House Committee on Children and Seniors

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Testimony on:

DCF Agency Overview

Presented by:

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The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) offers a wide range of programs and services to help vulnerable Kansans. The agency’s mission is to protect children, promote healthy families and encourage personal responsibility. DCF oversees a $631 million All Funds budget (FY 2016), with a staff budgeted for 2,609 positions (2,204 currently filled). The agency has four regions.

On Jan. 14, 2016, DCF announced to its staff a new Strategic Plan for 2016. The document was created to provide clear guidance to staff on how to gauge organizational performance and achieve agency goals. The plan demonstrates a shift in ideology—taking DCF from the “welfare agency” to “the agency of opportunity.” The plan emphasizes the importance of helping our clients in all program areas achieve self-reliance.

The following is a brief overview of how DCF fulfills its mission through State and federally-funded initiatives.

**Family Services: Prevention and Protection Services (PPS)**

PPS offers a variety of services to children, families and vulnerable adults, including protection services, family-based assessments, family support services, independent living services for older youth and foster care. Foster care, adoption and family preservation services are privatized, with two contractors. PPS oversees a $219.7 million budget (FY2016).

**ASSESSMENT & PREVENTION, FAMILY PRESERVATION and PERMANENCY**

Safety of children is and will continue to be a top priority for this agency. Specifically, since 2001, Kansas has met the federal standard (99.6%) every state fiscal year for absence of abuse and neglect in foster care.

PPS, pursuant to the Kansas Code for Care of Children, has the statutory duty to receive and investigate reports of child abuse or neglect for the purpose of determining whether a report is valid and whether action is required to protect a child. DCF strives first to maintain a child in the home if it is safe to do so. DCF then emphasizes the well-being and permanency of children if it is unsafe for a child to remain at home.

PPS provides services to children and their families who come into contact with the agency. The Division works collaboratively with many stakeholders statewide who together make up and support the Kansas child welfare system.
Intake and Assessment
Processing/Progress
The Kansas Protection Report Center (KPRC) operates 24/7 to receive reports of alleged abuse/neglect to children and adults. In SFY 2015, the KPRC received a total of 65,631 child reports and 15,839 adult reports. Social workers at the KPRC complete an initial assessment of the reports received to determine if DCF has the authority to proceed with an investigation and/or assessment with the family. Reports assigned investigation and/or assessment are forwarded to the region where the family resides. In FY 2015, 56 percent of the child reports received were assigned for assessment. The assigned social worker in the region makes the face-to-face visit with the family, child and collateral contacts needed to establish safety of the child and/or and follow up with referrals or services as indicated by the assessment.

Over the past year, the following is some of what has been accomplished by intake and assessment of child reports: data clarification of removal reasons to adequately reflect all the reasons children are removed from the home, continued work on practice model to incorporate vision, mission and values, enhancement of Critical Thinking skills related to the Risk and Assessment tool, additional supervisor training, pilot project to provide tablets and Dragon voice-to-text programs to field staff to improve efficiencies and data collection, and recruitment and retention of social worker staff. The agency also plans to return to a three-tiered finding structure to add clarity to case findings.

Human Trafficking
PPS continues to address issues relating to human trafficking and the ongoing response of the Rapid Response Team which completes the assessment after a child is reasonably believed to be a human trafficking victim. The assessment is required statutorily to determine “safety, placement and treatment needs”. PPS works collaboratively with many other agencies, entities/organizations to address human trafficking issues statewide. PPS has two members who serve on the Kansas Human Trafficking Advisory Board. Over the past two years, DCF has provided recommendations for safety, placement and treatment for 80 youth identified as possible victims of human trafficking.

Foster Care
Foster care services are provided for children and families in cases when a court determines a child to be in need of care and the parents are not able to meet the safety needs of their child. Most children who require foster care have been abused or neglected, and they have major developmental, physical and emotional needs that require a variety of services and care. Some children who are not abused or neglected may be placed in foster care for reasons such as out-of-control behavior, failure to attend school, overwhelmed parents and running away from home. Children in foster care are most often placed with relatives or in qualified family foster homes, but some children need more structured settings such as a group home or a residential center. A 2015 Annie E. Casey Foundation report ranked Kansas in the top five in the nation for family placements. In the past two decades, Kansas has reduced group home
placements from 30 percent to 5 percent. Kansas contracts with private agencies that are responsible for providing foster care and reintegration services including case planning, placement, life skills and foster parent recruitment and training. The contractors are KVC and Saint Francis Community Services. DCF social workers are responsible to monitor the safety and well-being of the children who are in foster homes and the progress the children are making toward being able to return to their family home or find another permanent home.

**Adoption**

When a child comes into the custody of DCF, DCF’s contracted providers work with the child and family to resolve issues so the child can return home. When it is not feasible for a child to return home, parental rights may be terminated by the court or voluntarily relinquished by the parents. At that point, the child is available for adoption. Maintaining a child’s connection to his/her relatives and culture and community is essential.

Relatives are given first consideration as a placement option for a child so if the child becomes available for adoption, the relatives are in a good position to adopt the child. Some children are placed in other types of homes when a relative is unavailable or unable to provide care for them.

The Adoption Exchange Contractor maintains, manages and enhances a statewide adoption resource exchange to match children in the custody of DCF who are available for adoption and do not have an adoptive resource with prospective adoptive families. The contractor is required to develop and utilize targeted and diligent recruitment strategies in compliance with the State Plan and help identify, educate and support adoptive families for the children listed on the exchange. The Adoption Exchange Contractor is responsible for organizing a group of Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) to work with adopt-only families and set up the Kansas Adoption Network. In FY 2015, 765 children were adopted from foster care, up from 666 in FY 2014.

Adoption Assistance is available for children with special needs. At the end of December 2015, the average subsidy payment was $348.55 per month. At the end of December 2015, there were 8,679 open adoption assistance cases.

**Independent Living (IL)**

The IL program provides services and supports to youth for a successful transition to self-sufficiency. To be eligible for services and supports, young people must have “aged out” of foster care at age 18 or graduated from high school or completed their GED while in foster care, or have a finalized adoption or guardianship after the age of 16. These young people may be eligible for an array of services and supports, including:

- Financial support for post-secondary education and/or training programs,
- Room and board assistance,
- Transportation costs,
- Leadership opportunities, and
- Medical services through the Medical Card Extension Program.
**Data/CPI Unit**
The Data Unit collects significant amounts of data and compiles reports to assist in ensuring services provided and actions taken are data informed/driven. Most reports are updated on a monthly basis and can be found of the DCF website.

**Training**
The Kansas Child Welfare Training System is enhanced by a public/private partnership. Although each Child Welfare Case Management Provider (CWCMP) may have a different business and organizational model, consistency in practice and outcomes in the system is gained through commitment of each child welfare partner to the goals of safety, permanency and well-being and use of common practice principles (family-centered, strengths-based, culturally responsive, family involvement, accountability and community based services) that have been embedded in contracts and training content.

**ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS)**
APS is mandated by statute to conduct investigations on allegations of abuse, neglect (including self-neglect), exploitation, and fiduciary abuse on individuals who live in the community, are 18 years of age and older, and who are unable or alleged to be unable to protect their own interests. The purpose of the investigations is to:

- Determine if the vulnerable adult was harmed or is at risk of being harmed;
- Hold the perpetrator accountable by notifying law enforcement of all substantiated findings and, after due process, place his/her name on the Adult Abuse Registry, to prevent the individual from working in KDADS-licensed community-based facilities and programs and;
- Protect the vulnerable adult from further harm.

During the investigation or shortly after, protective service may be provided. Protective services include assessment for need for service and assistance with accessing needed services and resources. When working with vulnerable adults, least restrictive interventions and self-determination are of utmost importance.

**Family Services: Economic and Employment Services (EES)**
EES oversees several welfare benefits programs and also offers employment services to help individuals move from welfare to work. EES manages a $144.9 million budget.

**Kansas HOPE Act**
The Kansas HOPE (Hope, Opportunity and Prosperity for Everyone) Act codified existing welfare policy reforms enacted by DCF and introduced some new policies. It was signed into law on April 16, 2015. The following is a summary of the major existing policies that were codified:

- Progressive periods of ineligibility established for not complying with TANF work requirements
• Prohibits TANF cash assistance from being used in liquor stores, casinos, gaming establishments and retail establishments providing adult entertainment.
• Progressive periods of ineligibility established for TANF cash assistance and child care assistance for not complying with child support requirements
• Establishes fraud penalties. Cash assistance to the children in the family may be continued under a third party, protective payee.
• Requires the counting of income of cohabitating partners when determining eligibility and benefits.
• Requires all able-bodied adults without dependents to work or participate in an employment training program for a minimum of 20 hours per week in order to receive food assistance benefits more than three months per three-year period.

Some of the new policies that were enacted include:
• Food assistance adult recipients are now required to cooperate with child support.
• Individuals shall be permanently disqualified for food assistance if they have been convicted of a drug felony.
• TANF recipients are prohibited from using cash assistance for certain items and in certain locations.
• The new 36-month TANF time limit was enacted.
• Vehicles that are not exempt were added as countable resources.

TANF
DCF administers Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding for the State and the TANF cash assistance program. States receive TANF Block Grant funding and are asked to design and operate programs to accomplish the purposes of TANF. The four purposes of TANF are:
• Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes
• Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
• Prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies
• Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

The TANF program is the result of the 1996 Welfare to Work legislation and is a temporary program meant to serve as a bridge from poverty to employment. Employment is the cornerstone of the TANF program. TANF cash recipients are required to take part in work activities that will help them find and maintain employment and ultimately self-reliance. TANF funds are limited in their use to individuals who meet the income guidelines to qualify for TANF services.

TANF applicants are required to actively seek employment and meet all work-related requirements during the application process. Hours required to participate in employment-related activities range from job searching to short-term training and job placement. This varies based on whether it is a one- or two-parent household. Emphasis on employment and self-reliance was strengthened by DCF leadership with
the establishment of an Employment Services unit. Career Navigators provide intensive case management and work with the client to develop an individualized plan for employment.

For SFY 2015, a monthly average of 471 clients reported new employments. One of the most recent positions secured was an over-the-road truck driver for PepsiCo at 40 hours a week and $20.43 an hour.

In addition to the TANF cash assistance program, other major programs identified to receive TANF funding include: child care, employment services, Accelerating Opportunities-Kansas, Kansas Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, Kansas Reading Roadmap, Healthy marriage and fatherhood initiatives, foster care/emergency care, Communities in Schools, Jobs for America’s Graduates, Connections to Success, domestic violence/sexual assault, healthy family supports and Solutions Recovery care coordination.

SNAP
The United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides qualifying low-income households with food benefits, access to a healthy diet and education on food preparation and nutrition. In Kansas, the program is known as the Food Assistance Program. It provides crucial support to elderly households, to low-income working households, to other low-income households that include the unemployed or disabled and to households transitioning from welfare to work.

The federal SNAP work requirements were initially implemented as part of the 1996 welfare reform package. The law states that able-bodied adults without dependent children (ABAWD) are eligible for SNAP benefits three out of every 36 months unless they meet the mandated work requirement, which is a minimum of 20 hours per week or enrollment in a federally-approved job training program. Individuals 18 to 49, who are capable of work and are not pregnant and have no dependent children, are required to meet work program requirements to receive food assistance.

DCF restored these work requirements in October 2013. Able-bodied adults who did not meet the work requirement began cycling off the program in January 2014. Data has shown that as a result, the food assistance program has lower caseloads because half of able-bodied adults cycled off of food assistance within three months of restoring the work requirement. Able-bodied adult enrollment is nearly 70 percent lower today than it was immediately before restoring this work requirement. In November 2013, the number of recipients was 27,224. In November 2015, that number had decreased to 7,511. Higher work participation for able-bodied adults on food assistance who were working nearly tripled after restoring work requirements, and nearly half of all able-bodied adults who cycled off the program were employed the following quarter. The average income among working able-bodied adults who left the program in January 2014 is now above the poverty line.

DCF is in the process of expanding a limited SNAP Employment & Training program, to help food assistance clients also achieve self-reliance. Kansas receives a federal block
grant to provide this non-mandatory program. These soft-touch services are available in Atchison, Brown, Douglas, Geary, Osage, Pottawatomie, Riley and Shawnee counties. There has been success in extending the program to a few other areas of the state, specifically in southwest Kansas and federal meat inspection positions. Clients who receive both TANF cash assistance and food assistance are served through the TANF work program.

In late January, DCF will launch a new employment and training pilot program called GOALS (Generating Opportunities to Attain Lifelong Success). GOALS will help eligible Kansans receiving food assistance get on a path to successful careers that pay living wages, offer advancement opportunities and enhance their sense of value to themselves, their families and communities.

Kansas is one of 10 states awarded a competitive grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to develop and test innovative SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) strategies. The GOALS pilot program will serve approximately 4,000 food assistance recipients in 36 counties across both urban and rural areas over three years. Clients who decide to participate will be randomly assigned to one of two groups. Half the participants will receive GOALS services, and the other half will receive regular E&T services (where available) in order to compare outcomes through a comprehensive evaluation process.

GOALS services will be individualized to each client’s needs, with a Career Navigator providing guidance and support through four service phases—Stabilize, Train, Place and Sustain. GOALS will also be tailored to meet the needs of each community, using a collective impact approach to engage employers and other partners in sustainable strategies for matching participants with labor market opportunities.

Eligible participants will have a chance to access:

- A career navigator specially assigned to assist clients on a path to a better career;
- Career guidance and training based on eligibility, individual assessments and labor market demands;
- Employment supports such as child care assistance, uniform and tool payments, transportation assistance, and help with other barriers as needed, such as addiction counseling.
- Employer Liaisons dedicated to building relationships with employers and finding job opportunities;
- Continued support after employment, such as peer mentoring and problem-solving guidance.

**CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND (CCDF)**

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a comprehensive three-year plan that supports low-income families by providing access to affordable, high-quality early care and afterschool programs. It is funded thru the Administration of Children and Families’ (ACF) Office of Child Care (OCC) - Child Care and Development Block Grant Act
(CCDBG). On Nov. 19, 2014, the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 was signed into law. The reauthorized law defines health and safety requirements for child care providers, outlines new eligibility policies for child care assistance programs, expands quality improvement requirements, and provides for more transparent information for parents about the child care choices. Due to reauthorization, the Office of Child Care sent out formal notice to states extending the submission date for the FY 2016–2018 CCDF Plan to March 1, 2016. The new three-year plan period will continue to be effective through Sept. 30, 2018. Our draft plan is currently posted for public comment and a public hearing is scheduled for February 11.

Child Care Assistance
The purpose of Child Care Assistance is to enable low-income families to enter the workforce and retain employment, while providing safe and developmentally-appropriate care for children. To be eligible for child care, families must have incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty level, have a need for child care (such as the parent’s employment), and must comply with Child Support Services requirements. Families with incomes above 70 percent of the poverty level are assigned a family share toward their child care cost. Assistance is provided for children up to age 13. The current weekly work requirement for Employed Child Care Assistance is 28 hours, with exceptions for parents in education or training classes.

The Child Care Assistance program provides services primarily to the following:

- Families receiving TANF Cash Assistance, to assist with TANF work requirements and obtaining employment
- Low-income, working families. Parents must work at least 28 hours per week to be eligible for Child Care Assistance.
- Some families in education or training activities, to support their employment
- Teen parents completing high school or their GED

Child care rates are reviewed regularly through a market survey in order to form a comparison to the 75th percentile of market rates, a benchmark used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to ensure that children receiving child care have access to quality care comparable to the general population. DCF adjusted child care provider rates based on the most current market analysis completed in November 2014. This adjustment was effective with child care benefits issued for the month of January 2016. While percentiles vary based on geographic location, provider type and the age of the child served, rates were set at the statewide average of the 40th percentile. With the adjustment, maximum provider rates increased in about half of the rate categories in the state and the remainder stayed the same. DCF is investing an estimated $4.2 million annually in this adjustment.

Child Care Quality Activities
The majority of child care quality expenditures are devoted to resource and referral services, workforce development, and expanding infant and toddler care. Resource and referral programs serve as a central component of the State’s child care infrastructure. The core role of this service is to provide information to parents about child care
available in their communities and referrals to other programs in response to family needs. Other functions include maintaining a database on child care programs, building the supply and quality of child care by providing training and technical assistance to new and existing providers. Workforce development activities include face to face and online training opportunities, technical assistance and resources specific to infant and toddler caregivers. DCF also contracts for the Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program, and assists in supporting the Kansas Enrichment Network to strengthen afterschool programs.

**Kansas Early Head Start**
The Kansas Early Head Start (KEHS) program provides early interventions to enhance visits, physical and mental health education, nutrition education, social services, parental involvement and education, services for children development during their formative years, enabling parents to be better caretakers and teachers to their children. It also helps parents meet their own goals, including economic independence. Comprehensive services available to program participants include weekly home visits, job-seeking and retention support, and quality child care for parents who are working or are attending school or job training. In FY 2016, Kansas Early Head Start grants were awarded to 12 early learning programs in 40 counties, serving 865 children from birth to age four and their families.

In FY 2017, DCF will provide funding opportunities for two KEHS program model options: KEHS Home Visitation with TANF funding; and KEHS-Child Care Partnerships through Child Care Development Funds (CCDF). The two service options will increase KEHS grantees’ ability to meet their individual community needs, determined by their community needs assessments, increase infant-toddler enrollment slots, and increase the quality of child care in their service areas. The Head Start Collaboration Office within DCF strives to improve the coordination of policies and initiatives among early childhood programs within the state.

**Quality Rating Improvement System**
A Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is a systematic framework for evaluating, improving and communicating the level of quality in early and school-age care settings. It provides opportunities to improve quality of care, parents’ understanding of quality care, professional development of child care providers and links funding and services of the State early learning system.

DCF is strategically developing a statewide network to increase the quality of child care in Kansas. It is our goal to create a sustainable system, recognizing and utilizing our current early childhood systems. We are coordinating with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), using our licensing requirements as our base. A qualified early learning workforce benefits not only the children in these programs, but also businesses. Parents are more productive employees knowing their children are in quality child care settings. According to the Institute of a Competitive Workforce, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, article, “Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education”, it encourages states to implement a QRIS to support early learning. Through a QRIS, parents and policymakers know which programs meet quality
standards. Through this system, it is our goal to increase the number of quality settings offering families a safe place for their children to learn and grow. This effort also further supports the State’s work to comply with the new requirements within the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014.

**Family Services: Faith-based and Community Initiatives (FBCI)**
FBCI builds public-private partnerships to enhance the capacity of local organizations to provide services to strengthen Kansas families through DCF’s Healthy Families and Fatherhood and Family Strengthening programs.

**Human Trafficking**
FBCI builds collaboration across State agencies and in local communities for the prevention, intervention and care of child victims of human trafficking. Local organizations have received technical assistance that has helped enhance programs to assist victims and vulnerable youth.

FBCI has conducted research, training and raised the level of awareness of the child welfare response to the commercial exploitation of children. FBCI has trained 400 staff from DCF, Saint Francis Community Services and KVC Behavioral Healthcare and more than 500 leaders across the state to combat human trafficking.

**Kansas Community Leadership Enterprise (KCLE)**
In 2015, KCLE was launched to bring together 240 leaders in 17 city-groups in the four DCF regions. These city leaders participated in leadership development training. The goal was to address the specific needs in a community and formulate a plan to combat various social issues such as poverty and child abuse. FBCI provided ongoing technical assistance to the 10 community projects established in 2015. One example of a community project developed from KCLE is Impact Wednesday in Kansas City, Kan. that is helping area families obtain the resources needed to escape homelessness and poverty. It provides a one-stop location for families to meet with 14 community-based organizations that specialize in housing, employment, job creation, healthy relationships and education. An estimated 120 families have been served, including 350 children.

**Adoption Recruitment**
FBCI continues to collaborate with community-based organizations and churches in mobilizing Kansans to support families and children involved in the child welfare system. Some of the organizations that FBCI is collaborating with include GO Project, Lifeline Children’s Services, Project Belong, What if the Church, Elevate KC and YouThrive in expanding systems of support for families across the state. DCF anticipates engaging 167 support families in 2016. An example of how these relationships are serving Kansas families—the Care Portal was developed by the GO Project, to pair churches with families and children in the child welfare system. Currently 71 churches are engaged. As of Jan. 4, 292 tangible needs have been met, with a value of $68,000.

**Hope for the Holidays**
FBCI launched Hope for the Holidays in 2015, to provide an opportunity for individuals, businesses, community organizations and churches to meet practical needs of youth in
DCF’s Independent Living program (youth ages 18-23, formerly in foster care). A total of 291 youth benefitted from this initiative, representing all four DCF regions.

**HOPE Mentoring**

In January 2016, Governor Sam Brownback launched the HOPE Mentoring program. Led by Jim Echols, HOPE Mentoring is a new initiative to help Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients and youth preparing to age out of foster care to become more self-reliant.

The goal is to pair 1,100 TANF clients with volunteer mentors. In July, the agency will roll-out the program as it pertains to youth in foster care. The goal is to pair 90 youth aging out of care with a mentor.

HOPE Mentoring is closely modeled after the successful Kansas Department for Corrections program, Mentoring 4 Success, which supports the reentry of offenders into Kansas communities. It has reduced recidivism among participants.

**Fatherhood and Family Strengthening**

*Volunteer Community Fathering Training*

FBCI is providing “train the trainer” to community leaders for work with fathers who are in poverty or in other challenging situations that impact their fatherhood engagement. Two curricula are being trained: Strong Dads (designed for men with children through age five) and Quenching the Father Thirst (designed for men with children of any age). The 50 volunteers completing the training have each committed to train a group of six men, impacting 300 families.

**Family Services: Child Support Services (CSS)**

CSS operates under Title IV-D of the federal Social Security Act and has two purposes: to promote long-term financial stability for households with children, and ease the public assistance burden caused when children are not supported by both parents. CSS oversees a $34.6 million ($42.9 million, with IT costs) budget (FY 2016).

Currently, CSS provides the following services at low or no cost to service recipients:

- Locating non-custodial parents and their assets;
- Establishing parentage, as needed;
- Establishing child support orders, including health insurance coverage;
- Ensuring regular child support payments through income withholding orders;
- Enforcing child support through administrative actions such as passport denial, interception of tax refunds and lottery winnings, deductions from unemployment benefits, sanctions against recreational licenses and driver’s licenses;
- Enforcing past due child support through court actions, such as garnishment and contempt;
- Using inter-governmental resources when part of the family lives or works in a different state, tribal jurisdiction, or country;
- Modifying ongoing child support orders as needed, to reflect the child’s current needs and both parents’ ability to provide support; and
• Receiving and disbursing support payments through a statewide unit, the Kansas Payment Center (KPC).

The majority of these services require attorney involvement. CSS contractor attorneys are directly involved in the establishment, enforcement and modification of all child support orders in more than 135,000 cases administered by DCF.

By performing these services, CSS helps families become or remain independent of public assistance, which in turn allows the State to manage public resources effectively on behalf of all Kansans. Last federal fiscal year, CSS collected almost $200 million for Kansas families. In July 2015, CSS began assisting food assistance recipients with their child support cases statewide as well.

Kansas privatized its full-service operations in September 2013, to better assist families and reduce taxpayer costs. The first year’s goal was to increase the cost-effectiveness ratio. It went from $4.12 to $5.89 collected per dollar expended in one federal fiscal year. The second year’s goal was to increase the amount of cases with child support orders. And this past year, CSS improved the cases with child support order rate from 82.5 percent to 87.7 percent. The next year is devoted to increasing child support collections. CSS works with the following full-service privatization contractors by judicial district:

- YoungWilliams
- Veritas HHS
- Sunflower Child Support Services
- 18th Judicial District Court Trustee

CSS has two other main contracts, one for the child support call center with MAXIMUS and one with YoungWilliams for the Kansas Payment Center (KPC). The call center answers all child support questions, and the KPC receives and distributes all child support payments in the state.

The main initiative for CSS has been the State arrears incentive programs. CSS will make an adjustment toward State arrears for the following incentives:

- Completion of GED, tech ed/vocational training, two-year degree, bachelor’s degree
- Child Support Savings Initiative (529 savings account)
- Preapproved educational classes (fatherhood, parenting, financial and workforce)

CSS manages grants to five Kansas organizations with training and technical assistance to adapt Connects to Success’ federally-funded program. The Kansas Work for Success program is currently operating a pilot program in five areas around the state with the goal of assisting parents in achieving a livable wage for their families and strengthen bonds with their children.

In August 2015, CSS launched a media campaign to promote new-hire reporting. By law, employers must report new hires who reside or work in Kansas to the Kansas
Department of Labor within 20 days, for the purpose of withholding income to meet any child support obligations the new employee may have. In Kansas, more than 70 percent of money collected for child support comes from income withheld from the employers.

To further increase collections, CSS also announced in 2015 a new convenient way to make child support payments. By visiting the PayNearMe website, non-custodial parents can request a payment code that allows them to submit their child support payment with cash at more than 85 locations in the state at any time of the day, such as Family Dollar and 7-Eleven stores.

**Family Services: Rehabilitation Services (RS)**

RS offers a variety of programs to promote employment and self-sufficiency for Kansans with disabilities. RS operates a $38.2 million budget (FY2016).

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)**

VR provides services for Kansans with disabilities to obtain, maintain or regain employment in the competitive and integrated workplace.

- To be eligible for services, a person must have a physical or mental disability that results in a substantial impediment to employment, and he/she must require VR services in order to get a job.
- Services are provided by qualified VR counselors stationed in DCF offices and in partnership with private contractors and service providers.
- Services are individualized according to each person’s rehabilitation needs and employment objective. Services may include vocational assessment, counseling and guidance, job-related training, job coaching, supported employment, assistive technology, physical/mental restoration services, transition services for youth, and job placement.
- Basic VR funds are 78.7 percent federal, authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- VR assisted in finding jobs for 1,441 Kansans with disabilities in FY2015, and 627 so far in FY2016 (YTD through Jan. 18, 2016).

VR also includes a specialized program for persons who are legally blind. The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) offers them the opportunity to manage food service and vending operations in public/government facilities, including State office buildings, the State Capitol, military food service operations, and highway rest areas. BEP uses funds generated by its operations, rather than State general funds, to match federal VR dollars.

**End-Dependence Kansas**

End-Dependence Kansas is a new initiative to increase employment of Kansans with disabilities. This initiative builds on Governor Brownback’s commitment to improving opportunities for employment and self-reliance for people with disabilities. Five cabinet agencies have come together to establish this initiative. They are DCF, Kansas
Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Department of Corrections, and Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. DCF/RS serves as the lead agency. With the five agencies working together, the initiative demonstrates a collaborative approach to a single mission of helping Kansans with disabilities get and keep jobs in the community.

Over five years, $25 million will be invested so that community partners are better able to provide evidence-based employment services. A Request for Proposals will be issued this spring to give these community partners the opportunity to apply for direct service contracts to implement the initiative. End-Dependence Kansas will also be supported by a robust training, technical assistance and evaluation component. In addition, the initiative will include data-sharing across agencies to identify consumers receiving services from multiple programs, to track individual and aggregate outcomes, to measure the impact of employment in reducing the use of other benefits, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative.

This effort is expected to help an estimated 2,000 Kansans throughout the state achieve competitive, integrated employment. The initiative also promotes sustainable improvements to the quality and quantity of employment outcomes in the long term. End-Dependence Kansas will emphasize and support community partners to prioritize competitive, integrated jobs in the community rather than sheltered employment, non-work day activities or other segregated services.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Under the new WIOA, VR is a core partner in the State’s workforce system, along with the Board of Regents’ Adult Education program and the Kansas Department of Commerce’s employment services and programs. WIOA directs the core partners to work collaboratively to develop a vision, goals, strategies and performance measures to address the needs of Kansas employers and job seekers. A combined State plan has been jointly developed and will be submitted to the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education in January 2016.

WIOA also incorporates significant changes to the VR program through amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. Among these new provisions are requirements to set aside 15 percent of federal VR funds for pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities who are moving from secondary education to employment and/or additional education leading to employment. Such services may include work-based learning experiences, soft skills training needed for the workplace, job exploration counseling, and instruction in self-advocacy.

Returned Federal Funding
In August 2015, Kansas was one of 13 states that elected to return unspent federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds through a formal process established by the U.S. Department of Education. Nationally, more than $125 million was returned. Kansas returned $15 million, representing an accumulation of unspent federal funds carried over from multiple years. VR funds are 78.7 percent federal and 21.3 percent SGF. The
return of federal funds has not resulted in any restrictions on accepting referrals or applications for services or the availability of VR services for eligible individuals. There is not a waiting list for VR services. Kansas has actually received re-allotment money in past years that other states had relinquished.

The unspent federal funds, once returned, no longer require the 21.3 percent SGF match. Therefore, this action preserved SGF match dollars totaling $4,059,720 which, now can be used toward matching FFY 2016 funds for VR. This decision was the most prudent course of action to preserve the SGF to leverage future federal grant awards. If Kansas caseloads grow and the agency needs additional funds to avoid a waiting list, the funds we saved in SGF by not over matching what we can legitimately spend can be used to request re-allotment funds in the future.

Unspent federal funds may “accumulate” because of federal rules relating to match, carried-over funds and spend-out timeframes. Federal VR funds are granted annually and must be matched annually on or before Sept. 30 of the year the grant was awarded. However, once the federal funds are matched, they may be carried over for the second year (or for a total of eight quarters.) Federal rules also allow states to pay any obligations that exist at the end of the eighth quarter in the ninth quarter, which is also known as the liquidation quarter. Since the receipt of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds the spend-out timeframe has increased, resulting in the recent “bubble” of accumulated unspent federal funds.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES (DDS)
DDS makes medical disability determinations for the U.S. Social Security Administration on most Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims filed or reviewed in Kansas. DDS also works with DCF/Economic and Employment Services and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to assess medical documentation for Kansans who apply for medical assistance on the basis of disability. DDS is virtually 100 percent federally funded in that it receives only about $30,000 in SGF.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CIL)
RS administers the Centers for Independent Living program, which includes operating grants to a network of 10 Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs provide information/referral, peer counseling, independent living skills training, youth transition services, advocacy and deinstitutionalization services for people with disabilities.

In addition, RS oversees grants with community-based organizations to carry out the independent living program for older (age 55+) individuals who are blind. Services include independent living skills training, assistive technology and orientation/mobility training. Services are intended to help persons served live in their own homes and communities rather than more costly institutional settings.
RS is also required to provide support for the Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas (SILCK), in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations.

**KANSAS COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (KCDHH)**

KCDHH is established in K.S.A. 75-5391 and is overseen by a board of commissioners appointed by the Governor. KCDHH offers technical assistance, information/referral, sign language interpreter registration and coordination of interpreting services.

**Legal: Foster Home Licensing**

In July 2015, responsibilities regarding Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) and Residential Facilities was transferred from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to DCF, as part of Executive Reorganization Order No. 43.

The ERO was established to allow DCF to better monitor the entire foster care system and streamline services for Children in Need of Care, their families and foster parents. DCF has placed a strong emphasis on ensuring proper oversight of family foster homes; making sure that every foster home provides a safe and healthy environment, with qualified and caring foster parents, who will conduct themselves at all times in the best interests of the children in care.

DCF’s vision is also to expand the role of the licensing division, moving it beyond merely enforcing a minimum regulatory floor of threshold standards. DCF will lead the way in continuous quality improvement by creating initiatives to improve the environment of all foster homes. By making already good homes into great homes, all children in foster care can thrive.

DCF is now responsible for all foster care-related activity in Kansas. The agency is in the process of a complete review of the licensing program. Kansas currently has 2,802 foster homes, with a capacity to serve more than 7,500 children.