



FOSTER CARE 101

LAURA HOWARD, SECRETARY KANSAS DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
FOSTER CARE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE - AUGUST 25, 2020



OVERVIEW



THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

What is the “child welfare system” and who is involved?



REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION

Who takes and investigates reports of child abuse/neglect?



PREVENTION SERVICES

What programs exist to keep youth out of foster care?



FOSTER CARE

How do youth come into state custody and how are they cared for?



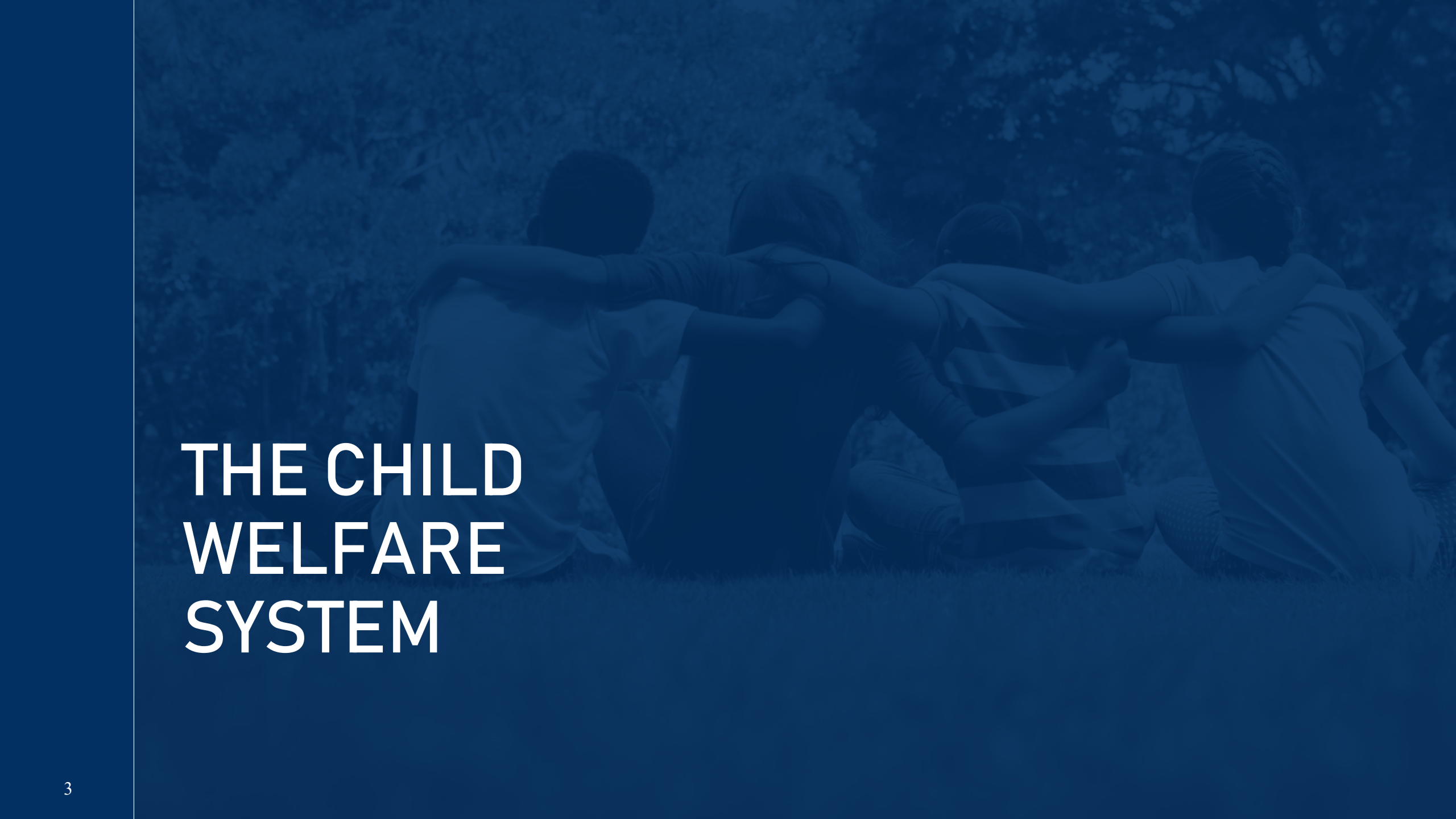
AGING OUT

What happens to foster youth that become adults while in state custody?



MOVING FORWARD

What is DCF’s vision moving forward?

A group of children sitting in a circle on grass, hugging each other, with a blue overlay.

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM



OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM



Child welfare begins in the...

COMMUNITY

...with primary prevention.



OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DCF PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

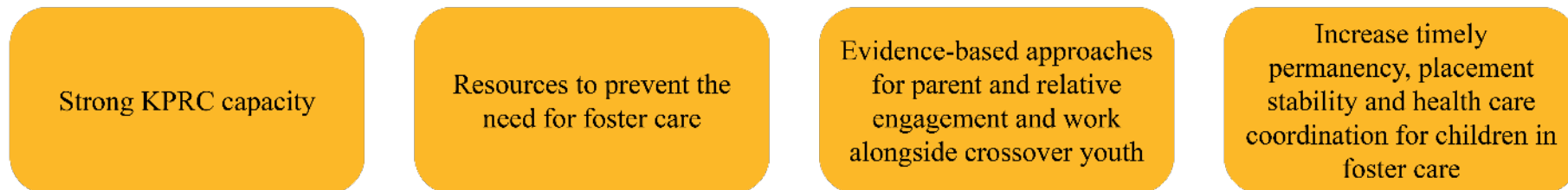


PARTNERS



STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

Strong safety, resiliency and prevention networks





OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Child welfare efforts are made possible by our **FOUNDATION.**

Strong Workforce:

Recruit and develop child welfare workforce partnerships and practice implementation

Informed Decisions:

Outcomes-based, safety- and data-informed alongside families in communities

Evidence-Based Practice that Engages Families:

Mental Health, Substance Use, Parent Skill Building, Kinship Navigation

Our strategies for protecting children lead to our **GOALS AND SUCCESS FACTORS**



- Timely and consistent report screening, safety assessment and planning alongside families



- Collaborate to implement evidence-based prevention and child welfare programs
- Support families, relatives and youth to navigate systems for access to meaningful resources
- Increase children placed with relatives
- Collaborate to remove barriers to legal permanency



- Amplify university partnership for practicums and increase recruiting and job advertisement media



THE KANSAS PROTECTION REPORT CENTER



- The Kansas Protection Report Center (KPRC) is the entity responsible for taking reports of alleged child abuse/neglect in the state of Kansas
- Receives reports of alleged abuse/neglect 24 hours-per-day 7-days-per-week
- Reports are made via the toll free phone-number, web intake, fax, and mail
 - Phone: 1-800-922-5330



REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION



REPORTING

- Reports received by the KPRC are evaluated by Intake Specialists
- Intake Specialists consider the contents of the report and safety/risk factors to form an initial assessment decision using Structured Decision Making
- Initial assessment decisions must be made within a half working day of the report being received
- Reports are either:
 - Assigned for investigation
 - Not assigned for further assessment



A report is made to Kansas Protection Report Center (KPRC). An intake protection specialist uses Structured Decision Making (SDM) to determine the assignment of the report.



Report is dispatched to DCF Regional Service Center if it meets all criteria of abuse/neglect or family in need of assessment (FINA).



The report is assigned to a Child Protection Specialist (CPS) to visit and assess family.



CPS and family work together to find the best solution for their problem or prevent the child from entering foster care.



MANDATED REPORTERS

- Anyone who suspects a child may be a victim of abuse/neglect can make a report to the KPRC, but some professionals are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect
- This includes but is not limited to:
 - Persons providing medical care
 - Persons licensed by the state to provide mental health services
 - Teachers
 - Child care providers
 - Firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency services personnel



INVESTIGATION

- The KPRC received 66,525 reports of alleged child abuse/neglect in FY 2020
- 37,940 of these reports (57%) were assigned for investigation
- Reports meeting criteria for investigation are assigned with one of the following assignment types:
 - Abuse/Neglect – physical abuse, physical neglect or sexual abuse
 - Family in Need of Assessment (FINA) – child with challenging behavior or not attending school





INVESTIGATION

- Investigations must be conducted within certain timeframes based on assignment type and facts of the case
- Reports of abuse/neglect must be responded to within either the same day or 72 hours depending on the severity of the report
- Family in Need of Assessment reports are assigned a 7 working-day response unless the case involves an infant positive for substance, a child under the age of one, or a report of a child engaging in self-harming behaviors
- In FY 2020, 94.1% of reports assigned had a timely contact with the victim/family





INVESTIGATION

Child Protective Services staff investigate reports.

Investigatory activities may include:

- Interviews with the reporter and witnesses
- Interviews with the child victim
- Interviews with family members
- Interviews with the alleged perpetrator
- Visiting the scene of alleged maltreatment
- Collection and review of records
- Making and documenting behavioral observations





INVESTIGATION

- After the completion of an investigation a determination is made as to the allegations made in the initial report to the KPRC
- Additionally, an assessment is completed with the family to determine if a referral to community-based or prevention services would be beneficial
- In FY 2020 93.1% of reports investigated were unsubstantiated
- If there are reasonable grounds to believe abuse or neglect occurred DCF must take steps to protect the child(ren)'s well being



A family of four is sitting on a light-colored sofa in a bright, modern living room. A man on the left is looking at a tablet held by a woman in the center. A young boy is sitting between them, also looking at the tablet. A woman on the right is looking down at a book or document. The scene is warm and positive, suggesting a family engaged in a shared activity or learning.

PREVENTION SERVICES



PREVENTION SERVICES

Family Preservation

- Four grantees
 - DCCCA (KC and Wichita)
 - TFI Family Services (West)
 - Cornerstones of Care (East)
- Two tiers of service to meet unique needs of each family

Family First Prevention Services

- 18 grantees
 - Mental Health
 - Substance Use Disorder
 - Kinship Navigation
 - Parent Skill Building
- Evidence-based programs
- 50/50 funding match from federal partners



FOSTER CARE



- DCF does not remove children or decide to take children into state custody
- Only law enforcement and the court have the ability to remove a child from a parent's custody
- If DCF determines it is not possible to protect a child through services it must recommend that the county or district attorney file a Child In Need of Care, or "CINC," petition

ENTRY INTO FOSTER CARE



- Temporary custody hearing held within 72 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) after CINC petition filing to determine if the child shall remain in the home or come into DCF custody
- An adjudication hearing to formally find the child of being “in need of care” usually must be held within 60 days of the filing of a CINC petition
 - The state’s burden of proof is clear and convincing evidence

ENTRY INTO FOSTER CARE



- After a child has come into state care they will be placed in the setting most appropriate for their individual needs
- Placements are reimbursed by DCF based on the type and intensity of care they provide
- Types of placements include:
 - Family foster home
 - Relative placement
 - Residential facilities
 - Emergency shelters
 - QRTPs
 - Staff secure facilities

FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS



In FY 2020, among youth in out of home placement...

- ~ 51.8% were placed in a family foster home
- ~ 34% were placed with a relative
- ~ 8.4% were placed in a group or residential home



**FOSTER CARE
PLACEMENTS**



CASE PLANS

- After a child is adjudicated to be a CINC, a disposition hearing is held in which the court will set the case plan goal for the child
- Following disposition, courts must have permanency hearings to evaluate progress towards case plan goals at a minimum of every 12 months
 - The court will continue to have final say over the child's case plan
- Case plan goals include: reintegration with the family, permanent guardianship/adoption, and other planned permanent living arrangements (OPPLA)



- Foster Care Case Management grantees work with to support families, manage individual cases, and achieve case plan goals
- Four case management grantees:
 - Saint Francis Ministries
 - KVC Health Systems, Inc.
 - TFI Family Services
 - Cornerstones of Care

FOSTER CARE CASE MANAGEMENT



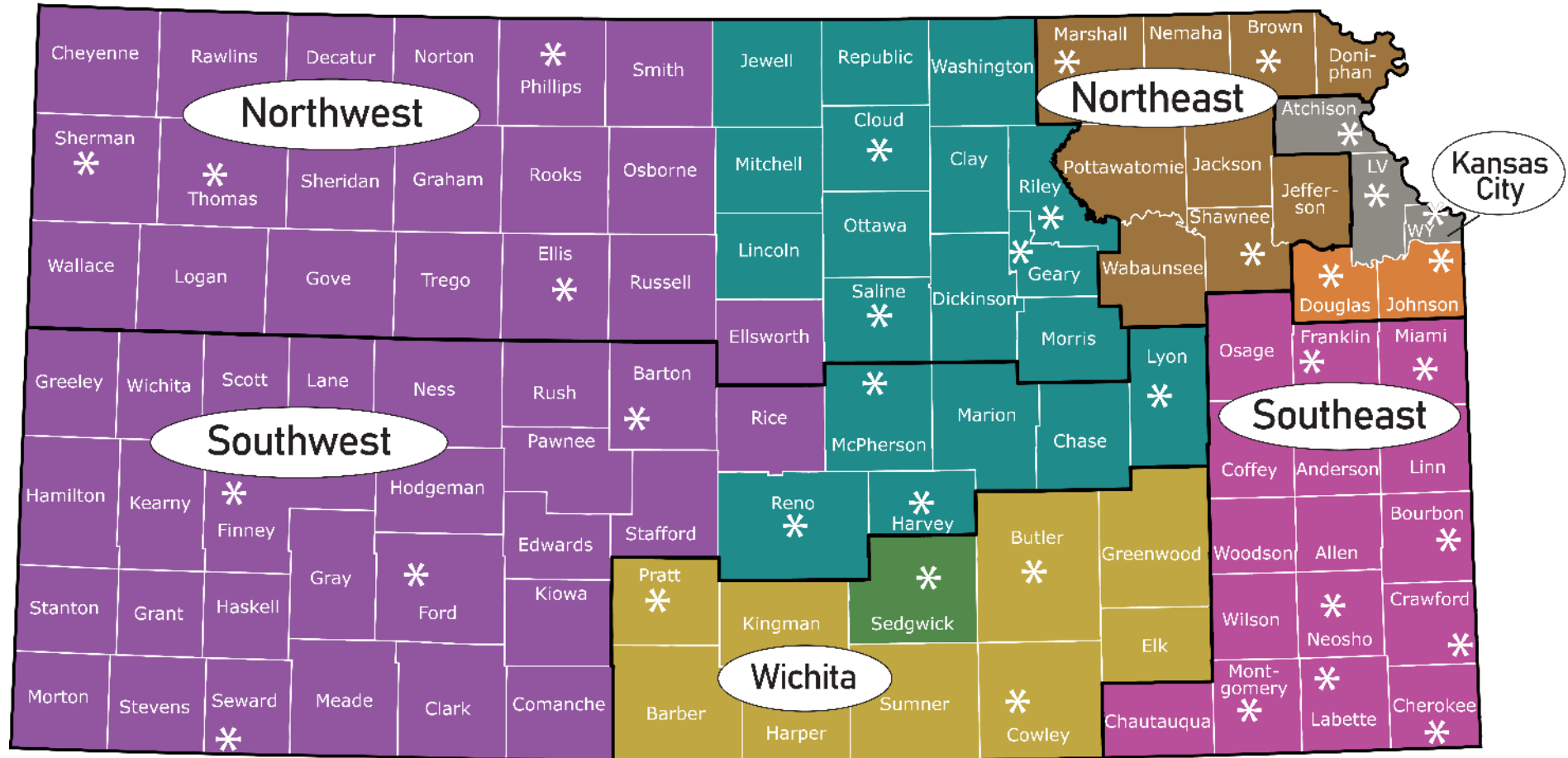
SERVICES FOR FOSTER YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Services provided by case management grantees include:

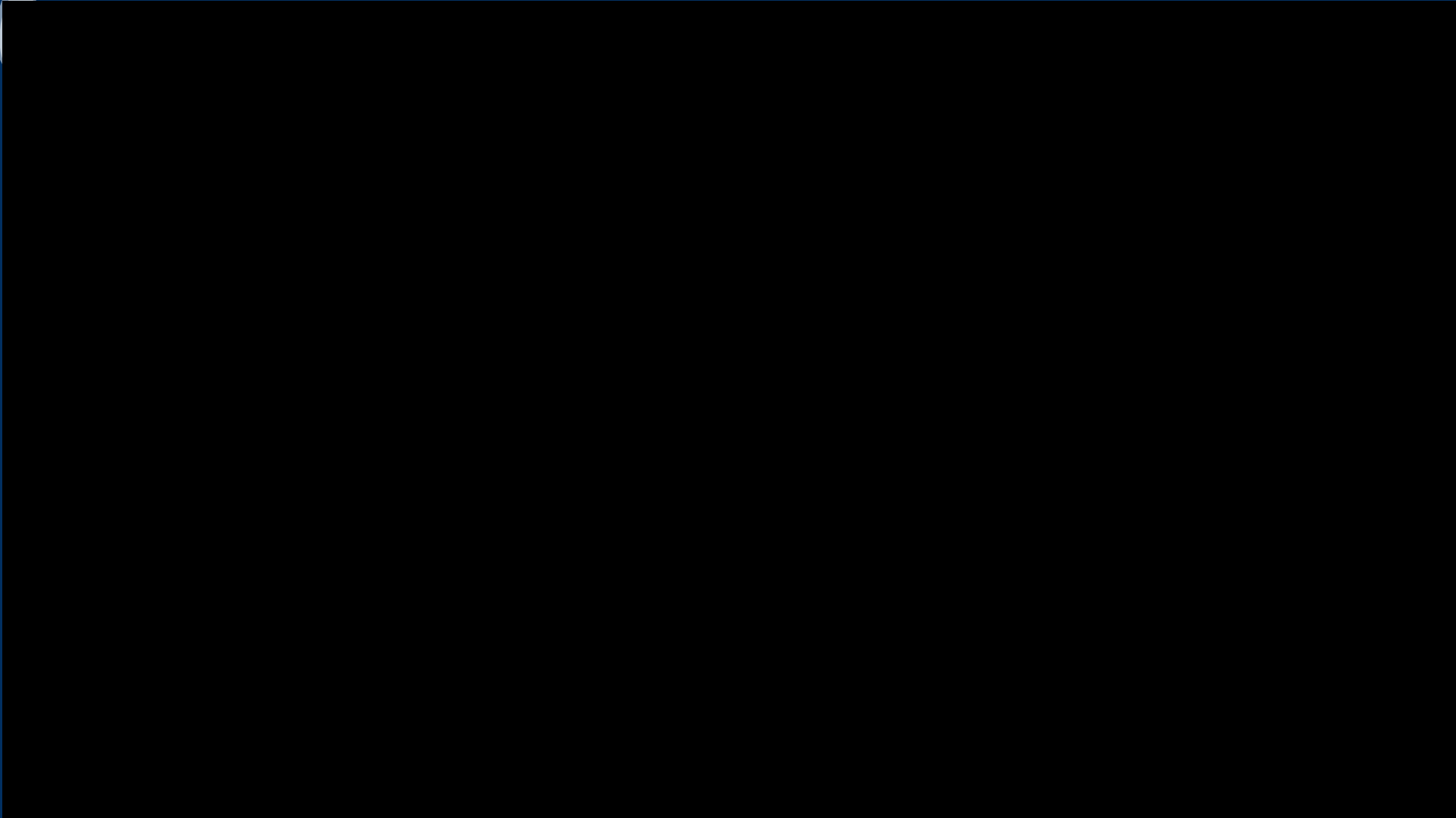
- Initial and ongoing screenings and assessments
- Facilitation and engagement for family meetings
- Case plan development
- Placement stability support
- Facilitation of parenting time and parent/child interactions
- Parent skill building
- Coordination/referral to other services (ex: mental health, disability)
- Coordination with MCOs



DCF Regions & Catchment Areas



- * DCF Service Center
- AREA #1 *Saint Francis Ministries*
- AREA #2 *Saint Francis Ministries*
- AREA #3 *KVC*
- AREA #4 *TFI Family Services*
- AREA #5 *Cornerstones of Care*
- AREA #6 *KVC*
- AREA #7 *Saint Francis Ministries*
- AREA #8 *TFI Family Services*



Kathy Ostrom
Foster Parent





- DCF is responsible for the licensure and regulation of all 24-hour-per-day, seven-day-per-week child care facilities in Kansas
- Licensing division strives to ensure facilities are operated and maintained with strict regard for the health and safety of the children residing in them
- DCF conducts initial licensure and ongoing compliance inspections and complaint investigations when necessary
- Also responsible for fingerprinting/background checks for these facilities

LICENSING



LICENSING

- Facilities licensed and regulated by DCF include:
 - Child Placement Agencies
 - Family foster homes
 - Group boarding homes and residential centers
 - Detention and secure care centers
 - Attendant care facilities
 - Staff secure facilities
 - Secure residential treatment facilities



OIG AUDIT

- Last month the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General released an audit of 31 group homes for foster youth that identified potential health/safety violations in most of the homes.

In response:

- Effective Jan. 2019 a policy was implemented requiring a surveyor to initiate a referral to the regional supervisor for any facility with outstanding areas of non-compliance
- In March 2019, DCF issued corrective action plan guidance on the required process and components of an acceptable action plan.
- In Feb. 2020, a group home program manager was added to the licensing division to assist in providing additional oversight of facilities, regulatory compliance and licensee support
- In Feb. 2020, licensing completed compliance visits to each of the facilities listed in the report to ensure corrections were made and facilities were in compliance.

A young man with short dark hair is sitting on a set of bleachers. He is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark pants. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred view of the bleachers, suggesting an outdoor sports setting. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

AGING OUT



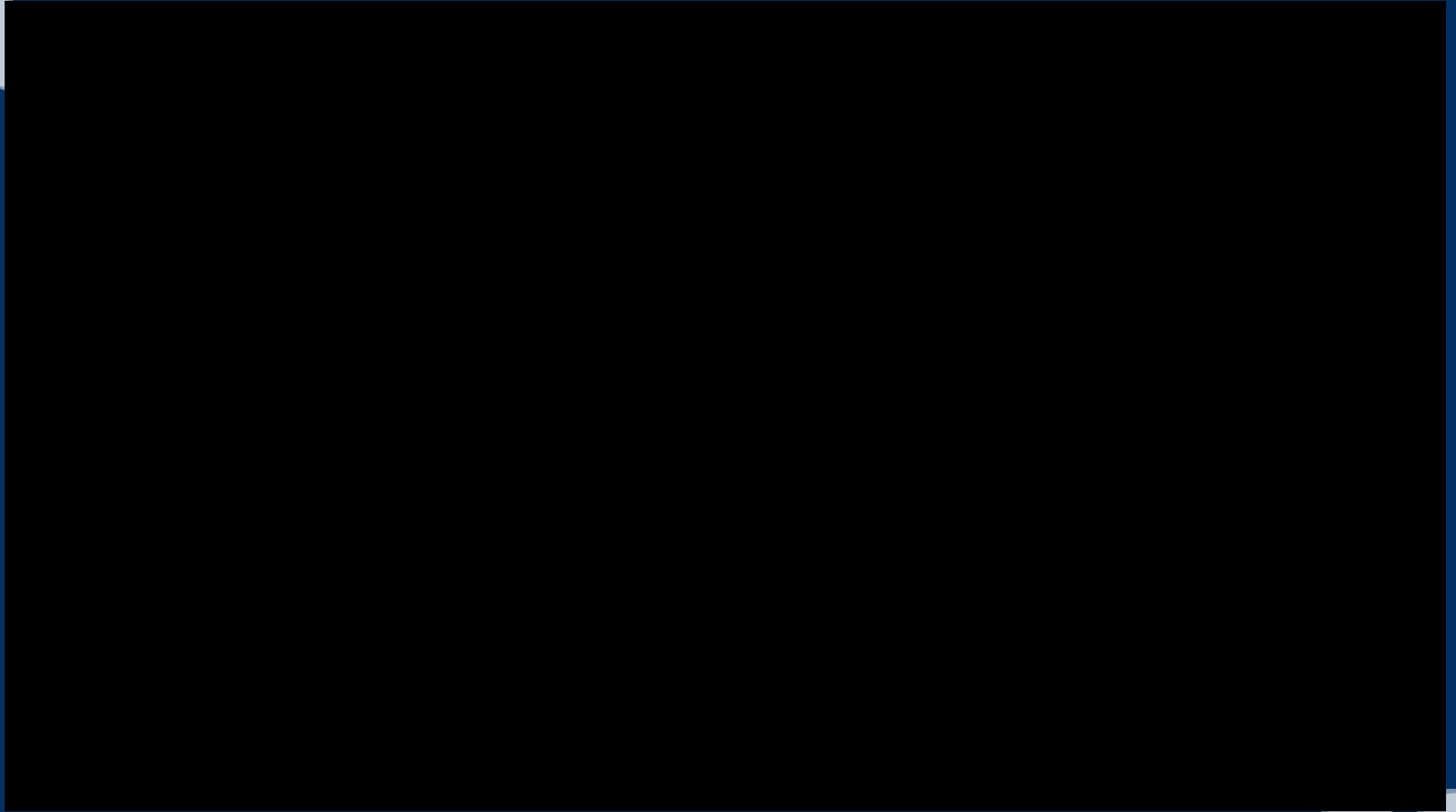
AGING OUT

- Youth that turn 18 while still in state custody are considered to have “aged out” of foster care
- 392 youth aged out in FY 2020
- DCF offers services to aged out youth to support them in their transition to self-sufficiency
- DCF engages with the Kansas Youth Advisory Council for feedback on the needs of youth who are or who have been involved in child welfare services



INDEPENDENT LIVING AND CHAFEE SERVICES

- The DCF Independent Living program provides services and supports to youth for a successful transition to self-sufficiency
- Services are offered statewide through Independent Living Coordinators
- Eligibility determined by age and length of stay in state custody
- Services available include:
 - Tuition waivers for postsecondary education
 - Medical coverage through KanCare
 - Independent living subsidies
 - Basic Chafee
 - Education and Training Voucher Program



Nicole Shaner
Former Foster Youth





MOVING FORWARD



- DCF service delivery is grounded in the strategies we employ
- Strategies are supported by a practice model with principles and approaches linked to better outcomes, engagement, equity and inclusivity working alongside families
- Four new practice models have been implemented

PRACTICE MODELS



Family Finding

- Engagement and family meeting (model) when there is a barrier to stability or legal permanency for a child
- Includes youth and family in tracing/search and planning
- Statement of need, concerns and goals are co-created
- Creates lifetime networks for sustained stability



PRACTICE
MODELS



Team Decision Making

- Facilitated family meeting (model) before a child is moved to determine if a child needs to be separated from their parent(s)/primary caregiver due to the parent(s)/primary caregiver behavior threatening a child's safety
- Families invite their support network
- Decision creates and results in strongest plan for safety
- Now in CK, CR, JO, WY; Expanded to South central counties in Spring 2020



PRACTICE
MODELS



Signs of Safety

- Set of tools for response to assigned reports alleging abuse, neglect or family in need of assessment (FINA)
- Alongside families and safety network, create a balanced assessment of strengths and existing safety
- Addresses worries, what's going well and what needs to happen
- Children's tools gain child and youth's voice
- Includes system of meaningful measures, supervisor coaching and QA



PRACTICE
MODELS



Structured Decision Making

- Tools for response to reports alleging abuse or neglect
- Focused on a sequence of key decision points to be intentional about decisions
- Structured scoring for abuse and neglect indices
- Initial implementation in Kansas Protection Report Center and counties of CR, CK, JO and WY
- Evaluation with Team Decision Making planned by National Council on Crime and Delinquency

**PRACTICE
MODELS**



- DCF is making it a priority to develop and implement innovations to support older youth as they transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency
- Efforts are underway to develop partnerships both externally and internally that will increase economic, employment, and transportation supports for older youth
 - Using VR dollars to support employment
 - Department of Commerce facilitating apprenticeships
 - Assisting youth obtain drivers licenses
- Fiscal analysis to be conducted to evaluate increasing IL subsidy





CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

- A class action lawsuit was filed in 2018 by Kansas Appleseed, Children's Rights and the National Center for Youth Law on behalf of named plaintiffs against the Governor, DCF, KDADS, and KDHE
- On July 8th, 2020 DCF announced that defendants have agreed to a settlement agreement
- Agreement set forth three categories of requirements for DCF to address including
 - Practice Improvements
 - Outcomes
 - Accountability reporting and implementation



Accountability Reporting & Implementation

- Within 30 days of order, amend foster care provider agreements to include practice improvements and outcomes.
- Within 6 mos. of order, develop independent advisory group to inform action planning and improvement.
- Report and validate # and placement duration of youth placed in detention or juvenile justice placement & foster care caseloads.
- Validate performance data through a neutral entity.
- Annual Reporting Periods Jan-Dec, 2021-23 or possibly 2024 for 2 outcomes.

Practice Improvements

- Achieve Substantial Compliance by Oct 31, 2021 and sustain for 12 months with:
- End the use of offices for overnight stays.
- Ensure no placement exceeds its licensed capacity without an approved policy exception.
- No delay in authorizing mental health treatment.
- Ensure Crisis Intervention Services statewide.
- End night to night placements with exception to those deemed appropriate by CFSR placement stability standards by 12/21. End short term placements that are 14 days or shorter by 12/23.

Outcomes

- Sustain final outcome for 12 months.
- Placement stability for children entering care at a rate of 4.44 moves or fewer per 1,000 days in care.
- Children have initial trauma and mental health screen within 30 days of entering care.
- 90% of children have their mental health needs addressed as measured in federal case review.
- 90% of children are in a stable placement as measured in federal case review.
- Children in care in 12 month reporting period have 1 or fewer moves in the past 12 months.

CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AT-A-GLANCE



WHERE WE STARTED

FY 19

- Number of youth in care at end of fiscal year: 7,578
- Average length of stay for those leaving state custody: 21.4 months
- Average percentage of children in out of home placement living with relative: 32.5%





WHERE WE STAND

FY 20

- Number of youth in care at end of fiscal year: 7,061
- Average length of stay for those leaving state custody: 20.6 months
- Average percentage of children in out of home placement living with relative: 34%





WHERE WE | FY STAND | 20

- In the second half of FY 2020, the agency achieved a decrease in the number of children who had no overnight placement to an average of six per month, down from 16 per month in the previous six months
- From July 2019 to January 2020 only 10% of placements were for a duration of one calendar day
- As of July 8, 95.9% of children were in a stable placement as measured in federal case review



LOOKING AHEAD

- Progress has been made, but work remains
- Continue efforts to increase permanency and support placements in family-like settings
- Continue to work alongside families and communities to support and protect children
- Pursue innovations that will achieve better outcomes for all youth in foster care

QUESTIONS?

