

KIDS COUNT Conversations Toolkit

Equipping Community Leaders with Data to Create Change



Kentucky KIDS COUNT

As a project of Kentucky Youth Advocates and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kentucky KIDS COUNT has provided the latest data on child well-being for nearly 30 years. Each year Kentucky KIDS COUNT publishes the annual *County Data Book*, along with a data profile for each Kentucky county. Visit kyyouth.org/kentucky-kids-count to access these publications, along with hundreds of additional data indicators through the KIDS COUNT Data Center.

“With the Kentucky KIDS COUNT project, I have been able to help advocate for kids that are in need of our assistance. I have been able to analyze problems that I was unaware of, or did not see them as a large issue. I am able to use the data provided in the books and figure out what kind of solutions may be viable to my community.”

—Nonprofit leader in Lee County

“The county specific data is vital and the perfect tool for grant writing and needs assessment. The data allows me to validate the services I am fighting for in our community.”

—Educator in Butler County

“We work in multiple communities in KY and use KIDS COUNT a lot to help educate our communities on how to use data to drive decision making and resource allocation.”

—Nonprofit leader in Madison County

KIDS COUNT Conversations

Plan > Engage > Facilitate > Action

KIDS COUNT Conversations bring together community leaders and advocates – including parents, superintendents, human service providers, mayors, and more – introducing them to the 100+ local data points available through Kentucky KIDS COUNT and providing a picture of how kids are faring in their counties. As a result of these conversations, local communities have launched coalitions, developed pilot programs, brought parenting programs to their counties, and more. **Hear from local hosts and check out the projects they have launched at kyyouth.org/kentucky-kids-count/conversations.**



Host a KIDS COUNT Conversation

Are you ready to host a KIDS COUNT Conversation? This toolkit offers suggestions on how to facilitate targeted conversations to develop local solutions around a common goal that will move data in the right direction. Use this step-by-step guide to lead a conversation in your community:



1. Create a planning team. If possible, it is a good idea to have more than one person, ideally representing different organizations, share the responsibility of making your KIDS COUNT Conversation a reality. Key responsibilities include establishing goals and articulating what you hope to accomplish for kids in your community, setting the timeline, and deciding who will take specific roles. **Roles include:**

- **Logistics.** In charge of organizing meeting space, refreshments, supplies, audiovisual needs, etc.
- **Outreach.** Take point on inviting community partners to attend. Consider inviting the media, elected officials, and potential funders.
- **Content.** Do an initial data scan. Take point on setting the agenda, inviting speakers, and facilitating the discussion.

See sample timeline.

2. Logistics. Planning for and taking care of the logistics ahead of time will help the community conversation go smoothly. **Here are some things to plan for:**

- **Meeting space.** Choose a location that is accessible and welcoming to all community members.
- **Room setup.** If possible, have tables of 6 to 8 which will allow for small group discussions.
- **Supplies.** You will need flipchart paper (and easels if not self-sticking), sticky note pads, markers, and dot stickers. You may want to use nametags and a sign-in sheet.



- **Audiovisual needs.** Plan to have a laptop, projector, and screen available for a data presentation. In larger rooms, a microphone could be needed.
- **Refreshments.** You might want to offer drinks, snacks and/or lunch to participants.
- **Print materials.** Order free copies of the Kentucky KIDS COUNT *County Data Books* and print County Profiles in advance at kyyouth.org/kentucky-kids-count.

See sample room setup.

3. Outreach. Having a diverse cross-sector mix of community members at your KIDS COUNT Conversation is critical to ensuring success. Since the goal is to create an action plan, we recommend choosing quality over quantity in order to encourage a sense of responsibility moving forward. **Depending on the focus of your conversation, here are community representatives to consider inviting:**

- **Educators** – teachers, family resource coordinators, principals, superintendents, child care owners, Head Start directors, community college leaders
- **Health professionals** – school nurses, pediatricians, public health department leaders, hospital administrators, oral health professionals
- **Child welfare/juvenile justice system** – former foster youth, foster parents, kinship caregivers, CASA volunteers, judges, guardian ad litem, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) representatives, county attorneys
- **Faith-based organizations** – leaders from local houses of worship, ministerial alliances
- **Human services providers** – food pantries, private child caring agencies, sexual assault providers, domestic violence shelters, substance abuse treatment providers, community mental health providers
- **Youth-serving organizations** – Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, out-of-school time providers, Big Brothers Big Sisters
- **Law enforcement** – police chief, emergency responders
- **Potential funders** – local foundations, businesses or hospitals who might be able to bring financial support to the action plan
- **Media** – local TV and newspaper (Before inviting media, the planning team should consider whether this would hinder the ability for participants to talk openly. Note that if the event is held at a public facility, such as the public library, members of the media have a right to attend).

See sample invitation.



4. Content. A well-designed KIDS COUNT Conversation should start with the data and end with an action plan. It's critical to engage community partners and get them talking to each other. **Here are some components to include:**

Setting the stage

Open the conversation in a way that creates a sense of urgency balanced with optimism. What inspired the planning team to have this conversation? Is there any unlikely ally that can speak to the importance? You might consider inviting someone to share their personal story, if appropriate.

Data dive

Spend some time sharing KIDS COUNT data on the trends facing children in your county. County Profiles break the data down by economic security, education, health and family and community domains. What are your county's strengths? What are areas of weakness? Are the trends moving in the right direction? After giving an overview, identify one data point to focus on and challenge community partners to develop strategies that will lead to measurable improvement over the next 5 years.

Example: How can we reduce the number of children in foster care by 25 percent by 2025?

Here are some resources where you can find data about your county:

- **KIDS COUNT County Profiles.** 7 key measures of child well-being, portraying most recent data, five years prior, and county rankings: kyyouth.org/kentucky-kids-count/#countyprofiles
- **KIDS COUNT Data Center.** 100 + measures of child well-being, by county, school district, and other geographies: datacenter.kidscount.org/ky
- **Kentucky Department of Education.** School and district report cards on academic performance, school safety, transition readiness and more: openhouse.education.ky.gov/src
- **Kentucky Health Facts.** County health data including indicators of maternal and child health: kentuckyhealthfacts.org
- **County Health Rankings.** A snapshot of how health is influenced by where we live, learn, work and play: www.countyhealthrankings.org

Facilitated discussion

- As a large group, participants identify barriers to reaching their established goal. The facilitator will record these barriers on sticky notes.
- Participants will each receive two dot stickers. They will place their dot stickers on two barriers they feel is the 'lowest hanging fruit' that if addressed, could make a measurable impact on their established goal.
- The top three barriers, identified by most dot stickers, will be selected and participants will break into small groups (6-8 people) to develop potential strategies to combat the barriers that will lead to measurable progress on improving their selected data point and meeting their established goal.
- Each small group will share to the larger group their potential strategies and this will be recorded by the facilitator on flipchart paper.
- Facilitator closes discussion confirming action steps and outlining who is responsible for each step and when the group will meet next.

See sample facilitators' guide.



Request Support for a KIDS COUNT Conversation

Kentucky Youth Advocates has technical assistance available to facilitate and provide data for your KIDS COUNT Conversation. For more information, including pricing, please contact ptennen@kyyouth.org.



Thank You to the Kentucky KIDS COUNT Sponsors!

Corporate partnerships are vital to the sustainability and success of KIDS COUNT Conversations. Because of corporate sponsors, all KIDS COUNT data materials are available to communities at no cost to them. Sponsors have also underwritten the cost of Kentucky Youth Advocates' technical assistance, which better equips local community hosts to create sustainable change.

Interested in funding a KIDS COUNT Conversation in your community or in other communities across the commonwealth? Contact **Patricia Tennen** at ptennen@kyyouth.org for more information.

Thank you to **UnitedHealthcare** for their support in producing this toolkit.

KIDS COUNT Conversation Toolkit

Sample Timeline

Three months is an ideal amount of time for planning a community conversation, but it can be done in a shorter timeframe if needed.

3 months out:

- Planning team meets, assigns roles, and decides best way to communicate
- Establish goals for the community conversation
- Brainstorm invitation list
- Develop suggestions for meeting date and location
- Consider whether to invite speakers and/or external facilitator
- Create an invitation

2 months out:

- Finalize the meeting date and location
- Send save the date to community partners
- Finalize the agenda, assign roles
- Invite speakers and/or external facilitator (ask if they have audiovisual needs)
- Order free KIDS COUNT County Data Books (kyyouth.org/kentucky-kids-count) to distribute at the event

1 month out:

- Send formal invitations to community partners
- Make arrangements for refreshments
- Develop media strategy (including traditional and social media)

1-2 weeks out:

- Send reminder email to partners who have RSVPed, including agenda
- Follow up with partners who have not responded
- Call/email local media outlets (if appropriate)
- Print County Profiles (kyyouth.org/kentucky-kids-count) and gather needed supplies (markers, sticky notes, flipchart paper, etc.)
- Make plan for how to set up the room
- Confirm audiovisual needs with speakers/facilitators

Day of:

- Set up the room and test technology (at least 1 hour before start time)
- Have a sign-in sheet to keep a record of who attended
- Ensure someone from planning team is taking notes
- Take photos of the event

Follow up, within 1 week:

- Email participants to thank them for attending, confirm next steps
- Debrief and celebrate with the planning team

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Sample Invitation

Subject: You're invited! Join us for a KIDS COUNT community conversation for kids in [your town]

Dear [Name],

Did you know that [insert data point here - e.g. our county ranks ## out of 120 in the rate of children living in foster care]? As a community leader, your insights about what is driving this trend for children are very important to us. We would like to share county level data, learn more about the community collaborations working to keep families together safely, better understand how best to use local assets to reduce those numbers, and determine what obstacles need to be addressed to keep children in their homes.

Date:

Time:

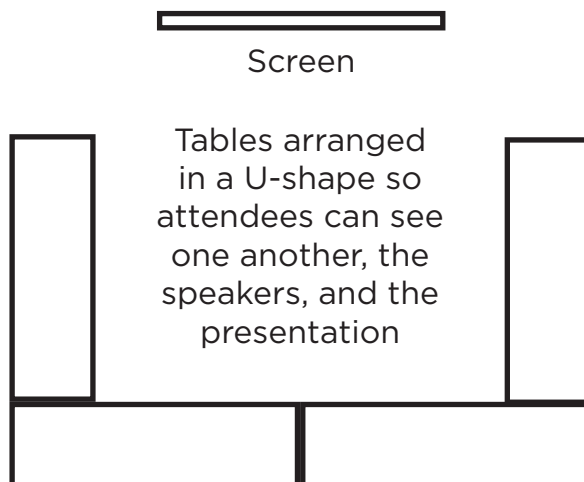
Location:

Refreshments will be served during the meeting and lunch will be provided immediately following the discussion. We will also have KIDS COUNT books available.

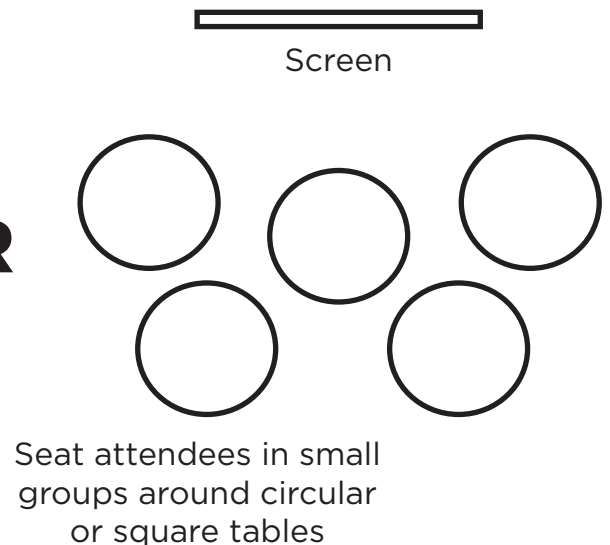
Will you join us? Please RSVP by [date] to [contact name].

We are looking forward to hearing your insights and working together to meet the unique needs of the children and families in [your town]!

Sample Room Layouts



OR



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Sample Facilitators' Guide

KIDS COUNT Community Conversation [Date and time]

Desired outcomes:

- Shared understanding of children in our community, grounded in data
- Shared understanding of the challenges facing kids
- Creating and achieving a goal together
- Identification of actions steps we can take to improve outcomes for children
- Others?

Section #	Time	What	How (materials/roles needed)	Intended Results	Who	Duration
1	9:00	Welcome Share intended results and frame the meeting	Context: Welcome, introductions, and framing the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local host welcomes everyone and explains the desired outcomes for the conversation • Invite participants to introduce themselves with their names and affiliations 	Begin day and shared understanding of goals	Facilitator: [List name here]	15 minutes
2	9:15	Data dive	Presenter gives an overview of the KIDS COUNT data, looking at economic security, education, health, and family & community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives an overview of strengths and weaknesses • Identifies 1 or 2 data point(s) to focus on today • Suggest a target: If we wanted to improve on this data point by 25% by 2025, we would need to impact ## kids <p>Materials: slide deck, County Data Books, County Profiles</p>	Shared understanding of data on child well-being Introduce focus	Presenter: [List name here]	30 minutes

Section #	Time	What	How (materials/roles needed)	Intended Results	Who	Duration
3	9:45	Questions/reactions	<p>Participants have time to ask questions (5 minutes)</p> <p>Facilitator asks them to split into pairs and discuss (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did anything surprise you? • What were your initial reactions? <p>Pairs then report to the group (5 minutes)</p>	Develop responses to data	Facilitator: [Name]	15 minutes
4	10:00	Identify barriers	<p>As a large group, participants identify barriers to reaching their established goal. Facilitator records barriers on sticky notes.</p> <p>Participants will each receive two dot stickers. They will place their dot stickers on two barriers they feel is the “lowest hanging fruit” that if addressed, could make a measurable impact on their established goal.</p> <p>Materials: sticky notes, dot stickers</p>	<p>Barriers are named</p> <p>Low-hanging fruit is identified</p>	<p>Facilitator: [Name]</p> <p>Notetaker/timekeeper: [Name]</p>	30 minutes
5	10:30	Brainstorm solutions	<p>Facilitator groups and names the 2 -3 barriers with the highest number of dots.</p> <p>Break into small groups (3-6 people) and brainstorm potential strategies to combat the barriers to achieve measurable progress.</p>	Potential solutions are identified	Facilitator: [Name]	30 minutes
6	11:00	Report out	<p>Small groups share their potential strategies. Facilitator records them on flipchart paper.</p> <p>Materials: flipchart paper</p>	Summarize potential solutions	Facilitator: [Name]	15 minutes

Section #	Time	What	How (materials/roles needed)	Intended Results	Who	Duration
7	11:15	Prioritize solutions	Participants are given 2 dots and asked to place them on the solutions that they think are the most feasible and most likely to achieve the intended impact Materials: dot stickers	Group narrows down the potential solutions	Facilitator: [Name]	15 minutes
8	11:30	Action planning	Facilitator shares with the large group which solutions were identified and leads a discussion of next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can/should take the lead on keeping this moving? • What commitments are participants ready to make today? • How can we make this sustainable? • Could we get creative with funding or reallocating existing resources? • When shall we meet next? 	Action steps identified	Facilitator: [Name]	25 minutes
9	11:55	Closing	Confirm what was decided and what the next step is. Thank attendees for coming and for their commitment to kids.	Shared understanding of next steps	Facilitator: [Name]	5 minutes