



Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight
June 26, 2024

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Minority Member Ousley and members of the Committee:

My name is Angela Hedrick, Vice President of the nonprofit KVC Kansas. Our case managers, therapists, and other helping professionals appreciate the opportunity to serve as the state's foster care case management provider in two of the eight catchment areas.

About KVC Kansas

KVC Kansas is a nonprofit organization founded over 50 years ago in Wyandotte County. KVC has been a continuous foster care case management provider for the past 27 years. Today, we are a team of 450 child welfare and mental health professionals committed to strengthening families, preventing child abuse and neglect, and helping both children and adults achieve mental wellness. We provide prevention services, foster care case management, outpatient mental health and substance abuse recovery services, residential treatment, and child placing agency services. We are the case management grantee organization for foster care in catchment areas 3 and 6; serving Kansas City, Lawrence, Topeka, Hiawatha, and surrounding counties. Our team of professionals are grateful for the opportunity to continue serving families in both areas as we move into the new contract period with DCF beginning July 1st.

Kansas Child Welfare System Status Update

The number of children experiencing foster care in Kansas continues to trend downward, averaging just under 6,000 children in foster care across our state – the lowest number since 2014. Area 3 which includes Shawnee County and the surrounding rural counties north to the state border has achieved a need for foster care below 900. Increased prevention programming circumvents the need for foster care and helps keep families safely together. This has led to more children achieving permanency than entering out-of-home care. Continuing to increase our focus on early intervention and support will not only improve children's lives but also strengthen Kansas communities and families for generations to come. This is what's best for Kansas families and benefits our workforce by reducing unnecessary strain on the system.

KVC is on track for a successful start to the new foster care contracts that begin on July 1st. We are excited about reducing caseloads for case managers and supervisors and have been busy hiring open positions to meet lower ratios. We will continue to provide substance use disorder treatment and batterer's intervention services. We will also expand our Kinship exploration and support services, and increase our training support for staff. These services are vital to supporting families as they resolve the safety concerns that sometimes necessitate out of home care.



Referral and Permanencies (past 12 months)

# of Referrals	645 children
Permanencies: Total	695 children
Adoption	201 children
Aged Out	108 youth
Reintegration	359 children
Custodianship	9 children
Other	18 children

Youth legally free for adoption: 331. Youth are featured on <http://adoption.kvc.org> and www.adoptkids.org.

Data on Youth in Offices Overnight

Since the last JCCWSO meeting, KVC Kansas has had six occurrences of youth overnight in an office. Our KVC team continues to work diligently to ensure that every youth has a safe, stable placement.

Month	Number of youth, number of nights	Reason for overnight office stay
April 2024	5 youth	Placement found for three youth but they refused to go to placement, 1 placement not found, and 1 placement found at 11:00 and 3 hours away from office with an early morning pick up- decided not in youth's best interest
May 2024	1 youth	Placement found, youth refused to go
June 2024 (through 6.12.24)	0	

Data on Caseload Sizes

KVC Kansas remains within the DCF caseload guidelines of no more than 30 children assigned to a single case manager (1:30). Currently, our own staffing pattern is based on a caseload ratio of 15 children assigned to a permanency case manager (1:15), 25 children assigned to an adoption worker (1:25), and 28 children assigned to an aftercare worker (1:28). As KVC prepares for new foster care contracts to begin on July 1st, we are excited about the ability to reduce caseloads even further. In line with KVC's proposal for contracts beginning July 1st, caseloads will reduce to 1:13 for Reintegration, 1:20 for Adoption, and 1:23 for Aftercare. KVC is also able to improve our supervisor to staff ratio to 1:6 (previously averaging 1:8).



Kansas City (catchment area 6)

Reunification cases **(within DCF and KVC set caseload limits)**

Individual CM – 15.8

Team – 32

Adoption cases **(within DCF and KVC set caseload limits)**

Individual CM – 21.8

Aftercare cases **(within DCF and KVC set caseload limits)**

Individual CM – 20.7

East (catchment area 3)

Reunification cases **(within DCF and KVC set caseload limits)**

Individual CM – 16

Team – 36.9

Adoption cases **(within DCF and KVC set caseload limits)**

Individual CM – 16.8

Team – 53

Aftercare cases **(within DCF and KVC set caseload limits)**

Individual CM – 30.5

Data on Missing and Runaway Youth

- KVC Kansas has two full-time Missing Youth Specialists (MYS) who work to engage all youth who are at risk for running behavior. MYS have small caseloads so they can spend time with youth building relationships and preventing future runs.
- On average, of the 1,460 youth in KVC programming, there are 12-15 youth who are missing or have temporarily run away daily (approx. 1% or less, consistent with the national average)

Workforce Recruitment, Retention, and Safety

KVC Kansas staff retention rates for FY24 remain strong and on track with FY23 rates; KVC Kansas ended FY23 with 80.9% employee retention and is currently at 78% for FY24 (compared to typical child welfare retention rates closer to 60%). Staff retention preserves critical knowledge and expertise in the workforce while also ensuring children and families receive consistent, high-quality care and do not experience a change in workers while receiving services.



KVC Kansas continues to collaborate with Gallup on employee engagement strategies and routinely survey staff about their work experience using State of the Team meetings through the year to act on areas of need to improve employee experience and strengthen engagement. Our most recent employee engagement survey concluded June 25. Agency-wide we are seeing positive results in terms of employees feeling heard, conversations occurring, and goals setting. We are focused on improving the progress made towards those goals throughout the year.

KVC supervisors continue to participate in KanCoach training cohorts and are excited as this opportunity expands to leaders in other departments including Child Placing Agency staff and administrators. The KanCoach curriculum and the monthly ‘Boss to Coach’ training and support sessions offered by KVC Engagement Champions complement each other very well in our effort to provide professional development and leadership growth opportunities to those in supervisory roles.

Settlement Performance

The 2024 settlement audit case file reads with DCF and the Settlement Administrator (The Neutral) are currently in progress. Prior to the current settlement audit reads beginning, KVC implemented our own internal audit practices that replicate those completed by the settlement auditors. KVC’s quality assurance and performance improvement team gathered information from DCF regarding the settlement audit questions and developed our own internal audit process to measure progress on each item quarterly. Performance on our quarterly internal replicated audit is reviewed with program staff so continued improvements can be made along the way.

With the new foster care contracts starting July 1st, KVC will expand our Outpatient Behavioral Health Services Department’s role in completing assessments. Currently, Outpatient Department completes all initial assessments. Starting July 1st, they will begin completing all follow-up assessments as well. This is expected to improve timeliness and consistency in completing all assessments throughout a case’s life and narrowing the pool of assessors to ensure they are fully qualified. The chart below demonstrates our progress towards this goal based on our internal measures.

KVC Kansas Settlement Data: Initial Mental Health and Trauma Screens Completed Within 30 Days Upon Each Entry into the Foster Care System (February 2024 - May 2024)		
February 2024		
Percent of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	100%	100%
Number of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	19 youth	49 youth

March 2024		
Percent of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	100%	100%
Number of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	10 youth	26 youth
April 2024		
Percent of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	100%	100%
Number of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	32 youth	28 youth
May 2024		
Percent of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	DCF reviewing data	DCF reviewing data
Number of youth who received an initial mental health and trauma screen within 30 days	12 youth	32 youth

Innovative Programming

Increasing Therapeutic Family Foster Homes through Mockingbird Family Model

KVC is thrilled to be a recipient of grant funding from the Kansas Department for Children and Families to support the development of therapeutic family foster homes.

This grant opportunity allows KVC to implement the Mockingbird Family Model and attendant care services, aimed at increasing the capacity of therapeutic family foster homes, general care licensed foster homes, licensed nonrelated kin homes, relatives (irrespective of licensure status), and biological parents. Our primary goals include reducing unnecessary foster care placements, facilitating timely legal permanency for children in care, and preventing the need for residential placements, all while promoting greater stability within these familial settings.

Utilizing the Mockingbird Family Model, KVC will recruit and support foster home constellations, with each constellation comprising a maximum of 11 families, including 10 foster homes and 1 Hub Home. Each constellation will feature homes equipped to provide placements for varying care levels. This model offers foster families a robust, organic support network that empowers them with the confidence and





resources to care for youth with higher needs. Plus, this model aims to retain existing families caring for high acuity youth and attract new families willing to provide therapeutic-level care.

The Hub Home serves as the core of each constellation, offering essential support to the other homes. It cultivates a sense of community by organizing social events that encourage peer interaction and caregiver support. Additionally, it provides planned and emergency mentorship, 24/7/365 respite care, assistance with navigating systems and accessing community resources, and ensures children's overall safety, permanency, and wellbeing.

With the presence of a compensated Hub Home, families gain access to consistent support, mentorship, and reliable respite care without feeling like they are imposing. Families will also benefit from support provided by other homes within their constellation and two full-time attendant care workers. These attendant care workers can provide up to 20 hours of in-home behavior management support each week.

When families connect with other homes within their constellation, they expand their support network and cultivate natural relationships. This connection gives them access to support and experience beyond the child welfare and mental health workforce. The Mockingbird Family Model supplements existing systems with an innovative solution, offering more structure and ease in accessing support and expertise beyond traditional professional roles.

We recognize the transformative impact of this innovative program and are committed to expanding these services to a broader demographic once we successfully establish initial capacity. Our long-term vision is to extend this vital support to more families in need, enriching and enhancing the lives of many more children and caregivers across the communities we serve.

2Generation Program: Community-Based Services for Families

KVC is proud to have been selected as a grantee to implement the 2Generation Program, this means we'll be providing prevention-based services and support to improve the health, social, and economic outcomes for children and families in 27 eastern Kansas counties. This work will begin July 1, 2024. The 2Gen Program is specifically designed to address common barriers to accessing support services, such as transportation, internet access, work schedules and childcare challenges. This comprehensive program offers one-on-one, in-home, virtual, and group interventions tailored for at-risk families.

2Generation goes beyond simply education, equipping families with essential resources and referrals to address the underlying risk factors contributing to poverty.



**Announcing 2Gen Program Grant
to Empower Kansas Families
for Generations**

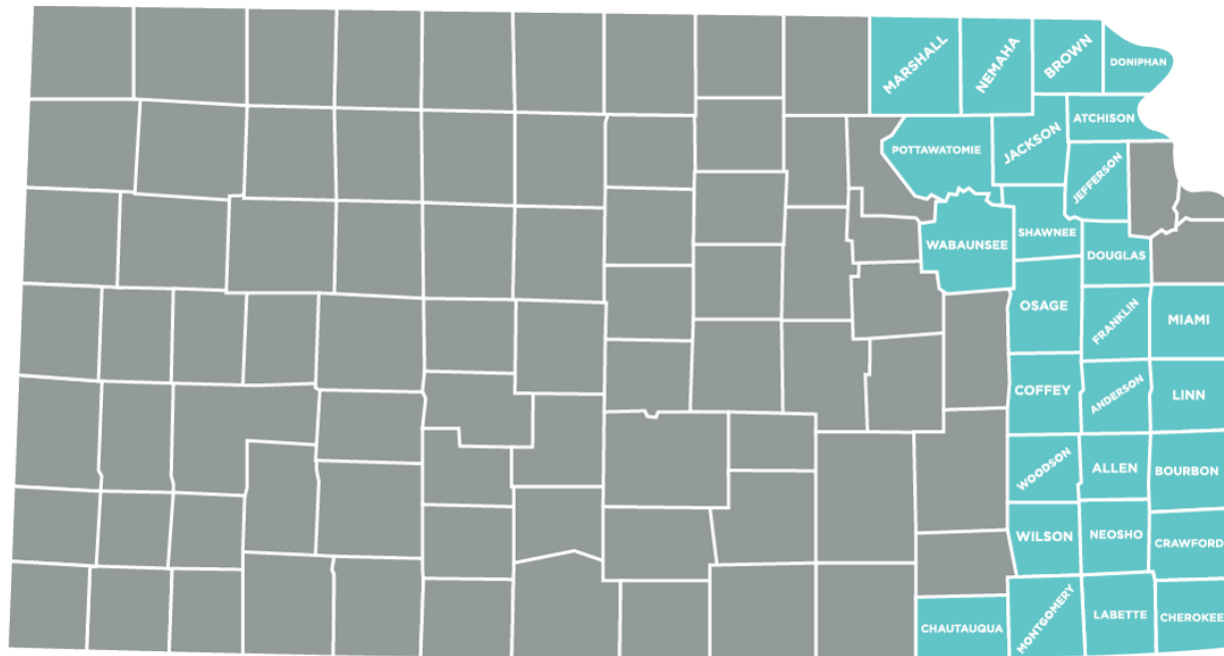


Through KVC's Family Navigators, families benefit from:

- Individualized support services lasting 3-6 months.
- Personalized service plans covering financial literacy, healthy relationships, protective factors, and parenting skills.
- Connections local behavioral health service providers for any identified needs.
- Crisis stabilization services as needed.

Those 27 eastern Kansas counties include Allen, Anderson, Atchison, Bourbon, Brown, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Crawford, Doniphan, Douglas, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Labette, Linn, Marshall, Miami, Montgomery, Nemaha, Neosho, Osage, Pottawatomie, Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Wilson, and Woodson. See the map below.

KVC Kansas' 2Gen Program Service Area



The 2Gen Approach, led by Ascend at the Aspen Institute, aims to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by supporting both children and their parents or caregivers as a cohesive family unit. In our program, we'll offer one-on-one, in-home, virtual, and group interventions, providing families with essential resources and referrals to address underlying risk factors contributing to poverty.

We are excited about this opportunity to expand KVC's community-based prevention services and look forward to the impact we can make in helping families thrive for generations to come! Find more information about KVC Kansas' 2Generation Program at kvckansas.org/2Gen.



SOUL Family Legal Permanency Option

KVC Kansas is excited to help our child welfare system in Kansas move forward with the implementation SOUL Family as a legal permanency option. Kansas is the first state in the nation to provide this permanency option to youth in foster care. HB2536 allows for the establishment of SOUL Family Legal Permanency as a new permanency option for youth in foster care who are 16 years and older. This adds a fifth legal option to Kansas's existing continuum of permanency options of reintegration, legal guardianship, adoption and APPLA (another planned permanent living arrangement). New statutes will be set out in the Kansas Child in Need of Care ("CINC") Code (K.S.A. 38-2201 et seq).

This new permanency option officially goes into effect through legislation and applicable DCF policy changes on July 1st. KVC Kansas is working diligently to identify youth who may be a good fit for reaching permanency through SOUL. Our staff are also participating in DCF led trainings to educate themselves on the requirements and benefits of reaching permanency in this way. Click [HERE](#) to read more about SOUL Family Permanency in a KVC Kansas Blog post.

KVC is honored to continue providing foster care case management service in Areas 3 and 6 within the new DCF contract period starting July 1st and we're excited at the opportunity to implement new and innovative programming in fiscal year 2025 to support youth, caregivers and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and I welcome any questions you may have.