



Keys for Networking, Inc.

Kansas Parent Information and Resource Center • www.keys.org

The State Organization of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

Testimony Presented to the House Education Committee,
March 16, 2020

By Dr. Jane Adams, Executive Director, Keys for Networking

Chairman Huebert and Members of the House Education Committee. I am here to provide you information regarding SB384.

I am Jane Adams, the Director of Keys for Networking, a statewide family organization for parents and their children who have severe emotional behavioral problems or who are at high risk of those problems. Keys provides information to parents and youth. We support Kansas youth and parents to use the information to secure services in the areas of education, foster care, juvenile justice, mental health.

I testify today to provide information to support the Kansas Senate approved legislation last Thursday requiring DCF and KSDE to compile an annual academic report card on children in foster care. If passed into law, the Kansas State Department of Education and the Kansas Department for Children and Families would report on high school graduations, standardized test scores, suspensions or expulsions and enrollment in at-risk programs of foster children in accredited public and private schools.

I believe the tasks of SB384 are both needed and doable. With a subcontract through Kansas Kids@GEAR UP, Wichita State University, Keys currently procures transcripts and grade cards of each foster child enrolled in GEAR UP. Keys staff analyze the transcripts to assure students are on track to graduate through SB 23 which allows them to use 21 credits. We send the analysis, see attached to the GEAR UP staff, school counselors, and this year foster care/educational coordinators to share with the student. The student letter shows current status, courses we recommend for enrollment in the current semester and repeated requests to contact us if the document is incorrect.

Our experience with Kansas KIDS@GEAR UP has taught us that the majority of youth in foster care need management of their paperwork (transcripts and grade cards) interventions that include assuring that youth are in the correct classes, do not repeat courses unnecessarily, enroll in core classes instead of electives, and that coursework and credits follow them through their moves from place to place. Many children need special education services, mental health supports, tutoring, encouragement to consider college and finish high school. We find that there is a direct correlation between the number of moves and failure to complete high school.

Our interventions to assist youth to complete the work of high school and allow the GEAR UP staff statewide to focus on helping unidentified scholars focus on post-secondary schools and transition to them.

Together with GEAR UP, we are making an impact and can show that the graduation rate of youth in foster care who are enrolled in GEAR UP is between 77 and 80%. We use continuous individualized monitoring of each youth's progress. We intervene directly with the schools for individual youth. The schools welcome us. We provide essential information to them and we share records on request. We capture much but not all the information in SB 3e Bill.84. We have not, to date, captured all of it such as attendance, standardized test scores or suspensions and expulsions. We could and we look forward to helping DCF and KSDE meet the requirements of SB 384.