



Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight **June 26, 2024**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Ousley and Members of the Committee, my name is Jeanette Owens, and I am the Chief Child Welfare Officer at DCCCA. DCCCA has served Kansas communities, families, and children for 50 years. We provide child welfare programs including family preservation and child placing agency services. Additionally, we provide mental health and substance use disorder treatment, traffic safety, prevention, and research services. Thank you for the opportunity to share about our services today.

Child Placing Agency (CPA) Services

DCCCA provides child placing agency services which includes recruitment, training, licensing, and support service for foster families. We currently serve 443 foster homes and have 510 children in placement. We have 55 total child placing agency staff.

Kansas has 2,322 foster families statewide. The highest number of Kansas foster homes in the last four years was in May of 2020 with 2,935 families.

DCCCA recently hosted our annual Foster Parent Appreciation Conference. At this event, we were able to provide foster families with family vacation time, national training opportunities and childcare. DCCCA and DCF staff volunteered to care for more than 300 youth ranging from 6 months to 18 years of age. Additionally, DCCCA has hosted four more localized summer appreciation events for foster parents.

New DCF Licensing regulations went into effect June 7th. This brings updates, changes and enhancements to regulations that have been around for many years. DCCCA has worked diligently to inform and train staff and foster parents of the new regulations as well as assist staff and families with the changes including purchasing \$12,000 worth of fire extinguishers.

We Kan Drive

We Kan Drive is a program that helps to remove the barriers youth in foster care and independent living face when working towards obtaining their driver's license. DCCCA provides educational and financial support to help teens and young adults.

Since November 2021, We Kan Drive has provided services for nearly 600 youth in Kansas. We Kan Drive enrolled 392 youth in Driver's Education courses, purchased auto insurance policies for 107 youth, and supported 187 youth in obtaining some form of licensure. We Kan Drive aims to continue to exceed program goals each year and has received an additional 387 referrals since expanding statewide in November of 2023.

DCCCA is offering these youth a new opportunity this month where they can attend B.R.A.K.E.S (Be Responsible And Keep Everyone Safe). The primary goal of this class is to prevent injuries and save lives by training and educating teenage drivers and their caregivers about the importance of safe and responsible driving. Youth that have participated in this class are approximately 64% less likely to be in a car crash their first three years of driving.

Post-Adoption Support Services

DCCCA provides post-adoption support services statewide to families that have adopted a child or children. Respite, trainings and support group, as well as in-home therapy services are resources adoptive families can now access. DCCCA has served over fifty post-adoption families during this past year. In the past quarter (January-March 2024) there have been 14 families provided respite care.

Family Preservation Services

DCCCA provides family preservation services for the five counties in the Kansas City region and 10 counties in the Wichita region. Our Family Preservation services focus specifically on providing voluntary in-home support for families with a child at risk of entering out of home placement.

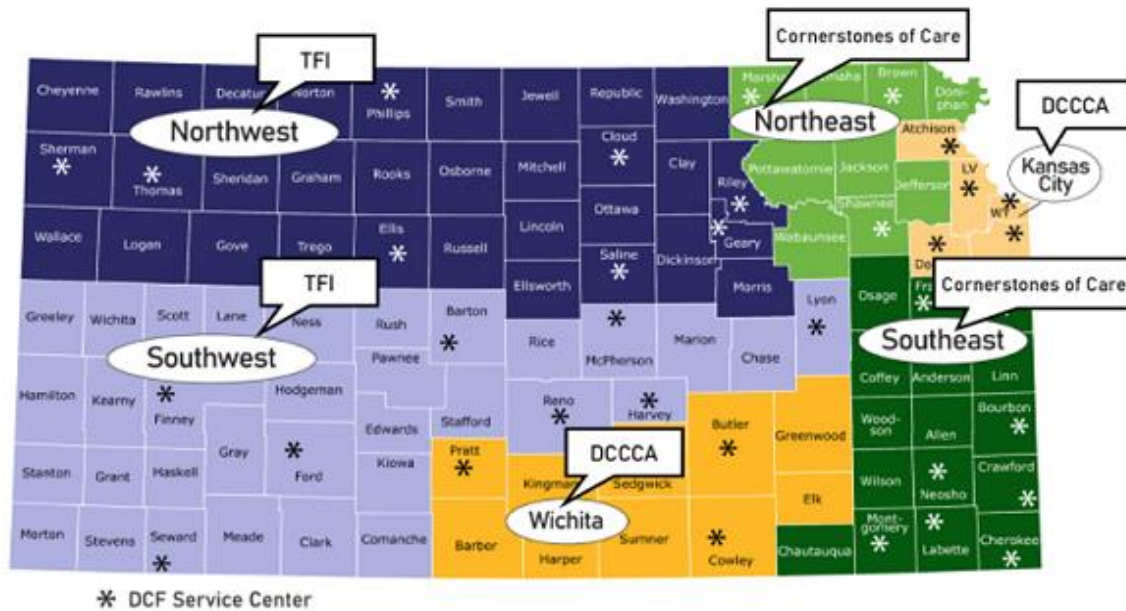
Newly awarded Family Preservation contracts will start July 1, 2024. The new contracts were awarded to the existing contractors with several updates and changes. We are excited about the contracts and the additional funding being added to Family Preservation services for the first time in over twenty-five years.

DCCCA will continue to use evidenced based practice Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) and add evidenced based practice Functional Family Therapy. DCCCA also is working in collaboration with DCF and the Foster Care Case Management Providers to enhance systems utilizing the Kansas Practice Model. Another area of focus is staff training and strategically scheduling designated weeks to assist with enhanced learning.

DCCCA currently has 207 active family preservation families in our services with 343 children in those families. We have 64 family preservation staff including therapists, case managers, support workers and administration staff. Our current average caseload for Tier 1 is 3 families. Our Tier 2 current average caseloads are 10.5 families in both regions. It is

important to note that caseloads sizes vary based on referrals received as well as open staff positions.

Family Preservation in DCF Regions



Staff Retention

DCCCA recognizes that our most valuable resource is our staff. We continue to seek feedback regularly to make updates that provide support and tools for better services. DCCCA continues to provide 24/7 access to their supervisor for all of our child welfare program staff. Staff share this allows them to have support when needed and reduces concern that they are on their own in decision making.

DCCCA recently purchased 3 additional NeuroOptimal systems for staff to use. NeuroOptimal is an advanced neurotechnology designed to train the brain to function at peak performance levels. Staff that have used this technology continue to express the significant positive impact that the system has made on their well-being.

DCCCA child welfare programs staff retention rate through May is 61%. DCCCA continues to focus on staff retention and workforce needs.

Continued Area of Need:

Access to Resources:

Similar to past testimony, one of the most difficult barriers for our families is timely access to mental health services and other community resources. The crisis needs of youth in the system require timely access to therapy and other services before a family can reach

stabilization. We are excited for Medicaid codes opening to additional providers in July allowing more access and choice for children and families.

Thank you for your time. We appreciate the invitation to join today's conversation and we appreciate the commitment to improving the lives of Kansas children.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Owens
DCCCA, Inc. Chief Child Welfare Officer
3312 Clinton Parkway Lawrence, KS 66047
jowens@dccca.org

Questions may also be directed to:
Stuart Little, Little Relations, stuartjlittle@mac.com