



The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is pleased to announce that Deidre Anderson-Barbee will step into the role of Assistant Commissioner in the Office of Childhood effective June 2, 2025.

Anderson-Barbee most recently served as the Executive Director of Starting Early, an organization that supports child care providers and parents to ensure families have access to high quality, affordable early care and education. Prior to that, she was the CEO of EarlystART, which delivers arts integrated early childhood services in Kansas City, Mo.

“Throughout her career, Deidre has been a passionate advocate for all children,” said Deputy Commissioner of Learning Services Kelli Jones. “She has worked tirelessly to bring people together to ensure that families are afforded the opportunity to access the programs and services they need. Deidre’s background in public education, community development, and child welfare will serve her well in leading the work in the Office of Childhood.”

Anderson-Barbee was selected by the NFL to represent the Kansas City Chiefs as a 2023 Inspire Change Changemaker award recipient, in recognition of her role in changing the culture in Kansas City to recognize the importance of early care and education. She also served on the statewide Zero to Three committee with the Governor’s Office that supported the creation of the Office of Childhood at DESE.

Prior to working in early childhood, Anderson-Barbee served as the Director of At-Risk Programs and Grants for the Hickman Mills School District in Kansas City, as well as a child welfare worker for the Children’s Division.

Anderson-Barbee earned her bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Simpson College in Indianola, Ia. and a master’s degree in Public Administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.