



Where We Are Today—Improvements and Changes Made Under Secretary Gina Meier-Hummel's Leadership



Strong Families Make a Strong Kansas



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Child Safety and Wellbeing: Under Secretary Gina Meier-Hummel's leadership, DCF has enacted key changes to improve child safety and wellbeing. These changes have included: personnel changes, an internal review of cases, proposing key policy and procedure changes and implementing further mandatory training for child welfare investigative staff. Additionally, we have changed policies that require child protection specialists to respond to reports of abuse or neglect quicker. Now, if a child is under the age of six and there is an alleged report of abuse or neglect, child protection specialists are required to see the youth in their home environment. Previously, they could be seen at a DCF service center. The agency has also worked diligently to strengthen DCF's working relationship with local law enforcement. In the Wichita Region, we are piloting a 24/7 phone line where law enforcement and hospital workers can immediately report abuse or neglect, without having to call the Kansas Protection Report Center (KPRC). These reports will be prioritized by staff. Child safety is paramount, so DCF will continue to evaluate and review systems, policies and procedures.

Child Welfare Vacancy Rate: On April 26, 2018, DCF created a new classification of staff—unlicensed protection specialists. The unlicensed protection specialists are required to have a four-year degree in a related field, and they are also required to take the same training and pass the same background checks as licensed staff. In short six months, DCF's child welfare vacancy rate has decreased by 56 percent. In April 2018, our child protection specialist vacancy rate was 20.7. As of October 2018, it is 9.14 percent. This drastic decrease is vitally important to our work because having an adequate workforce equals quality services for Kansas children and families.

Missing and Runaway Youth: Missing and runaway youth have been a priority for Secretary Meier-Hummel since her first day on the job. She has ensured that DCF has a robust investigative team actively looking for these youth, and she continues to receive daily reports about children that are missing or have run away from placement. According to a report, the number of youth who have run away from their foster care placement has decreased. On August 31, 2017, there were 86 missing or runaway youth. Comparatively, on August 31, 2018, there were 63, representing a 26.7 percent decrease in the number of missing and runaway youth. Not only is DCF actively searching for these youth to ensure their safety, we have launched a new partnership with the Youth Advocacy Program (YAP) to help prevent youth from running again in the future. Each youth will be assigned an advocate who will establish a meaningful relationship with them, support them and advocate for them, regardless of where they are in the state.

Adoption: The agency reviewed the adoption process and eliminated policies and procedures that were serving as a barrier to youth reaching timely permanency. Additionally, DCF reviewed all open adoption cases and created 30, 60 and 90 day working plans to help youth reach timely permanency. The agency is on track to finalize approximately 1,500 adoptions in FY 19, compared to the 766 adoptions that were finalized in FY 18.

By the Numbers

- The child protection specialist vacancy rate has dropped **56 percent**. The number of missing and runaway youth has dropped **26.7 percent**.
- We anticipate finalizing **1,500 adoptions** in FY 19, double the number of adoptions in FY18.
- Risk Removal staffings have kept **34 youth** from needing to enter care.



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Risk Removal Staffing's: On Sept. 5, DCF launched Risk Removal Staffing teams. These teams, which include DCF staff from across the state and all DCF programs, help consider all DCF and community services and supports available to maintain children safely in their home, and prevent children being placed in foster care. Specifically, they review cases where children are at-risk of entering the foster care system as a result of non-abuse and neglect reasons. To date, they have reviewed 84 cases and have successfully diverted 34 youth from entering foster care, giving them a 40 percent diversion rate. The Risk Removal Staffing teams are offering real, preventative services to keep Kansas families together.

Improved Child Welfare Grants: DCF rewrote the child welfare grants and contracts to include a renewed focus on accountability, fiscal responsibility, quality services and outcomes. The new child welfare grants include many changes from the previous contracts to improve services for Kansas children and families. When awarding the new grants, DCF also brought more providers to the table. Where previously there were two providers serving the entire state, there are now six. In addition to the child welfare grants, we have issued a Placement Matching System Grant. Currently, each provider has its own system, and the State does not readily have available data. This new contract will require every licensed foster home or residential bed to be entered into one single statewide system. DCF will monitor the system to ensure children's placement needs are being met, and they are remaining in their home communities, when possible.

Streamlined Processes at KPRC: DCF has completely overhauled the Kansas Protection Report Center (KPRC), the portion of the agency responsible for receiving and processing reports of abuse or neglect. The changes at the KPRC have included: streamlining the training process, changed key policies and procedures to streamline the screening process, tailored roles for staff to be more specific, implemented temporary teams to help the KPRC for short periods of time and start the implementation of Structured Decision Making (SDM). SDM will ensure the consistent delivery of child welfare services across the State of Kansas and develop clearer policy and procedures for assessment completion to be applied uniformly across the state for agency staff and providers.

Transparency: DCF introduced legislation, in conjunction with Governor Jeff Colyer, that increases the information we can share in the death of a child, as a result of abuse or neglect. This bill was passed and has already had a significant impact on how we have been able to share information with the public. DCF has also been forthcoming and transparent about other tragic incidents that don't fall under the jurisdiction of that legislation. Finally, with transparency as one of the Secretary's top priorities, I approached each program area at DCF and asked them to submit written work plans, outlining their work and initiatives in their respective fields. These work plans are currently being used to create an online, interactive dashboard, demonstrating our progress toward agency goals.

Communication, Culture and Stakeholders: Secretary Meier-Hummel visited each DCF office and each DCF region. During these visits, she met with DCF staff, judges, law enforcement, legislators, foster parents, mental health professionals, providers and other community partners to provide an update about the recent changes at the agency and to listen to their concerns and feedback. In addition to the regional tour, Secretary Meier-Hummel has worked diligently to listen to all voices in the child welfare system, and has also met with biological families, youth in foster care and youth who have aged out of the system. The agency has slowly shifted from a punitive agency to one of opportunity. DCF doesn't want to be the child welfare system, DCF wants to be the family wellness agency, and Secretary Meier-Hummel continues to work every day to ensure the culture at DCF changes to one of compassionate, servant leadership.

Invested in Child Welfare: When Secretary Meier-Hummel arrived at the agency, the child welfare system had been underfunded and neglected. Recognizing an immediate need for resources, DCF requested additional funds to strengthen the child welfare system this past legislative session. The 2018 Kansas Legislature approved the following: funding for child welfare feasibility study, funding for additional 20 child welfare staff and increased payments for foster care kinship placements. DCF will continue to advocate for additional resources, specifically around an improved comprehensive child welfare information system and Family First Prevention Services Act.

