

# LINC Commission Meeting

October 16, 2023



## Beautiful vision

Students from eleven Hickman Mills School District schools were chaperoned by LINC staff to Kansas City University on Oct. 10 for free eye exams and glasses provided by Score 1 for Health and One Sight Foundation.



# Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

## Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

## Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

## Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward, participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



**Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 | 4 – 5:30 pm**  
**Kauffman Foundation Conference Center**

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## **Agenda**

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- I. Welcome and Announcements**
- II. September minutes**
  - a. Approval (motion)**
- III. Superintendent Reports**
- IV. Score 1 for Health Vision Clinic**
- V. Justice in the Schools**
  - a. Utility & Rental Assistance**
- VI. LINC Youth Services**
- VII. KC Digital Drive**
  - a. Community Partner Celebration**
- VIII. Other Reports**
- IX. Adjournment**



## THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Cochair **David Disney** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bert Berkley  
Kiki Curls  
Aaron Deacon  
Shawn Foster

Rob Givens  
Anita Gorman  
Matt Haase  
David Ross

Disney welcomed everyone to the meeting.

*A motion to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2023, LINC Commission meeting was passed unanimously.*

LINC Treasurer David Ross presented the LINC fiscal year 2024 budget and reported the LINC Finance Committee recommended approval.

*A motion to approve the LINC fiscal year 2024 budget was passed unanimously.*

### Superintendents Reports

- **Rick Chambers** (Director of Communications and Development, Center School District) reported that LINC has expanded its Caring Communities Before & After School program into Red Bridge Elementary this school year. The district has hired two new principals. Center is part of the system design group for the Success Ready Student Network, which has been working to develop more effective and equitable ways of assessing student learning. The Missouri Board of Education has granted waivers to 20 school districts, including Center, that are part of the networks system design zone.
- **Prissy LeMay** (Assistant Superintendent, Grandview School District) reported the district has three new first-year principals. This week the district is starting in cohort two of the Success Ready Student Network. Grandview is providing ongoing professional development, including using a reading interventionist to help high school staff as well as consulting with William H. Parrett and Kathleen Budget, authors of *Disrupting Poverty: Five Powerful Classroom Practices*. Projects funded by the recent \$43 million bond issue are underway, including construction of visitor seating at the high school football stadium, renovated band rooms and cafeteria at the high school, and replacing elementary school playgrounds.
- **Casey Klappmeyer** (Deputy Superintendent, Hickman Mills School District) thanked LINC for its support of the district's summer school program, which saw a 25% increase in enrollment this year. Following a staff pay increase funded by a voter-approved levy and bond increase, the district saw a 50% increase in staff retention and a 25% reduction in vacancies. The district recently completed construction of a new cafeteria and performing arts center at Ruskin High School, and has purchased the Pinnacle Building, which it is renovating to include a coffeeshop and welding center as part of the district's real world learning program. The district is transforming the middle school program, which is now in two buildings (6th & 7th Grade Center and 8th Grade Center) and has two new principals.
- **Kevin Foster** (Executive Director, Genesis School) reported the school is at 101% enrollment and is fully staffed. Genesis is participating in the Missouri Reading Initiative to ensure students

are reading and writing proficiently. Keith Brown retired from Genesis but continues to work on some school projects. The LINC Chess program is off and running. Cascade Media is helping students who are part of the Genesis middle school experience. Genesis is working with Coco's Kidz to provide family engagement activities. The school is using Covid funding to resurface the playground with rubber. Staff shortages at busing companies are affecting attendance at Genesis and the region.

- **Jajuan Turner** (Sixth Grade Teacher, Lee A. Tolbert Academy) reported student enrollment is up 23% and state assessment is showing academic growth. Tolbert is thankful for LINC's partnership.

Caring Communities Administrator **Sean Akridge** reported that LINC summer programs served 1,489 students enrolled at 16 sites. Programming in addition to regular before and after summer school included a two-week camp at Ervin Elementary in Hickman Mills and the start of year-round school at Ingels Elementary in Hickman Mills. LINC summer programs are an opportunity to provide activities that are different from the regular school year, such as bringing a water park to the program at Wendell Phillips Elementary in KCPS. Kansas City Young Audiences supported the effort by providing internships on integrating the arts into programming for 30 LINC staff. A video on LINC summer programs was shown.

Director of Finance **Jeff Hill** reported 5,200 students are enrolled in LINC Before & After School programs supported by 510 LINC site staff. Hiring sufficient staff remains a challenge but is important because without it families will have to go on waiting lists. This year LINC submitted two successful 21st Century Community Learning Center proposals, which will provide \$800,000 in funding of afterschool activities and family supports at six LINC Before & After School sites. Vice President **Janet Miles-Bartee** reported that thanks to site coordinators and their staff there are no waiting lists and staff are able to provide support to working parents. A video on Back to School was shown.

Miles-Bartee reported on a meeting she had recently with Missouri Governor **Mike Parson** and his legislative budget director, **Alex Tuttle**, regarding LINC's funding. The governor recognized LINC's good work and expressed support for Caring Communities.

Disney introduced a video on LINC's involvement in Missouri's Local Food Purchase Assistance program, which LINC is calling LINC Farm to Families. The video was shown.

Akridge introduced a presentation on LINC's partnership with Kansas City Community Gardens, which gives students access to fresh vegetables and the opportunity to learn how they grow. A video was shown. **Andrew Smith**, Pitcher Caring Communities Site Coordinator, reported that schoolyard gardens are a good opportunity to teach students real-life schools and are a fun, easy activity. **Edina von Hofman**, Gladstone Caring Communities Site Coordinator, reported that keeping a schoolyard garden can be challenging, but they can also be very rewarding learning experiences for children.

Akridge introduced **Bonita Powell** of Total Man CDC, which has stepped in to provide hot meals to students at 12 LINC program sites since Harvesters no longer provides Kids Café. Powell reported on Total Man's areas of work including helping communities, special events, fatherhood, and summer feeding programs, and thanked LINC for its partnership.

LINC staff **Joe Robertson** reported U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona visited Kansas City this month for the agency's Raise the Bar tour to engage communities around education. LINC supported the event, which was hosted by Mattie Rhodes Center, by recruiting its partners Urban TEC and Mad Science to provide activities, as well as providing LINC chess activities and an appearance by KC Wolf.

The meeting was adjourned.



# Beautiful vision: Free eye exams and glasses set children up for success

Oct. 12, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer

The yellow school bus came rumbling up along the curb and the field trip was on.

Out they came, students from Warford Elementary School, their faces lit with anticipation as if they were loading up for a trip to the zoo, an ice cream shop or a bounce house.

But this trip was different.

Eye tests and — for many of them — glasses would be the adventure of this day, said the chaperone leading them to the bus.

*Glasses?* the children said in different ways, looks and tones, seeming to sense a special day.

The bus that was picking them up was headed downtown for Kansas City University. There the university's free preventative program for children — Score 1 For Health — and a OneSight Foundation vision clinic would soon have a swarm of vision professionals and students waiting to assess their eyes and get them seeing sharply with style.

"It's really an amazing opportunity for us," said Warford Elementary School Principal Kimberly Shaw. "Everyone is going to come back so excited to show off their new eyewear."

And LINC staff were going as chaperones along with parent liaisons from Warford — the same scene as at all the other Hickman Mills schools taking part in the day's event.

"What makes it even better is we have a collaboration with our community partners — our LINC partners," Shaw said, "who are here every day with our kids, who know our students."

In all, more than 80 students from 11 Hickman Mills schools on two buses would go to the clinic. Between the trips to the clinic on the university campus and the Vision Vans that visit schools, more than 1,000 Hickman Mills students get vision screenings each year, and more than 10,000 in the Kansas City area, said An-



nette Campbell, the director of Score 1 For Health.

“What is so special about this week is that we are bringing all the services to our (Kansas City University) campus,” Campbell said.

It was quite a procession.

The OneSight and Score 1 For Health team ushered the groups of children from room to room with mind-easing charm.

Each child took their turn reading simple eye charts, then advancing along a regimen of optometry machines and gadgets — like keratometers, autorefractors, retinoscopes and the owl-like bank of wheels and dials of the phoropter.

This was the complete and important full eye exam that makes the children feel that they and their eyes are valued.

“The kids like the experience of getting to go through all the different stations,” said LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Lee Kupka.

And then, she said, “they get to pick out their frames with all the adults, and LINC, telling them how great they look.”

Frames came in purple, blue, black, red, clear, gold and more. One after another, when asked to pose with their chosen frames, the children propped hands on hips, or flashed peace signs and smiled as if in a fashion show.

“The students leave happy, astounded with their new eyesight,” said Danyca Singleton, the student support specialist for Hickman Mills. “Every year our numbers grow with the number of students we can offer this opportunity to. We are eliminating barriers for our families.”

The LINC teams are happy to travel alongside the students, helping the experience feel familiar and comfortable.

It’s a special day for the students and their families, said LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Wesley Cunningham. He thanked the OneSight, Score 1 For Health and Kansas City University collaboration.

“The glasses are free and everything that the kids need is given to them,” he said. “I love this opportunity that they (the children) have. All kids need to be able to see, so I appreciate that they do this for us.”



# Justice in the Schools was 'my voice' in beating eviction threat

September 29, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



*Raleesha Smith poses with her husband, Cornell Miller, in the Kansas City apartment where they live with their four children after the Justice in the Schools legal assistance program helped them defeat an eviction threat.*

Raleesha Smith's anguish spiked with each escalating eviction notice.

First came the tri-folded sheet of paper stuck in the crack of her south Kansas City apartment door, telling her that she and her husband and their four children had ten days to get out.

Then came the second sheet, saying the eviction was immediate, and they had 24 hours.

And finally the knock on the door that she opened to a process server — a man handing her the notice from the court.

Those were days — before she heard about attorney Garrett Christensen and the [Justice in the Schools](#) program with LINC and [Legal Aid of Western Missouri](#) — that were filled with frustration and terror.

She'd taken the eviction notice to the management office, anxious to try to resolve it, feeling certain that none of her family's circumstances warranted such a severe consequence.

But each time the management office personnel refused to discuss it, she said. They sent her out, she said,



saying it was a matter for housing court now.

So many times in the past, renters like Smith and her husband, Cornell Miller, have been overwhelmed and powerless in moments like this.

“We couldn’t afford a lawyer,” Smith said. “She (the apartment manager) had the power.”

Smith and Miller rely on government subsidized housing, and the wait lists for another apartment were months long. The eviction filing — the first Smith ever received — now effectively blocked a potential agreement to move into another apartment.

“We had nobody to stay with,” Smith said. Maybe they could send their four kids to her mother, but her place was too small even if she might be willing to take them in. She and her husband worried. “Would we go to a shelter? Or live in my car?”

In a call to the city seeking help, she was referred to Legal Aid of Western Missouri and that got them connected to Christensen, the Legal Aid attorney who, with LINC’s financial support, has been representing families and staff in some of the school districts in LINC’s Caring Communities.

“He told me my rights,” Smith said. “He was my voice.”

Since the Justice in the Schools program opened in the Hickman Mills School District in January 2020, the program has handled 484 cases for school families and staff, including 324 cases involving eviction threats and other housing situations, as well as 72 family law cases plus several other issues.

Those 484 cases have impacted 662 children and served 26 school staff.

The program expanded into the Center School District and has also taken cases out of the Grandview School District, including Smith’s case, whose children go to Butcher-Greene Elementary School and Grandview High School.

The support Smith received from Justice in the Schools follows a growing movement in Kansas City that has helped tenants gain some power in housing court where, historically, property owners and their attorneys overwhelmingly prevailed.

[KC Tenants](#) and the [Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom](#) have led the surge in tenants rights. Victories, like securing a Kansas City ordinance in 2022 that gives all tenants the right to an attorney, have come at a crucial time as eviction filings are rising again and rents are getting higher in the post-pandemic years.

In its recently released study — [The State of Eviction 2023](#) — the Heartland Center reported that 1,941 tenants were represented by attorneys through the Right to Counsel ordinance in the first 15 months. Of those, 1,326 tenants avoided eviction, and 350 cases are still pending.

## Tenants gain in KC courts

Since January 2022, Kansas City tenants have been assured the right to an attorney in housing court.

- 1,941** Number of tenants who exercised their right to counsel.
- 1,326** Number of tenants who avoided eviction
- 350** Number of tenants with counsel in pending cases
- 86** Percentage of tenants who remain housed with no eviction record

Source: Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom

## Justice in the Schools

LINC and Legal Aid of Western Missouri have supported Hickman Mills and Center families and district staff in civil cases since January 2020

- 484** Total cases
- 662** Children impacted
- 26** School staff served

This is what the right to counsel and connecting with Justice in the Schools meant for Smith and Miller:

Christensen went to work on their case, seeking to determine what records, witnesses or other evidence the property owners might have to support their filing for immediate eviction.

There had been an incident, Smith told Christensen. In November of 2022, one of Smith's daughters had gotten into a fight on the grounds of the apartment complex, and this had led to an shouting argument between Smith and the apartment manager that Smith thought had been resolved.

But in late February, months after the incident, the property owners had filed for an immediate eviction — a serious claim that suggested there was a threat to the safety of other tenants or staff. The notices left inside Smith's door arrived in March.

Christensen searched for any police reports that might back up the seriousness of the claim and found there were none. He filed requests for discovery, asking the property owners for all the evidence they had to back the claim.

The property owners never complied, despite a legal duty to do so, Christensen said. Come the court day, May 4, the property owner's attorneys arrived with no witnesses and still none of the requested documentation.

The case was dismissed with prejudice, meaning the property owners lost their claim and cannot refile it.

Smith, her husband and their four children remained in their home and their children never had to miss class or change schools.

The mission of Justice in the Schools is to help families stay in stable, safe homes so children can continue daily attendance in school with their familiar teachers and friends.

Smith's case was alarming, Christensen said, "for the seriousness of the allegations and the significant detrimental effect it would have had" if it had gone unchallenged.

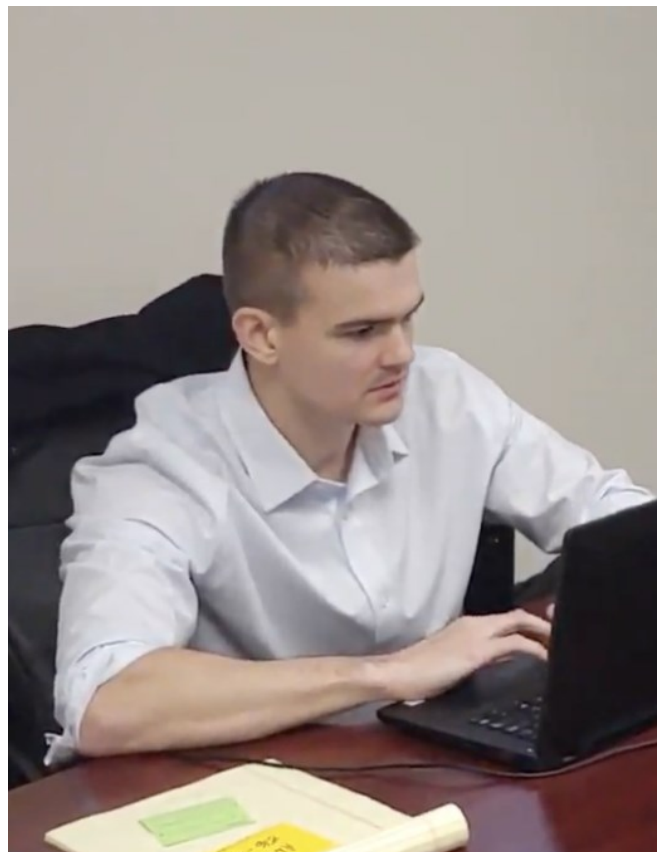
"It was a good result," he said.

Smith had heard in the past about neighbors or acquaintances who struggled with landlords and evictions and found herself in the same state of distress when it happened to her. She felt the same intimidation with the legal system and a powerlessness against the landlord.

"A lot of people have been going through the same thing" with property owners, she said, "and no one stood up to them."

But now she's spreading the word — Justice in the Schools.

"They're not judgmental," she said. "They just want to help you."



*Justice in the Schools attorney Garret Christensen*

# THE KANSAS CITY BEACON

## Rising rents leave more Kansas City tenants facing eviction

*Two years after the end of a national eviction moratorium, landlords are still looking to make up for lost income. That's led to more residents facing eviction.*

by [Mili Mansaray](#)

September 18, 2023



Eviction proceedings take place at the Jackson County Courthouse every Thursday. (Chase Castor/The Beacon)

Jared Johnson hasn't paid rent in four months. The trouble started when his car got towed. That cost him his job delivering groceries for Instacart.

He's been able to hold off an eviction — for now.

At his eviction trial, his landlord agreed to give him until the end of September to pay his back rent. Johnson, who is originally from Florida, said the extension is the only thing between him and a homeless shelter or a short-term housing program.

“Or my last resort, since I won't be able to take my dog with me, is to go back to Florida,” he said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control's nationwide eviction moratorium, which began in September 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, [ended](#) in July 2021. Since then, eviction rates in Kansas City have risen back to pre-pandemic levels. In fact, efforts to evict tenants run higher now than before the pandemic.

Jackson County court records show 261 evictions in July and 1,388 so far this year. Before the pandemic and the national ban on evictions, the county saw 183 evictions in July 2019 and 1,675 evic-



tions in the 10 months before the moratorium.

Landlords are also filing more cases to evict more tenants. More than 11,000 cases were filed from July 2022 to July 2023 in Jackson County, compared to 7,358 from June 2021 to June 2022.

To help tenants fight their cases, the Kansas City Council passed a [“Right to Counsel”](#) ordinance last year that gives free legal assistance to residents facing eviction.

One year later, the demand for representation has surpassed the supply of legal help.

“We were able to represent everyone who appeared in court when it went into effect,” said Gina Chiala, the executive director of the [Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom](#), an organization that provides legal services for low-wage workers and tenants. “Since then, that has changed and we’ve really started to feel the pressure.”

### Why are residents getting evicted?

Rent is at the center of eviction disputes. About a third of the eviction cases filed are for rent and possession, Chiala said.

This year, the Kansas City area had the second-highest yearly increase in rent among the 50 biggest cities in the country, according to a study by [Rent.com](#), a digital apartment marketplace.

Renters pay an [average](#) of \$1,044 per month in Jackson County. Yet, as the rent rises, [wages](#) are stagnating.

Missouri’s minimum wage is \$12 an hour, but the living wage for a single adult in Jackson County is \$33.60, according to a [living-wage calculator](#) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“People ... are just living at the edge of existence,” said Kirk McClure, professor of urban planning at the University of Kansas.

The average American renter is also [rent-burned](#), meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

“Most low-income folks that get laid off don’t have big savings accounts to pay their rent,” McClure said. “They have a very low cushion to absorb a shock like the pandemic or a layoff.”

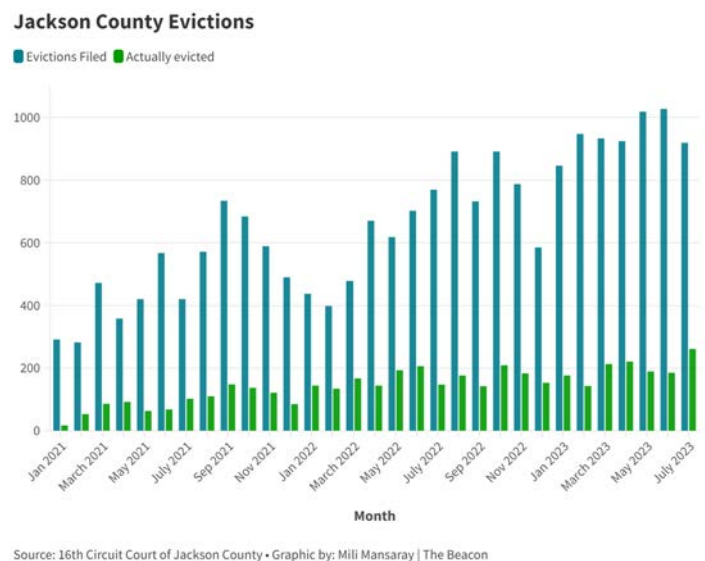
Lindale Lee stopped paying rent after he lost his job and his roommate moved out in July. He has since found a new job and paid it back, but he still found himself on trial due to the added fees.

“I owe \$700,” he said. “But with the late fees, processing fees and attorney fees, I owe \$1,402.”

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have also influenced landlords to raise rental costs. Many are



Jared Johnson has until the end of September to pay nearly \$3,000 in back rent in court fees to avoid eviction from his apartment. (Mili Mansaray/The Beacon)





looking to recoup the money they lost due to the national eviction moratoriums.

“Landlords were put on a huge financial crunch since they weren’t getting their rent on time. Sometimes it was paid, sometimes not,” said Michael Fortin, a lawyer who provides legal services to business owners. “Now that the moratoriums are lifted, the landlords have to raise their rents to cover their losses. ... A lot of their patience is gone.”

Through federal [emergency rental assistance](#) programs, state governments distributed \$2.6 billion in assistance to renters. But McClure said it took months to reach them.

He blamed out-of-state corporate property owners for the rising rents.

“We’re getting professional investors who’ve never even been to the city they’re buying in,” he said. “They’re seeing rents going up and they’re saying, ‘I want in on that.’”

The [Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom](#) says property owners in California, New York and New Jersey evict the most tenants in Kansas City.

### **Can Right to Counsel handle heightening Kansas City rent?**

In the 15 months since the Right to Counsel ordinance was passed, nearly 2,000 tenants have been represented by attorneys, with 86% of the rulings ending in no eviction, according to the Heartland Center’s [State of Eviction report](#).

But as case filings rise, the organizations are losing the capacity to represent tenants.

“We are scrambling to build up staff to meet the number of evictions that are actually being filed,” said Chiala.

There are 12 attorneys between Heartland, [Legal Aid of Western Missouri](#) and the [University of Missouri-Kansas City](#) combined, each capable of handling 120 cases in a year.

The organizations want to have 18 attorneys by the spring of 2024, and they have already hired two more.

“In the meantime,” Chiala said, “we’re having to turn down cases since there’s not enough attorneys to keep up.”

Without attorneys, many tenants must defend themselves.

But a lawyer makes a sizable difference in outcome.

“A lot of times the tenants have affirmative defenses, most often because the landlord failed to maintain the property,” Chiala said. “And so we’re able to raise those defenses and then try to negotiate a humane outcome between the tenant and the landlord.”



Lindale Lee owes nearly \$1,500 to his landlord after factoring in court fees and other charges. (Mili Mansaray/The Beacon)

# KC Digital Drive celebrates the "doers striving to change the community"

October 12, 2023

By Joe Robertson, LINC Writer



*Kansas City players in digital inclusion and innovation celebrated with KC Digital Drive at The Abbott in Kansas City, above, including a panel discussion led by KC Digital Drive Managing Director Aaron Deacon, left, with B.J. Tanksley, Director of the Missouri Office of Broadband Development, and Jade Piros de Carvalho, Director of the Kansas Office of Broadband Management.*

Kansas City's many partners in building an innovative and inclusive digital community came together to celebrate the work at KC Digital Drive's Community Partner Event.

"This whole partnership model has been what we are since the beginning," KC Digital Drive Managing Director Aaron Deacon said in a video production for the audience at The Abbott in the Crossroads Oct. 10.

"People that are passionate, people that have a compelling idea, that's where we go to support the doers and the actors who are striving to make change in the community," he said. "We are a capacity-building organization. We go out and try to find people within the community who are trying to solve really critical problems that Kansas City faces and to enable them and empower them and figure out how to connect them in ways to create better solutions."

The many partners, including LINC, who gathered at the event have a mutual desire to find creative solutions in building an equitable, innovative community.

"KC Digital Drive is really focused on digital transformation and working in digital technologies, seeing how we can build up communities across the city," said Jim Starcev, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program Manager for KC Digital Drive. This work, he said, especially focuses on "including people that may have not been included before in those discussions."

The work of meaningful change in digital inclusion requires a systems level of thinking, said Leslie Scott, Digital Inclusion Program Manager with KC Digital Drive.



“Because digital skills intersect everything, from workforce to education to housing, telehealth, all the things that many of us take for granted,” Scott said. “There are a lot of organizations doing digital inclusion work in Kansas City, and we can always do more together and that’s how we’re going to move the needle.

LINC, which was one of the main sponsors of the celebration, has been partnering with KC Digital Drive since 2010, when they first joined forces in mobilizing an effort to help see Google Fiber distributed equitably across the city when Kansas City became the first city to test the new service.

“LINC Caring Communities have enjoyed a longstanding partnership with KC Digital Drive,” said LINC Executive Vice President Janet Miles-Bartee. “We share the same mission of identifying gaps and finding creative solutions. LINC is proud to support KC Digital Drive’s work to help more households and more families make strong connections to the Internet, and also give them the skills they need to thrive in school and work and our community.”

While the celebration event provides opportunity to celebrate the work of so many organizations “for the public good,” the night strives for more than that, Deacon said.

It’s also meant as a springboard to more and better work, together.

“It offers an opportunity to help broaden and build the community across our different projects,” he said. “It creates greater visibility across our partner network. Because we get involved in so many different kinds of projects, it can be hard to see the through-line or understand how we operate as an organization. By gathering with a broad cross-section of partners and learning about other types of projects, we hope to make it a little bit easier.”



*Information cards distributed on the tables at the KC Digital Drive celebration highlighted many of the collaborative efforts toward inclusive digital innovation.*

# MISSOURI **I**NDEPENDENT

## Nearly half of all Missouri Medicaid terminations in last three months have been children

Paperwork issues were to blame for most kids who lost coverage, raising some concerns those eligible for health care coverage are going without

BY: [CLARA BATES](#) - SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 12:00 PM

Another 12,833 children were removed from the state's Medicaid program in August — more than three-quarters of whom were terminated because of paperwork issues rather than being determined ineligible.

August was the third month of the state reassessing the eligibility of every Medicaid participant, after a three year COVID-era pause on the practice. The process will take place over a year.

Around one-quarter of the state's population is enrolled in Medicaid, the government health insurance program for low-income residents, called MO HealthNet in Missouri.

According to newly-released [data](#) from Missouri's Department of Social Services, nearly half — 49% — of all terminations from June through August were terminations of children's Medicaid coverage. Missouri's share of children being disenrolled is third-highest among the 16 states that report age breakouts, according to health policy nonprofit [KFF](#).

Over the first three months, nearly 40,000 kids total lost coverage. It's not yet clear how many of those children were able to cycle back onto Medicaid or moved to another program.

“[Missouri] needs to look closely at why so many kids are being terminated,” said Joel Ferber, director of advocacy at Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.

And the state should “closely consider a pause on terminations while it evaluates the data,” Ferber added — an option offered by the federal government that some states such as [Michigan](#) and [South Carolina](#) have voluntarily taken up.



From June to August, nearly 40,000 kids total lost Medicaid. It's not yet clear how many of those children were able to cycle back onto Medicaid or moved to another program (Mint Images/Getty Images).



Caitlin Whaley, spokesperson for the Department of Social Services, said because children make up around half of the Medicaid caseload in Missouri, “their disenrollment rate has been roughly proportionate to their share of the overall MO HealthNet population.”

But the income limit for kids to be on Medicaid is higher than it is for adults. Even if parents lose coverage, kids may still qualify, though they sometimes fall through the cracks.

Missouri has said it [does not have a glitch](#) some other states have received [federal scrutiny](#) for, in which the eligibility determination is made at the household rather than individual level. So it is not yet clear why Missouri has a high rate of children losing coverage.

“We do recognize that children are a particularly vulnerable population and are refocusing targeted messaging efforts,” said Whaley, “as well as working with partners to reach parents and guardians in Missouri to make sure they know the importance of completing the annual renewal form.”

After kids, the group with the largest rate of coverage loss is low-income adults who became eligible after Medicaid expansion in the state, making up 33% of coverage losses.

### **77% of all terminations in first three months were procedural**

Advocates nationwide have been especially concerned with overall rates of procedural disenrollments.

Procedural disenrollments refer to a variety of paperwork-related issues that prevent the state from determining a participant’s eligibility — including that the state never received the completed paperwork or the participant never received the form.

For instance, a participant may not receive the paperwork if they changed addresses, or may not return it if they received but didn’t understand the forms.

Seventy-seven percent of all coverage losses in Missouri in the first three months were for procedural reasons. That is slightly higher than the national average, according to [KFF](#), of 73%.

Over the three month period, an average of 71% percent of kids’ coverage losses were due to procedural issues.

Whaley said some of the procedural terminations are people who would have been determined ineligible had the participant returned their paperwork, because the state’s process of using other data sources found them to be “likely ineligible.”

In August, more than 23,000 Missourians lost coverage for procedural reasons, while 4,590 lost coverage because they were determined to be ineligible. That means around 84% of all terminations were procedural, higher than both June and July.

The state has not yet broken down the sources of procedural issues, which some advocates say could help them target their outreach strategies. Whaley said “the state is regularly looking at data to identify opportunities to improve communication and outreach.”

Ferber said the state should continue to try to “streamline” its largely-manual process.

States are required to attempt to renew participants’ eligibility using existing data before contacting enrollees to complete forms or documentation themselves — a process called ex-parte renewals that Missouri historical-



ly used at a low rate.

In August, the percent of total cases renewed ex-parte was 41%, down from 54% in July. The social services department has said it is working to [increase the rate of automated renewals](#).

### **‘Not seeing significant amounts of churn’**

The state’s [overall Medicaid caseload](#) has fallen, over the three months, by [30,664](#) people, according to the caseload counter updated at the end of every month. That’s less than the total 82,211 who have been terminated, but that case count data lags behind the renewal data, which “goes to explaining why the drop in overall caseload isn’t as drastic,” Whaley said. Over half (56%) of the drop in enrollment by the net measure was for children.



The regular stream of new Medicaid applications could offset some of the terminations — for instance, from eligible people moving to Missouri or newly-eligible Missourians applying for the first time — and some of those terminated could be added back onto the program.

Enrollees have 90 days after termination to submit required paperwork for reconsideration and to be reinstated if eligible. After 90 days, they need to fill out a new application to be enrolled.

“Churn is something the state will look into over the course of this process,” Whaley said, referring to the temporary loss of coverage after an enrollee is terminated and then re-enrolls in a short period. “We have not conducted an exhaustive analysis at this time, but we are not seeing significant amounts of churn thus far.”

There are over [1.4 million](#) people, as of the end of August, on Medicaid in the state.

*This story was updated with additional comment from the Department of Social Services.*

# Public News Service

## MO loses \$1.35 billion annually due to child care issues

Farah Siddiqi, Producer

Monday, October 2, 2023

Among Missouri parents surveyed, 30% reported they have limited their working hours or stopped altogether because of unreliable child care.

The Missouri Chamber of Commerce said child care issues pose a [\\$1.35 billion hit](#) to the state economy every year.

Robin Phillips, CEO of Child Care Aware of Missouri, said in addition to higher operating costs for food, rent, and utilities, it is difficult for child care providers to pay their staff livable wages, despite getting some federal help.

"There are great and significant investments happening, and we still have a lot of work to do," Phillips explained. "Because two years, three years of federal relief money doesn't fix 40-plus years of fragmentation."

Childcare Aware found the [median wage](#) for child care educators in Missouri has increased to \$17.50 an hour this year, up from just over \$10 in 2017.

Missouri [ranks 28th overall](#) for child well-being, according to the most recent Kids Count data. The report showed "child care deserts" have almost doubled since before the pandemic. Inaccessible -- and often unaffordable -- child care pushes parents to the financial breaking point.

Tracy Greever-Rice, Kids Count program director for the Missouri Family and Community Trust, said many areas need good short-term and long-term solutions.

"Attentiveness to these issues will make a big difference," Greever-Rice contended. "And prevention is not just good for individuals, but also more efficient and less expensive of a way to do public policy."

On average, Missourians pay \$8,900 a year for center-based care for a toddler, which equates to around 22% of a single mother's income, and 7% for a married couple.

Disclosure: Missouri Kids Count contributes to our fund for reporting on Children's Issues, Hunger/Food/Nutrition, Poverty Issues, and Youth Issues. If you would like to help support news in the public interest, [click here](#).



Many of Missouri's working parents have limited and often unaffordable access to quality child care, resulting in "childcare deserts," according to the 2023 Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Book. (aicandy/Adobe Stock)

# LIGHTS ON 2023

## AFTERSCHOOL



Join LINC as our Caring Communities sites celebrate our students, families & community, and focus on the importance of afterschool programs.

### Center School District

Boone Elementary, 8817 Wornall, Kansas City, MO 64114  
 Center Elementary, 8401 Euclid Ave., Kansas City, MO 64132  
 Indian Creek Elementary, 9801 Grand Ave., Kansas City, MO 64114  
 Red Bridge Elementary, 10781 Oak St, Kansas City, MO 64114

### Charter School

Lee A. Tolbert Academy, 3400 Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64109

### Grandview School District

Belvidere Elementary, 15200 White Avenue, Grandview, MO 64030  
 Butcher-Greene Elementary, 5302 East 140th Street, Grandview, MO 64030  
 Conn-West Elementary, 1100 High Grove Road, Grandview, MO 64030  
 Grandview Middle, 12650 Manchester Ave, Grandview, MO 64030  
 Martin City K-8, 201 East 133rd Street, Kansas City, MO 64145  
 Meadowmere Elementary, 7010 E 136th St, Grandview, MO 64030

### Hickman Mills School District

Compass Elementary, 5401 East 103rd St., Kansas City, MO 64137  
 Dobbs Elementary, 9400 Eastern, Kansas City, MO 64138  
 Ervin Elementary, 10530 Greenwood Rd., Kansas City, MO 64134  
 Freda Markley Early Childhood Center, 9201 E. Bannister Rd., Kansas City, MO 64134  
 6th & 7th Grade Center, 9010A Old Santa Fe Rd., Kansas City, MO 64138  
 8th Grade Center, 11115 Bennington Ave., Kansas City, MO 64134  
 Ingels Elementary, 11600 Food Ln., Kansas City, MO 64134  
 Millennium Elementary, 8908 Old Santa Fe Road, Kansas City, MO 64138  
 Truman Elementary, 9601 James A. Reed Rd., Kansas City, MO 64134  
 Warford Elementary, 11400 Cleveland, Kansas City, MO 64137

### Kansas City Public Schools

ACE, 6410 Swope Parkway, Kansas City, MO 64130  
 Banneker Elementary, 7050 Askew Ave., Kansas City, MO 64132  
 Border Star Montessori, 6321 Wornall Rd., Kansas City, MO 64113  
 Carver Elementary, 4600 Elmwood, Kansas City, MO 64130  
 Faxon Elementary, 1320 E. 32nd Terr., Kansas City, MO 64109  
 Foreign Language Academy, 3450 Warwick, Kansas City, MO 64111  
 Garcia Elementary, 1000 W 17th St., Kansas City, MO 64108  
 Garfield Elementary, 436 Prospect Ave., Kansas City, MO 64124  
 Gladstone Elementary, 335 N. Elmwood, Kansas City, MO 64123  
 Hale Cook Elementary, 7302 Pennsylvania Ave., Kansas City, MO 64114  
 Hartman Elementary, 8111 Oak, Kansas City, MO 64114  
 Holliday Montessori, 7227 Jackson, Kansas City, MO 64132  
 James Elementary, 5810 Scarritt, Kansas City, MO 64123  
 Melcher Elementary, 3958 Chelsea, Kansas City, MO 64130  
 Pitcher Elementary, 9915 E 38th Terr., Kansas City, MO 64133  
 Rogers Elementary, 6400 E 23rd St, Kansas City, MO 64129  
 Trailwoods Elementary, 6201 E. 17th St., Kansas City, MO 64126  
 Wendell Phillips Elementary, 2400 Prospect Ave., Kansas City, MO 64127  
 Wheatley Elementary, 2415 Agnes, Kansas City, MO 64127  
 Whittier Elementary, 1012 Bales Ave., Kansas City, Mo 64127

### North Kansas City School District

Topping Elementary, 4433 N. Topping Avenue, Kansas City, MO 64117

### Lights On Afterschool Event

Oct. 26, 5:30-7:00pm  
 Oct. 17, 5:00-5:45pm  
 Oct. 25, 4:00-6:00pm  
 Oct. 25, 4:00-6:00pm  
  
 Oct. 30, 4:00-6:00pm  
  
 Oct. 25, 6:15-7:30pm  
 Oct. 20, 6:30-8:30pm  
 Oct. 30, 6:15-7:45pm  
 Oct. 24, 6:00-7:30pm  
 Oct. 24, 4:15-5:30pm  
 Oct. 20, 6:00-7:30pm  
  
 Oct. 25, 5:30-7:30pm  
 Oct. 24, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Oct. 25, 4:30-5:30pm  
 Oct. 23, 5:00-6:30pm  
 Oct. 30, 5:00-7:00pm  
 Oct. 19, 5:30-7:30pm  
 Oct. 20, 4:30-5:45pm  
 Oct. 23, 5:00-6:15pm  
 Oct. 30, 6:00-7:00pm  
 Oct. 19, 4:30-6:00pm  
  
 Oct. 19, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Oct. 25, 6:00-7:30pm  
 Oct. 31, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Nov. 2, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Oct. 25, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Oct. 19, 5:30-6:30pm  
 Nov. 2, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Oct. 30, 4:00-6:30pm  
 Nov. 1, 5:00-7:00pm  
 Oct. 25, 6:00-7:00pm  
 Oct. 13, 3:30-5:30pm  
 Oct. 24, 5:00-7:00pm  
 Nov. 2, 4:30-6:30  
 Oct. 19, 4:30-6:00pm  
 Oct. 19, 4:30-5:30pm  
 Oct. 30, 4:45-6:00pm  
 Oct. 24, 5:30-7:00pm  
 Oct. 30, 5:00-7:00pm  
 Oct. 20, 6:00-7:00pm  
 Oct. 25, 4:00-6:00pm  
  
 Oct. 25, 5:30-7:30pm