

Prevention in Kansas

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Kansas moves to become a Kin First State

In January 2021, the Department for Children and Families began the initiative of becoming a Kin First State.

Becoming a Kin First state means identifying a child’s extended family network and other people who are important to them, the moment the child welfare system becomes engaged on their behalf. When agencies first begin working with families, substantial people in their lives can help prevent removal from the home by playing a supportive role to the family when they are in crisis.

DCF has begun working toward this by amending policies to be more in alignment with statute definitions for relatives and kinship care. Relative and kinship care involves persons related by blood, marriage, adoption or have close emotional ties with the child/young adult or the child’s parents. Additionally, DCF’s policies acknowledge “*Termination of parental rights does not alter or eliminate the blood relationship to relatives.*” Thus, there is an intentional focus on children

and young adults being placed with a Kinship Family as their first and only placement should there be a need for them to be placed in out of home care.

Relative caregivers are also encouraged to become licensed foster homes, and DCF has removed barriers to assist relatives with this. By becoming a licensed foster home, relative caregivers have access to more supports including monthly subsidies, worker support and other benefits. DCF Licensing is able to waive some non-safety regulations to assist relative caregivers with the process. Currently, development of caregiver specific training and support is underway. As with all licensed foster homes, Relative Caregivers have choice in which Child Placing Agency they wish to be sponsored by and they should direct questions to their current kinship worker or DCF Licensing at DCF.FCL@ks.gov, or by calling (785)291-3032

Kin First update provided by DCF Permanency Team.

Send us a message to be added to our listserv, or send feedback

DCF.FamilyFirst@ks.gov

[View past issues in the archive](#)



Prior to COVID-19, DCF hosted Kevin Campbell’s Family Finding Bootcamp, which focuses on the importance of finding family connections. DCF will be offering virtual Family Finding Bootcamps starting this spring.

Prevention Provider Spotlight: Kansas Family Advisory Network (KFAN)

From its conception in 2007, Kansas Family Advisory Network incorporate the six guiding principles from the Family Centered Systems of Care into every service KFAN offers. These guiding principles are:

- Youth and Family Involvement
- Individualized Strength-based Care
- Cultural Competence
- Interagency Collaboration
- Community Based Services Accountability

Kansas Family Advisory Network's

mission is to promote restoration of families through Support, Education, Advocacy and Trainings. Kansas Family Advisory Network's vision is to be a statewide network of family advocates who partner and engage with families across state systems. Kansas Family Advisory Network's purpose is to initiate positive change in the lives of families, community partners and stakeholders through efforts based upon understanding, compassion and love.

We believe every family deserves the chance to be empowered with the knowledge & tools they need to advocate



The new KFAN office in Coffeyville, Kansas.

for their family. We believe that birth & kinship families have rights & should have the ability to advocate & exercise their rights.

DCF interviews Nina Shaw-Woody

Prevention has so many different meanings. What does it mean for KFAN? I like this question! For us, prevention is being able to help families prevent excessive or unnecessary trauma. Everybody goes through seasons of struggles or hardships. We could all be one step away from our own kids getting caught up in the system. Basically, prevention for KFAN is doing all we can to prevent disruptions in families so they can stay stable as a family unit.

I know Kansas is working on the Ohio Kinship model, what do you want readers to know about this model?

This is a family friendly model, it's very hands on, in the home, doing the work with the families and walking them through it. When KFAN started it was a very small info line, the first month I only had two calls, and I thought, "this is not enough to help families!" I always loved Mother Theresa and she was always in the midst of the mess, doing the work to help people. With this model, you build trust with families so they can open up and you can uncover the things you need to really help them.

What are some of things you are noticing with families working this model? We've seen families that find themselves raising kids when they never wanted to have children or maybe take in kids that are not easy kids. They come in feeling overwhelmed. After working with our special parent advocates,

or taking parenting classes, or maybe participating in therapy, you start to see the change. They open up and become "free" as they start to buy-in to the program.

What are some other services that KFAN offers families?

Our resource closet supplies up to 3 outfits a month for every person in the family. We also have our food pantry. Our parent advocates can schedule one-one-one parenting classes for quick turnaround situations. For example, we may have a parent who has court next week so we help them get them through parenting classes as quickly as possible. We host many groups. Like the Kansas Kinship Advisory Council, and our Stronger Me Stronger Parent (SMSP) support group.

Maintaining relationships with relatives is especially helpful to keep young children connected to their cultural identity.

Can you expand on this based on your experience? A family connection is powerful. We all know when kids are running, a lot of times they are running back to their family. I can tell you from own experience being raised in the Bronx, we had family everywhere! From aunts to godmothers, to cousins, if anything happened to me, I grew up on a block where everyone looked out for everyone, blood related or not! Later, I personally experienced this again when I adopted my own kids. I had to change my way of thinking for my kids well-being—it's so important for these kids to feel connected. I love that Kansas is becoming a Kin First state.

How do you see communities collaborating to help kin families with sustained placement stability or helping to advocate for them when they are facing difficulty?

That's a big question but it's simple! It takes a village. We can't do this by ourselves, DCF can't do it by themselves, KFAN can't do it alone! It's about us advocating for families, communicating with each other, and working together as agencies to put the family first. It's about bringing the level of transparency up to build that level of trust.

KFAN is currently serving these counties: Montgomery, Crawford, Labette, Chautauqua, Rawlins, Ford, Adams, Thomas, Meade, Shawnee, Atchison, Douglass, Wyandotte, Lyon, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Geary, Linn, Brown, Sedgwick, McPherson, Elk, Reno, Harvey, Saline, Cowley, Butler, Stafford and Harper.

For more information visit <http://www.kfan.org>



Michelle Warner (left) DCF foster care program manager interviews Nina Shaw-Woody, Executive Director and therapist at KFAN

From the Field: A collection of Family First Success Stories

Just wanted to share a happy story and shout out for DCF staff.

We received a referral for a very complicated family system with language barriers. The KPATA staff and DCF child protection specialist found a wonderful Spanish speaking parent educator to work with them. It will be a great fit for the family. The DCF CPS really went above and beyond to fully communicate about the families needs and help us to know how to best serve this family! So thankful for the partnership!



- Becky Peters, Kansas Parents as Teachers Association (KPATA), Parents as Teacher's Bright Futures program in each county.

A family with a single parent, was struggling with parenting a teen. The family came from another country and had challenges of cultural barriers and a parenting style that differs from America culture. Physical disciplining and confining a child in the home are acceptable in their culture. When SFM received the referral, the parent was still strongly attached to their culture while the youth was already adopting to American culture, which created struggle between the parent and the youth which led to DCF involvement.

Fortunately, this case landed with Family Centered Treatment (FCT) specialist who speaks the family's language and understands their culture, which helped the parent to acculturate. It wasn't an easy journey, but the parent was cooperative and engaged well in all phases of the program, and acknowledged that cultural difference was a barrier. FCT also helped in reducing the teen's behavior significantly as the youth was allowed to participate in social activities, including YMCA and hanging out with friends with permission from the parent. The parent is now working full-time because they are comfortable with the teen's behavior and is learning to accept a new culture. The family successfully completed 6 months of FCT.

—Saint Francis Ministries (SFM), offering Family Centered Treatment (FCT), serving each county in the Northwest, Southwest, and Wichita regions.



Update for a teen struggling with truancy:

The youth started going to school as early as 8:30 even though not required to be there until 9:30am. They are attending school daily and taking medication as prescribed. The youth has blocked negative peers from social media and phone and is not engaging with them in public. Previously, when the youth didn't get their way, family conflict would happen daily. Family conflict is happening a lot less and no threatening or physical aggression noted. Parent reports feeling things are going much better. Other family are standing united with parent and supporting them.

- Therapist at Community Solutions, Inc., Multisystemic Therapy (MST). MST is offered in certain counties in each region of the state.



We represented a woman on a Petition for Guardianship and Conservatorship. She is of no blood relation to the older child and is the former step-grandmother to the minor children. The mother of the children had abandoned them for over a period of years. The father of one child was unknown, and the father of the other child refuses to acknowledge his child. KLS' Kintech program was able to obtain permanency for the two young children.

- Kansas Legal Services representative, offering KINTECH in each county



Crossover Youth Practice Model, voice of youth

Written by Michelle Montgomery, Kansas Department of Corrections Juvenile Services, Crossover Coordinator

[January's edition of the newsletter](#), highlighted the importance of including youth and families when making decisions about programs and services that affect their lives. This month, I would like to introduce you to Kristen Powell, who brings the “voice of youth” to the Kansas Crossover State Policy Team (SPT).

Kristen has been a member of the SPT since the team was created in October 2019. Her passion comes from personal life experience as well as her love and heart for people who have diverse backgrounds. Beginning at the age of 13 and throughout the rest of her childhood, Kristen experienced both the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems. She has used her lived experiences along with her education and knowledge to provide insight and bring about changes and improvements needed in the systems of care. Kristen served as the Prosperity Coach at the Center for Combating Human Trafficking (CCHT) from May 2016 to September 2020. While at CCHT, Kristen worked to create survivor informed, survivor-led services and was integral in developing programming that focused on holistic healing for victims and survivors of human trafficking. During the 2020 term, she served as a member of the Emerging Leaders Committee (ELC) with the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) and currently serves as the CJJ's Administrative and Youth Partnership Assistant.

In addition to working with the SPT, Kristen has been appointed to serve on the Kansas Advisory Group (KAG) on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP). She serves as the Youth Chair for the KAG and is working to develop a Youth Committee that will include youth who are incarcerated or have lived experiences and with youth who simply have a passion for juvenile justice reform in the state of Kansas.

Kristen is a full-time student at Wichita State University, where she is working to obtain a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice.

To learn more about the Crossover Youth Practice Model, visit <https://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/crossover-youth-practice-model>.

For questions, contact the Crossover Youth Practice Model coordinators:

Ashley.Brown@ks.gov (DCF CYPM coordinator)

Michelle.Montgomery@ks.gov (KDOC-JS CYPM)

I love doing this work and creating a platform for those directly impacted (whether it be by human trafficking, the juvenile justice system, homelessness, foster care, etc.) has always been something that I see value in and that I love being able to



do. It makes the most sense in any field to let those who are directly impacted, be the ones who are leading the fight for change and justice. In my career that is something that I want to always be able to do. No matter what capacity or field of work that I am in I want to always be a person who sees value in bringing those with lived experience to the table.

—Kristen Powell, Kansas Crossover State Policy Team



