

**SALINE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**



We are good for your health!

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**Saline County Health Department
125 W. Elm
Salina, KS 67401**

To whom it concerns,

Experiences of being a mom for 15 years, a licensed child care provider in my home for 12, and now a child care surveyor for almost 1 year, have given ample opportunity for a fairly clear expectation of healthy and safe child care standards. Bill 282 brings about several areas of concern for me as a consumer of child care and a surveyor supporting the work that child care providers do. Lowering training requirements, capacity changes, ages of staff in a center and surveyors required to be employed by the department of health are my top concerns.

Professional development training for early childhood professionals can provide helpful tools that may be used on a daily basis. More importantly however, is the information shared in training which educates providers how to keep the youngest generation alive. Actual facts presented by specialists in the field on safest practices of health and well being of children is critical to continue to keep children safe. The current number of training hours required should not be decreased.

Allowing more children to be supervised under the care of less adults is problematic. The number of injuries, missing children and deaths of children is sure to increase when providers are responsible for more children. The capacity tables, in their current state, allow flexibility for additional children based on age, time of day and time of year. It is a plan that has been utilized well for years. KDHE allows exceptions occasionally for regulation compliant providers meeting minimum standards to exceed capacity short term for specific, well planned situations. This is a sufficient system keeping the safety and well being of children top priority. 4 infants under the age of 12 months year round is senseless.

In the realm of motherhood, I have 5 children, ages 15 to 5 years. The consideration of 30 children ages 3-5 years being supervised by 1 adult and a 14 year old is terrifying. As a consumer paying a child care center to keep my child's best interest in mind while I cannot be with him, I am horrified at the thought of what could happen with that sort of minimal supervision. A 14 year old is still a child themselves. They do not have the maturity to be second responsible for 30 children. I would like to see a consideration of them being additional eyes and ears in a room as there is certainly value in them assisting in caring for the young, just not responsible for them.

This community I grew up in and now am raising my family in brings a connection to my responsibilities as a mom, past provider, and now surveyor. I know the communities I serve well. I am able to connect with providers as a resource, not only a regulator. If I did not have the knowledge of organizations in the area, I could not fulfill my role as a surveyor as effectively. I value the connections with providers in the area. Kansas is unique in the sense that we offer local surveyors in most parts of the state. In order to keep creating strong relationships with providers, which in turn keeps resources going in support of the well being of children, we need to support local public health and NOT allow KDHE the authority to employ all inspectors.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jessica Pickering

Child Care Surveyor SA, MP & OT counties

