

Prevention in Kansas

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Above: DCF Safe Sleep Instructor, Jim Harmon, during an in-person training in January 2020. After COVID, the training was offered virtually.

DCF and partners contribute to safe sleep training research

ABCs of Safe ALONE, on the BACK, in a CLUTTER-FREE CRIB

Use a firm and flat mattress in a safety-approved crib*, free of soft and loose bedding, such as bumpers, stuffed animals and blankets.

*A crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that follows the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is recommended.



For information on crib safety, visit <https://www.cpsc.gov>

A new research article titled *Infant Safe Sleep Promotion: Increasing Capacity of Child Protective Services Employees* was recently published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health by the Kansas Infant Death and SIDS Network (KIDS Network) and their affiliates. DCF staff trained as Safe Sleep Instructors (or SSIs) deliver the training to DCF colleagues, providers and professionals, and community partners.

The article follows data from the 2019 Safe Sleep Instructor training cohort and the results of this study.

The article exhibits that DCF SSIs have been able to exceed expectations with the number of professionals they've been able to train and with the amount of information participants have learned from the trainings.

Kaleena Erwin, DCF training and curriculum specialist and Safe Sleep program lead, said DCF is doing more than just making parents and caregivers aware of safe sleep practices. "We know infants who sleep alone, on their back, in a clutter free crib located in the same room as their caregiver for every sleep, are at reduced risk of sleep-related death. That's why DCF has made cribs available in each DCF office for parents and caregivers who have an immediate need for a safe sleep environment for an infant in their care."

The full article can be accessed here: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/8/4227>

For more information on the KIDS Network visit: <http://www.kidsks.org/>

Region Round up: Progress towards Prevention

Our six DCF Regions have been working hard to move toward a prevention focused agency. Here's some current projects and recent highlights. Thank you to regional leadership and staff for gathering and providing updates.



Northeast Region, from the TDM supervisor: A Team Decision Making meeting was held regarding a mother struggling with substance use disorder who delivered a baby that tested positive for illicit drugs. The hospital and DCF were hesitant about sending mom home with baby right away, so a TDM was held to discuss options. Mom was very open to accepting

help and the TDM participants were able to connect her with an abundance of services and created a support network to include having someone check in on mom every day of the week. Mom is now working with Great Circle, Family First provider of Healthy Families America, an Early Head Start program, and has a sponsor from Narcotics Anonymous. Someone from her support network stops by her home daily to check in with her, including the Family First case manager, to ensure she is staying sober and has the right tools to be successful. The early head start provider delivered mom a goodie basket full of baby items, as did Great Circle the previous week.

We are all hopeful mom will be successful in her recovery and have community-based supports to help with parenting and support her newborn.

The **Southeast Region** continues to build strong partnerships with our providers. Here's a success story from Family First grantee, TFI Family Services.

We received a referral to the Grow Nurturing Families PCIT Program for a family struggling with twin toddlers behaviors. Mom reported the twins struggle with communicating, fighting and hitting each other, destroying toys and difficulties at school.

She quickly learned the positive parenting skills, applied them daily to her parenting routine and did her homework every single day. She reported any time the family left the house, the twins would ask if they were coming to therapy and looked forward to sessions. The mother started to display confidence when handling difficult situations and learned how to manage her children's behaviors at home. At the end of treatment, they were showing a huge reduction in the amount of challenging behaviors and the frequency in which they occur. The twins are now sharing, playing nicely, communicating better with mom and at school, and mom rarely has to set consequences as the twins are eager to make good healthy choices. Since graduating the program, the family has shown tremendous improvement!



Hunter Ramer, LMSW, TFI Family Services PCIT Therapist



Serena Hanson, LMSW, Foster Care Supervisor & Independent Living Supervisor, DCF

Wichita Region: Serena Hanson, Wichita Region Adoption and Independent Living Supervisor, has years of experience working with adoptive families in various roles and capacities during her time in the child welfare field. Always striving to improve our support of children and families, Serena recognized a need to explore further how adoptive families experience the adoption process and what services/supports look like for children and families post-adoption.

Last fall, listening sessions were held with adoptive families to get a better picture of their experience and what they find to be both helpful and lacking with our processes and services. In January 2021, these efforts were solidified into a formal adoption collaborative, comprised of several stakeholder groups from across the state. Participants include adoptive families, adoption and child welfare staff at case management provider agencies, community agencies that offer support to adoptive families, mental health professionals, leaders from KDADS, KDHE, representatives from each of the three managed care organizations (MCOs), and members of DCF staff from each region and administration. Workgroups have been formed to further explore system strengths and gaps related to training, skill-building, crisis service development and medical card/Medicaid related needs. Assessment and prevention staff have

been an integral part of these discussions, as they at times will come into contact with post-adoptive families who are in crisis and are in needs of supports and services.

Through these efforts, we hope to build a strong and stable supportive network for adoptive families, including strengthen our own practice and response to the needs of adoptive families. Families involved in those listening sessions have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to share feedback and information for system improvement. Serena's leadership in promoting best practice and continual growth exemplifies our agency's commitment to children and families.

Region Round up: Progress towards Prevention (*cont.*)

In the Northwest we like to say “Prevention... it’s an agency affair.”

Our teams understand by strengthening families through prevention efforts, partnering with the family as well as others in the child and family wellbeing arena, we will see more families reach their goals. Here are a few demonstrations of the great work happening in the Northwest.

Family First grantee, LiveWell Northwest Kansas, providing ABC is making a big difference for one family. Initially this referral for a mom appeared unsuccessful because she hadn’t engaged in the program as hoped. However, the child’s grandparents stepped in and have been completing ABC with the child. Our Family First case manager spoke with them by phone and they had completed their ninth session in the home. They spoke very highly of the program, stating it’s been very helpful in strengthening their attachment with their grandchild. They noted the assigned worker was extremely flexible and answered their questions regarding his developmental and social skills.

A positive Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting happened recently for one of our teams. The child participating in the session was able to articulate to her mother about the actions she needed her mother to take to feel safe at home. In her own words, the child freely and openly expressed her worries to her mother which made a big impact. Those present felt this had tremendous influence because the child’s words will be everlasting to the mother. Through our approach of engaging

families in a way that is honoring, knowing they are the expert of their family and setting them up alongside their network to do their best thinking, opens the door for success at building safety with a family.

The work DCF does is not new, but the “how” we do it is.

As we move into our second year engaging with families through our new Kansas Practice Model, we continue to see benefits of ongoing discussion with our community partners and the courts about our efforts in building safety with families and connecting them to prevention services. One judge noted recently after a learning exchange held with court partners she appreciated knowing

how much extra work DCF practitioners do before making recommendations. She said she feels more comfortable making recommendations now, knowing the preparation and variety of programs

we have. This has opened the door to potential greater opportunities for relatives and close connections to come in to support a family as safety is built.



Hello from the Southwest Region! We are excited to share the great work our staff and prevention partners are doing across the region. Here are some bright spots.

During the past six months the Southwest Region has held 172 Team Decision Meetings, impacting 355 children. 204 or 57% of those children were able to be maintained at home or with a relative without court involvement. In one of our counties a TDM was held involving a newborn and an incarcerated father. The child was born the day before the TDM and due to father being incarcerated he had not been able to see his child yet. The mother shared pictures so staff could show the dad during the TDM. Dad was very appreciative and teared up seeing his child for the first time.

Another bright spot was planning with a young teen mom whose infant was placed in police protective custody (PPC). Our team acted fast and worked with the mother to make a plan to keep the baby

safe. The infant was ultimately released from PPC to their grandmother.



Saint Francis Ministries, our Family First Family Centered Treatment (FCT) provider shared this about a family they are walking alongside, stating, *“things have been progressing at a great pace and I feel like the family is very open to learning and growing. I am really liking what I see with mom and have honestly*

not had someone who was so open to change right off the bat before like she is.”

In a partnership with educators and community partners in Emporia we are embarking on a journey together- Communities Supporting Families where families can obtain services without DCF involvement and not come to the attention of DCF. We’re specifically looking at those families who are currently receiving Family In Need of Assessments assignments on thru the Kansas Protection Report Center.

The Southwest Region will also be collaborating with community partners in McPherson on a truancy prevention/ intervention program.

These examples are just a few showing that together, collaboratively we can positively impact the lives of families. Prevention is sprouting up all over the Southwest Region, happy Spring!

Region Round up: Progress towards Prevention (*cont.*)

Kansas City Region– Sometimes a prevention success story is about preventing situations from getting worse and overcoming obstacles one by one to produce better circumstances, like this example of a youth who aged out of custody spring of 2018. A DCF Independent Living (IL) coordinator made the initial contact with them that year and then all subsequent contact attempts elicited no response. Nearly two years later, the youth contacted DCF customer service, who opened a ticket. The ticket went to the original IL Coordinator who was able to reconnect. The individual reported a history of homelessness since 2018 and had lost employment due to COVID. They moved to another state after the job loss and were living on and off with family. The youth was experiencing a variety of difficulties, based on untreated mental health.

The IL Coordinator and the youth developed a plan for their return to Kansas and to engage in supportive services and connect to community resources. DCF IL paid for the youth to return to KS via train, shuttle, and taxi to

a local shelter only to present COVID symptoms. DCF was able to help the youth quarantine in a hotel.

There were no programs for short term housing available in the region that seemed like an appropriate fit given this individual's circumstances. With shelter beds full and to avoid having the youth go back on the streets DCF IL paid for a hotel found until they could be connected to local community mental health center (CMHC). Currently the individual is on a wait list for the CMHC, but the plan was made to get the youth approved for an apartment in the area and pre-pay rent with funding through the Consolidated Appropriations Act which is targeted to assist foster youth and former foster youth. During the final approval stage for move-in, the landlord placed the application on hold due to previous criminal charges for disorderly conduct in another state. The IL Coordinator contacted the public defender assigned to the case to request the dismissal of charges based on the untreated mental health, lack of adult supports, and homelessness at the time. Since the youth

is receiving and complying with services in Kansas, the prosecutor agreed. Currently, this individual's situation is waiting on a decision from the screening company for the apartment and will be seeking re-approval for the application.

It is DCF's hope to continue to provide support to this youth and get them into affordable and safe housing, and connect them to employment and other community supports. The IL Coordinator also worked with the managed care organization to get an intensive case manager assigned to youth to assist with the severe and persistent mental health concerns. This, along with connection to the mental health center, have been very beneficial to help the youth gain progress with mental health and medications. The youth has expressed interest in a few certified training programs which are all future goals once stability is achieved.

To learn more about the new funding and programs available to support IL youth, foster youth and families visit <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/caasp/pages/default.aspx>

Kansas Crossover Youth State Policy Team update

We have a quick and exciting update on our pilot sites:

Montgomery County has identified two youth and a parent to be part of their implementation team and the new members were oriented on and attended their first meeting in mid-April. This is a great accomplishment as including youth and families is an important step to creating real system change.

Shawnee County completed their system assessment at their March meeting. During the April meeting recommendations from Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform were discussed. It is anticipated that youth and family members will be oriented and ready to join the implementation team in May.

In other updates, Daniel Olson has accepted the position of the Crossover Youth Policy and Practice Coordinator for the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA). He is a great addition to our team! Daniel graduated from Washburn University in 2005 where he obtained his Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. He began his career at Family Service and Guidance Center as a case manager for 3 years. He was an intensive supervision officer for the 8th Judicial District for about a year. In 2012 Daniel began working at Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) as

a corrections counselor for adult women. In 2019 he decided to try his hand as a corrections counselor (CCII) at Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC). One of Daniel's favorite roles as a CCII was the challenge of working with the youth to help them change their thinking and behavior patterns so they could become successful adults once released. Daniel also works part-time at the Topeka Round-Up Club. He enjoys being outdoors and around animals. Daniel is excited to be a part of this new program that will help youth in the long term. Daniel can be reached at olsond@kscourts.org



Daniel Olson, Crossover Youth Policy and Practice Coordinator, Office of Judicial Administration

To learn more about the Crossover Youth State Policy Team and more information regarding past and upcoming meetings please visit: <https://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/crossover-youth-practice-model>



KANSAS FAMILY FIRST FAMILY COUNCIL

Prevention · Family Services · Family Well-Being

- Are you the caregiver of a child in Kansas?
- Do you have experience with Kansas Child Welfare or Prevention Services as a caregiver or as a youth?
- Do you want to help shape services and resources in Kansas to support children and families?

WE NEED YOUR VOICE!

The Kansas Family First Family Council is an advisory board of Kansans with experience in the child welfare system and/or prevention services as a caregiver or as a youth.

Purpose: To ensure services that support family well-being are designed with families to align with their needs, priorities, and goals. Members will contribute to statewide decision-making in partnership with the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the KU School of Social Welfare, and the KU Center for Public Partnerships and Research.

Expectations & Compensation:

- Serve a one-year term beginning 7/1/2021
- Attend up to 6 meetings
- Receive a \$4,000 stipend to alleviate barriers to participation and support inclusion of this essential family perspective.

Scan code to learn more and apply to represent your community:



Questions?

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