

CHILD WELFARE OVERVIEW

HOUSE CHILD WELFARE AND FOSTER CARE
SECRETARY LAURA HOWARD | 3.2.2026

DCF MISSION STATEMENT



TO PROTECT CHILDREN, STRENGTHEN FAMILIES, AND PROMOTE ADULT SELF-SUFFICIENCY.



OUR MISSION:

To protect children, strengthen families and promote adult self-sufficiency.

WHAT WE BELIEVE:



PEOPLE HAVE THE CAPACITY:

- To progress
- To succeed
- To grow
- To do well in life



PEOPLE ARE THE EXPERTS ON THEIR LIVES AND HAVE:

- Voices
- Choices
- Needs
- Strengths
- Life Stories



WE VALUE COMMUNITIES AND THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THEM UNIQUE:

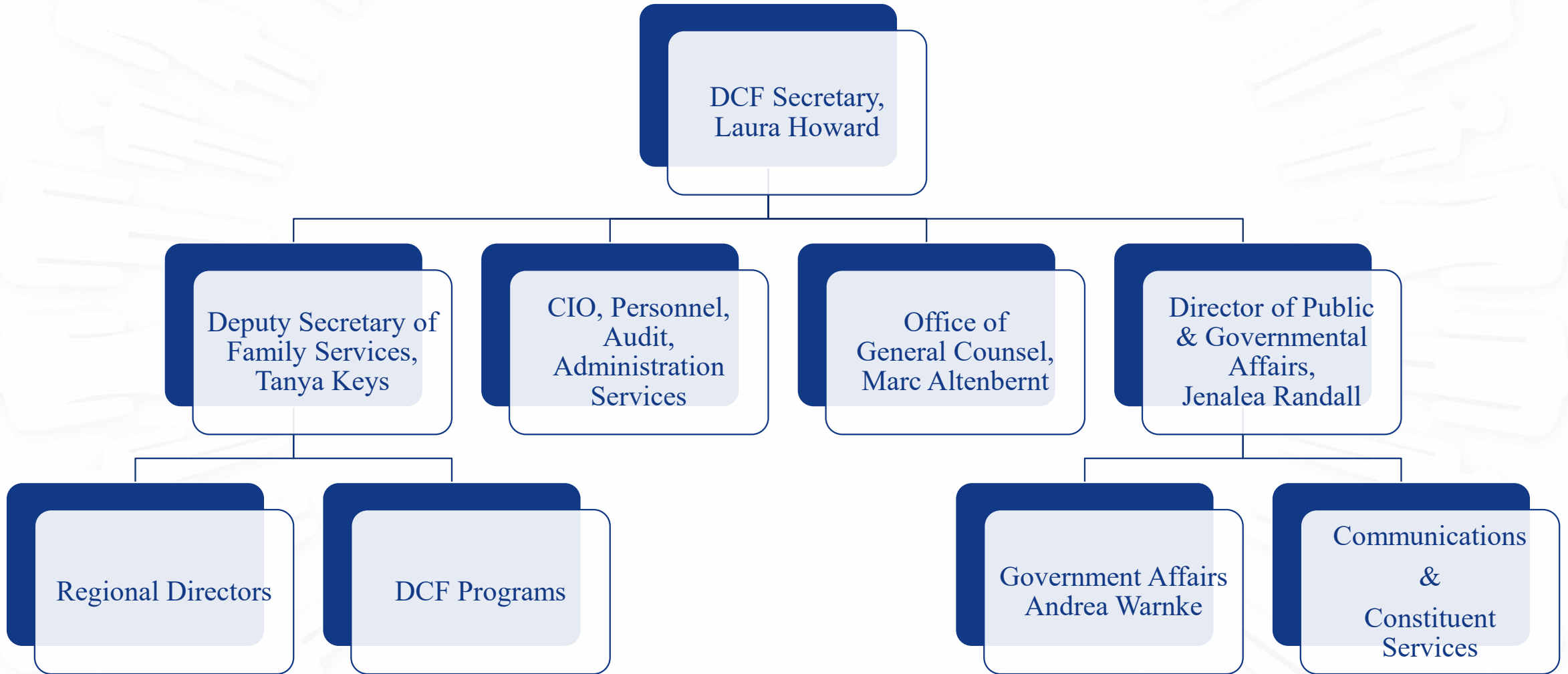
- We honor the whole person
- We rely on each other
- We are partners, not competitors
- We all benefit from a collective impact approach
- Communities bring strength through relationships and resources



WE LEAD WITH AUTHENTICITY, CURIOSITY, AND RESPECT:

- We are innovative
- We are inclusive
- We are experts
- We are leaders
- We are authentic
- We are diverse
- We care about each other, our work and the people we serve
- We share success stories

DCF ADMINISTRATION



ORGANIZATION

DCF Major Programs

- Programs collaborate for family and individual outcome achievement
- Programs are supported by core operations.
- Program and practice are carried out by teams in 36 service centers across 6 Regional Offices



PREVENTION & PROTECTION SERVICES



Director of Prevention – Jennifer Bretsnyder

Director of Permanency – Rebecca Gerhardt

Director of Safety & Thriving Families, Performance Improvement, Learning & Development, and Wellness – Ashley Johnson

Director of Children’s Mental Health & Medicaid – Brenda Soto

PPS helps families and vulnerable adults by providing:

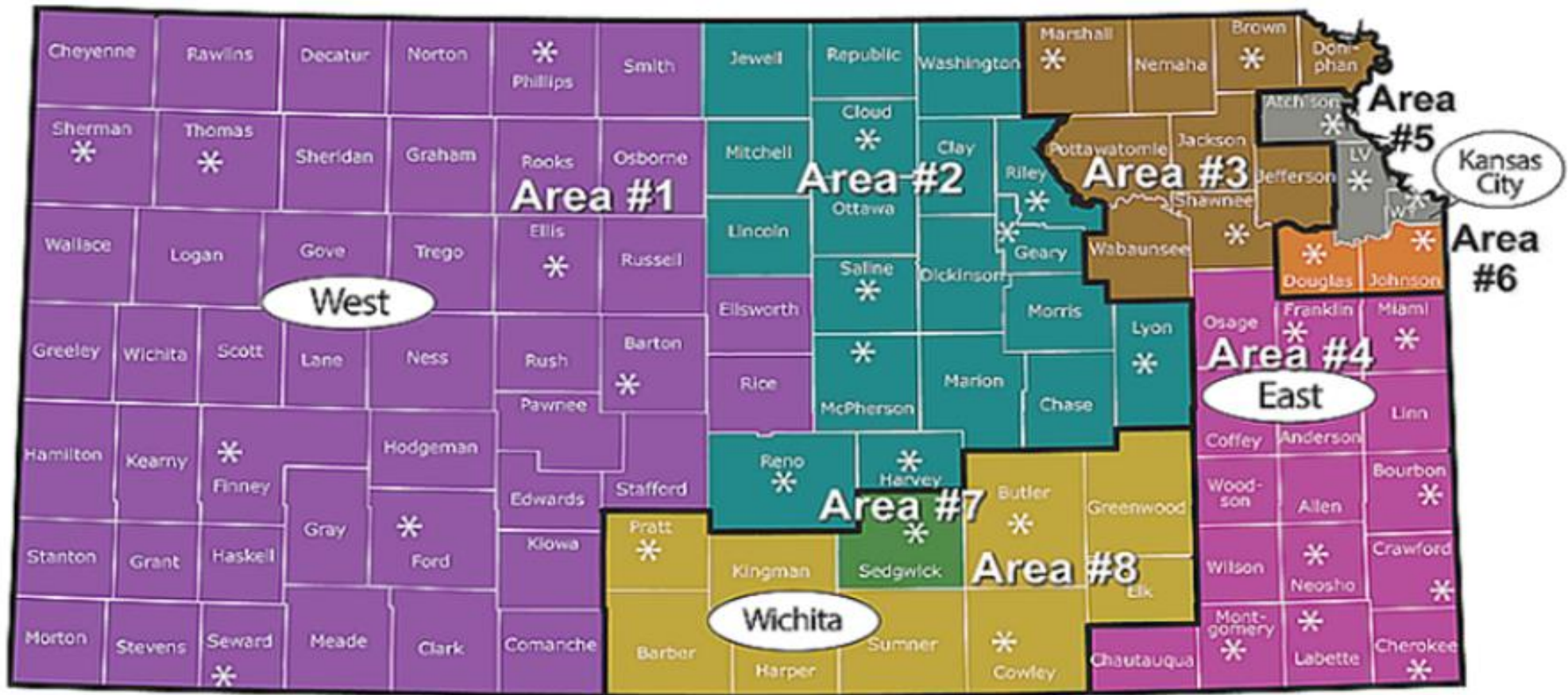
- Protection services (PRC and investigations)
- Family-based assessments
- Family support services
- Family preservation
- Families first prevention services
- Foster care
- Adoption services
- Independent living services for older youth
- Licensing foster homes



Kansas Protection Report Center
1-800-922-5330

FOSTER CARE CASE MANAGEMENT PROVIDERS

FOSTER CARE CONTRACT EFFECTIVE 7/1/24



* DCF Service Center

— DCF Regions

- 1 St. Francis Ministries
- 5 Cornerstones of Care

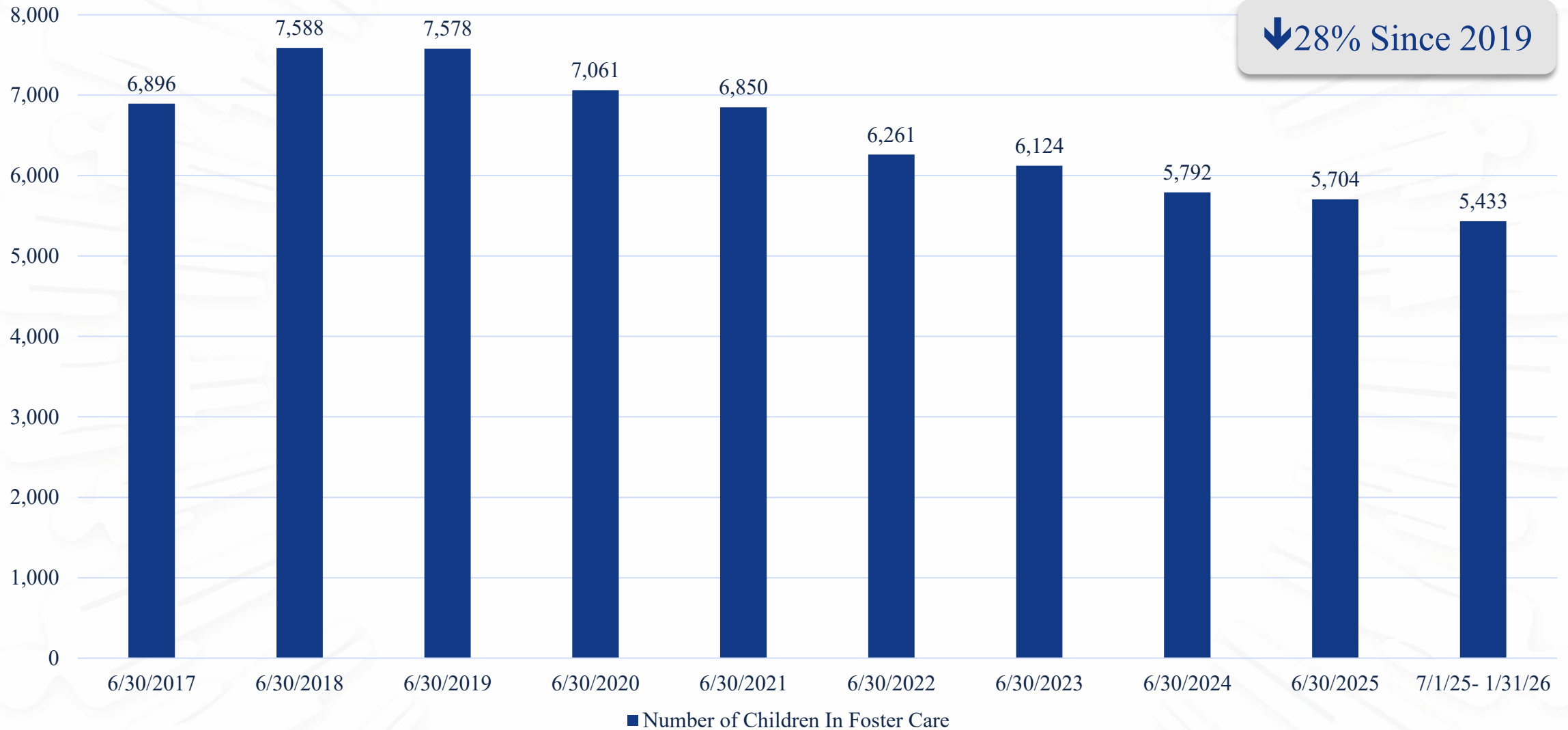
- 2 St. Francis Ministries
- 6 KVC

- 3 KVC
- 7 EmberHope

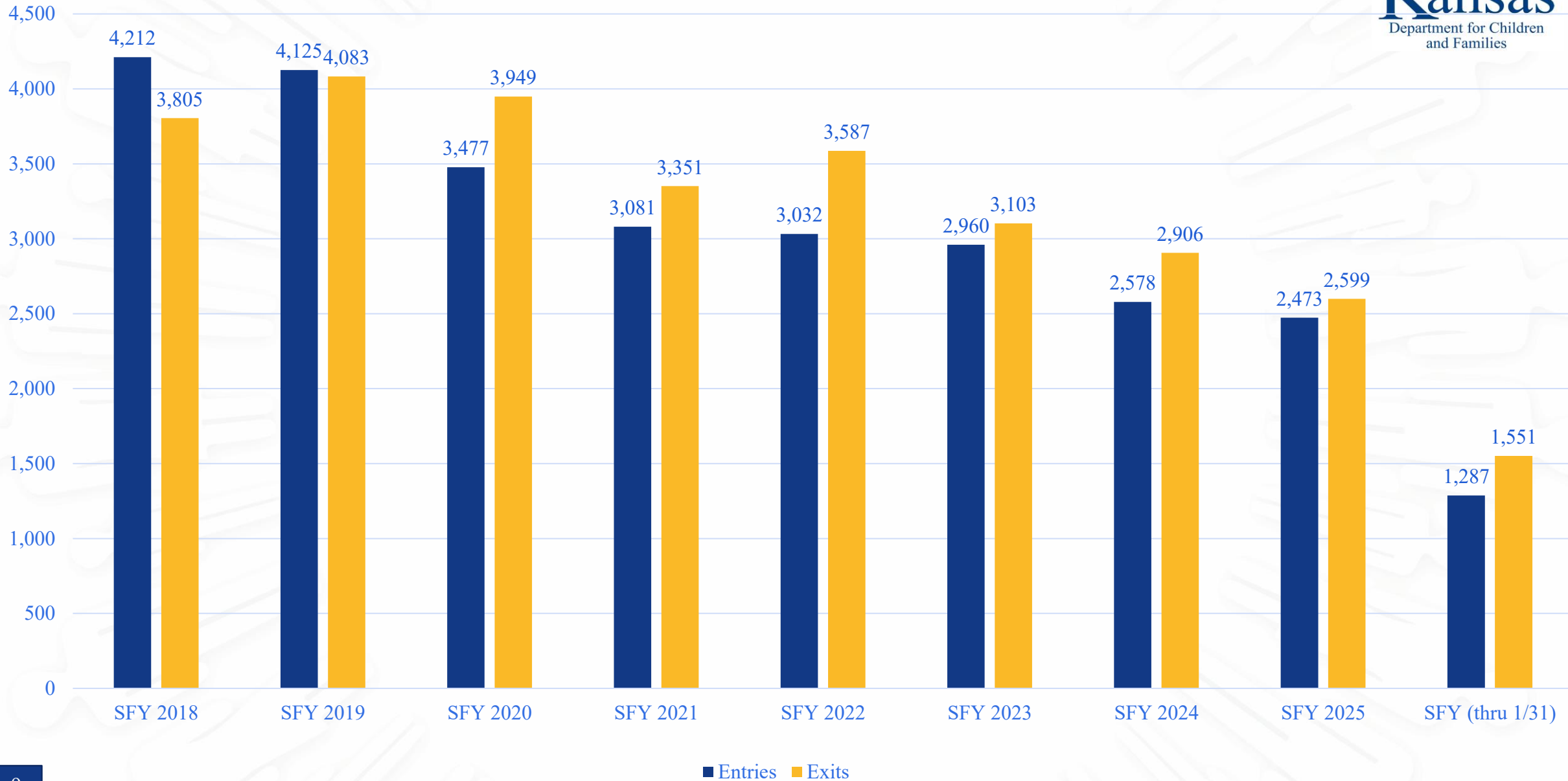
- 4 TFI
- 8 TFI

BY THE NUMBERS

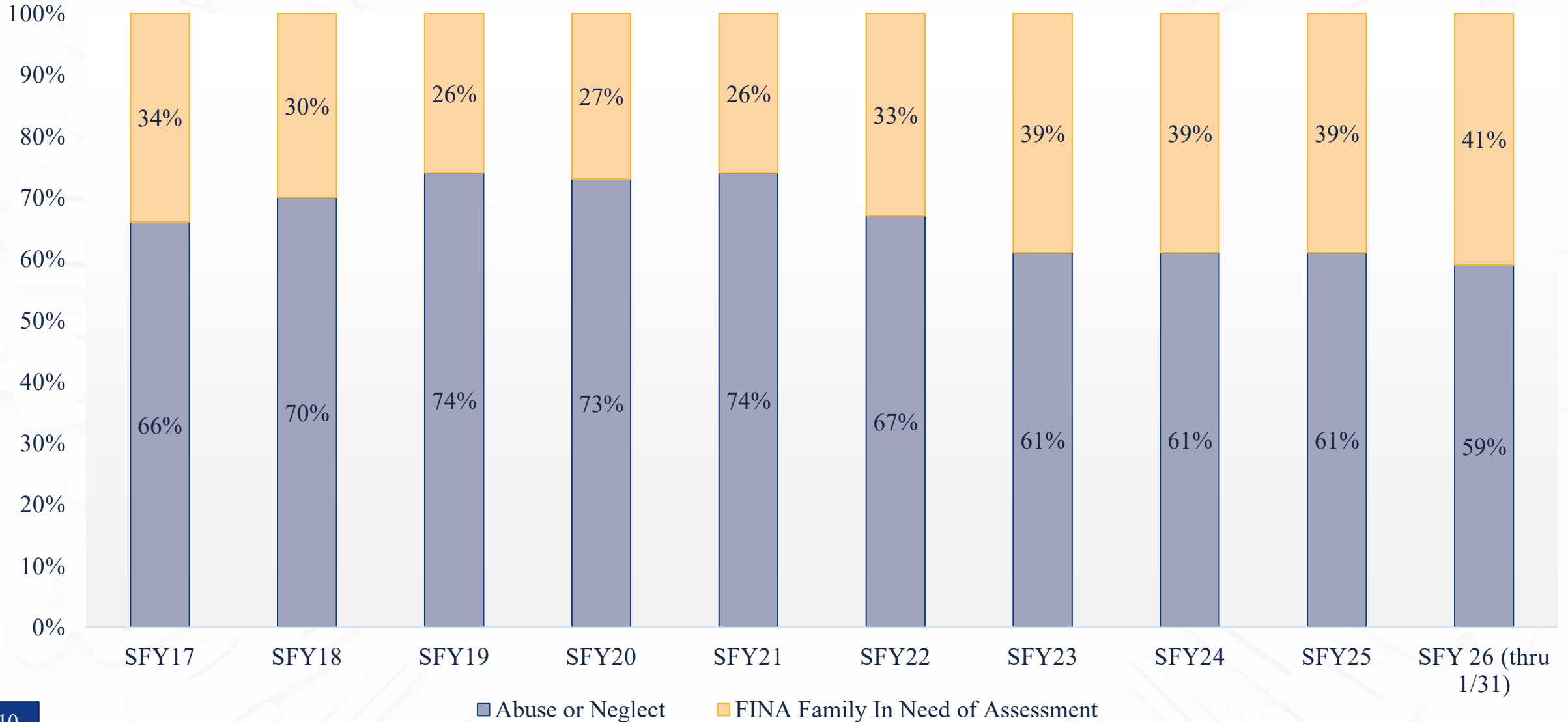
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



CHILDREN ENTERING & EXITING FOSTER CARE ACROSS YEARS



STATEWIDE CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE PRIMARY REMOVAL REASON



DCF Caseload Summary



Program	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Actual
Prevention and Protection Services		
Child Protective Services Investigations	24,811	23,963
Family Services Assistance	\$2,141,475	\$2,176,696
Family Preservation Families Referred Assistance	1,515	1,411
Families First Assistance	\$9,820,408	\$9,852,456
Adult Protective Services Investigations Assistance	\$17,099,353	\$20,864,219
Reintegration/Foster Care Average monthly children Assistance	10,608	10,152
Adoption Support Average monthly children Assistance	\$749,088	\$309,742
SOUL Permanency Average monthly youth Assistance	5,923	5,633
Permanent Custodianship Average monthly youth Assistance	\$299,126,603	\$341,915,643
Independent Living Persons Assistance	8,910	8,792
	\$51,993,661	\$52,484,235
	--	9
	--	491,500
	83	70
	\$303,084	\$261,401
	928	927
	\$4,312,748	\$3,808,520

CCWIS

WHAT IS CCWIS

“COMPREHENSIVE CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM”

The CCWIS project modernizes DCF’s child welfare information systems and develops interfaces between the various agencies serving DCF’s Prevention and Protection Services (PPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) programs.

CCWIS is a:

- **Single, comprehensive case management information system** to be used by DCF and all grantee partners
- System compliant with **standards set by the Federal Government** for which Kansas receives **enhanced reimbursement**
- System designed to support Prevention & Protection Services (PPS) staff needs to organize and record quality case information
- Active Kansas Information Technology Office (KITO) project in ***good standing***.

CCWIS CONTRACT AWARDS

CONTRACTS ANNOUNCED ON JULY 22, 2025



DDI Contract – RedMane Technology LLC

Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI)

The DDI contract is the largest contract for the project, and the contractor will work alongside DCF staff to develop and roll out the new system.

RedMane Technology is a Chicago-based software solutions and systems integration company.

IV&V Contract – Maximus US Services Inc.

Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V)

Maximus brings 23 years of experience, providing IV&V and real-time objective assessment services to the CCWIS project, as well as independent oversight of the DDI contractor's project performance and adherence to schedules and scope of work.

Quality Assurance (QA) - CSG Government Solutions








Quality Assurance (QA)

The CSG team offers 25 years of experience delivering quality assurance services for complex health and human services agencies across the country, including multiple active CCWIS projects.

CCWIS PROJECT TIMELINE



State Fiscal Year (SFY)

Project Phases	SFY 2026	SFY 2027	SFY 2028	SFY 2029
Discovery	 November 2025 – February 2026			
Design			February 2026 – December 2027	
Building			August 2026 – March 2028	
Systems Integration Testing				April 2028 – June 2028
User Acceptance Testing			June 2028 – September 2028	
Training			July 2028 – November 2028	
Go Live !!!				 November 2028

UPDATES



A HOME FOR
EVERY CHILD

UPDATES – FEDERAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CF SR)

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
(PIP)

UPDATES – CFSSR PIP

Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Technical Bulletin #14

- On December 19, 2025, ACF through [CFSSR Technical Bulletin #14 from the Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#) offered states the opportunity to voluntarily transition from an existing Child and Family Services Review (CFSSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) into a new pilot framework, “A Home for Every Child.” This pilot:
 - Reflects a deliberate shift toward outcome-focused, data-driven accountability and is expected to inform the future direction of federal child welfare oversight
 - Helps shape implementation of a new federal performance model through early engagement and feedback
 - Shifts focus on population-level outcomes, reducing reliance on labor-intensive qualitative case reviews
 - Use staff capacity more efficiently by aligning performance efforts with measurable, system-level outcomes or system-level measures that are already tracked
 - Strengthen prevention and permanency strategies by continuously monitoring and proactively addressing the number of children entering and remaining in care

UPDATES – CFSSR PIP

DCF / ACF Engagement Regarding Technical Bulletin #14

- Through conversation in two January calls and review of materials from ACF, DCF informed ACF of our interest to renegotiate our PIP on February 17, 2026.
- Kansas is currently halfway through our existing CFSSR PIP, which is scheduled to conclude in February 2028; however, our implementation period ends April 2026, which means we need to submit PIP request for changes (renegotiate) to our Region VII office before April, 2026
- With instruction and assistance from our ACF Region VII leads, we are revising our PIP document for submission by 3/19/26.
 - The renegotiated PIP focus is on one goal — **impacting the ratio of homes to children in care** — supported by a small number of clear strategies.
 - Revisions build on strategies and tools identified in our current PIP .
 - Relative and kin caregiver placements have positive impact on the ratio measures.
 - Recent guidance of the ratio follows on next slide and DCF can provide future updates on PIP progress.

UPDATES – CF SR PIP

ACF Most Recent Guidance regarding the required data metric ratio

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Required Data and Measures</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">All licensed foster family homes in a state at the end of the reporting period</p>			
Numerator	Denominator	Chaser	Sample Lead Measures
<p>The number of licensed homes in a jurisdiction at the end of the month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster Home ID License Type # of Beds License age range License Start Date License End Date Flag indicating home had a least one placement during the reporting month 	<p>The number of children in custody, who require placement at the end of the month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children less than 1 yr old in state custody end of month Number of children 1 to 5 in state custody end of month Number of children 6 to 12 in state custody end of month Number of children 13 to 17 in state custody end of month Number of children 18 + in state custody end of month 	<p>Standardized to ensure that the home to child ratio is reflective of meaningful and desired practices and provides broader understanding for the reported numerator and denominator values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children in family settings at end of month Number of children in kin home at end of month Number of children in non-family-based settings at end of month % of children in care at end of month who disrupted at least one time during that month 	<p>State-selected indicators that offer flexibility to choose and track specific priority practices and interventions, directly impacting numerator, denominator, and chaser outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly licensed homes in quarter Percent of licensed homes with at least one placement Reports of unusual incidents in licensed homes % of children in care at end of month who disrupted at least one time during that month Number of newly licensed kinship homes Subx Reports w/12 months of unsub referral Subx Reports w/12 months of screened out referral Subx Reports while a child is in an open prevention plan

**ACF understands some states may have variabilities and will discuss further during negotiations*



UPDATES – FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



FAMILY CASE PLANNING TOOLS

DCF alongside partners made the first major update to the permanency and prevention case planning tool in nearly 30 years.

- Better alignment with the Kansas Practice Model
- Supports consistency for families as they move through the service system.
- Mapping conversations about the tool's new use occurred with partners after implementation on January 1, 2026, to track what is going well, what worries exist, and what needs to happen next.

Working Well

If you had to point to one early win from the first month, what would it be?

- Had a lot of excitement about how family-friendly it was
- One CINC Judge created a document to help counsel work alongside families to prepare aligned with the new tool.
- A staff member said a teenager said he liked it better and it was easier to understand
- Some families shared that they liked we were asking for more of their input (including youth)
- Some workers have expressed they feel like it does help engage the family better.

UPDATES – FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK | PARENT EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Parent Support Network – a contract awarded through competitive proposal review last year to University of Kansas Center for Research who is partnering with Families Together.

- The Parent Support Network is ready to accept referrals that are made by case management providers.

The Parent Empowerment Project (PEP) offers three services specific to caregivers seeking reunification. These services include:

- 1. Caregiver Support Groups:** Semi-structured, flexible caregiver support groups available to caregivers with open DCF cases that have children who are at-risk or removal OR have already experienced removal and have a case plan goal of reunification. Caregivers with children that have recently reunified are also eligible to attend.
- 2. Training & Educational Opportunities:** Structured, virtual group targeting a parent-specific topic that is relevant for caregivers seeking reunification. Important support individuals for the respective caregiver are welcome to attend.
- 3. Advocacy Support for Parent Empowerment Support Specialist (PEP):** Tailored support and resource access provided by parent mentor. Referral acceptance is based on case characteristics – after thorough referral review– and PEP caseload at the time of referral.

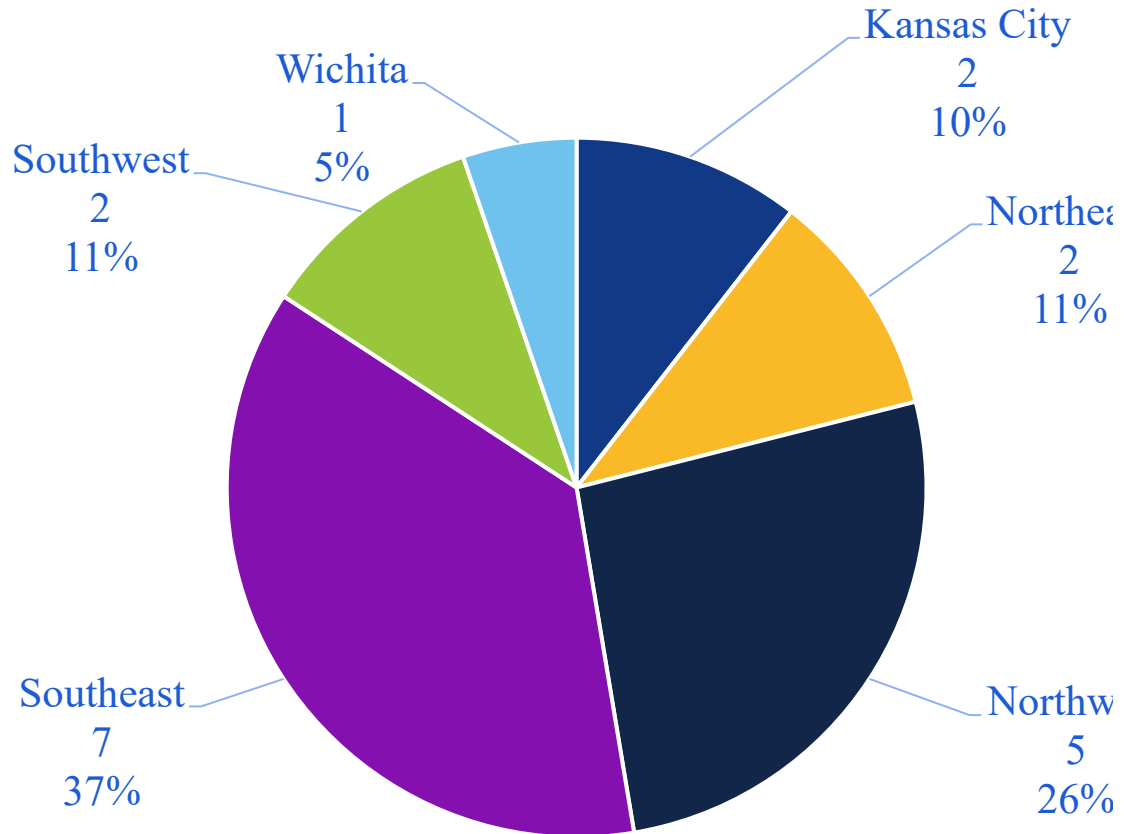
UPDATES

SOUL (Support, Opportunity, Unity and Legal Relationships)

- Through partnership from Annie E. Casey Foundation, KU is assisting the SOUL Advisory Board with data collection and review.
- In SFY26 July to January, there have been 28 SOUL with an average length of time in care of 41 months at the time they exited care.
 - By Region: KC, 9; NE, 3, NW, 5; SE, 3; SW, 3; WIC, 5.
- In the first year of implementation SFY25, 19 SOUL Families were finalized.
- Every DCF region experienced at least one SOUL Family finalization and each of the case management providers experienced at least one SOUL Family finalization except Area 8 – served by TFI,
 - 15 of 105 Kansas Counties are represented in the SOUL permanencies. Young people who exited care to the support of a SOUL family were frequently able to remain close to their home county.
 - 9 youth remained in their home county (47%)
 - 3 youth remained in an adjacent county (16%)
 - 2 youth were within the same DCF region as their home county (11%)
 - 5 youth found relationships that were not in any of these categories (26%)
- Young people entering SOUL families were nearly evenly divided between sexes (10 females, 9 males)

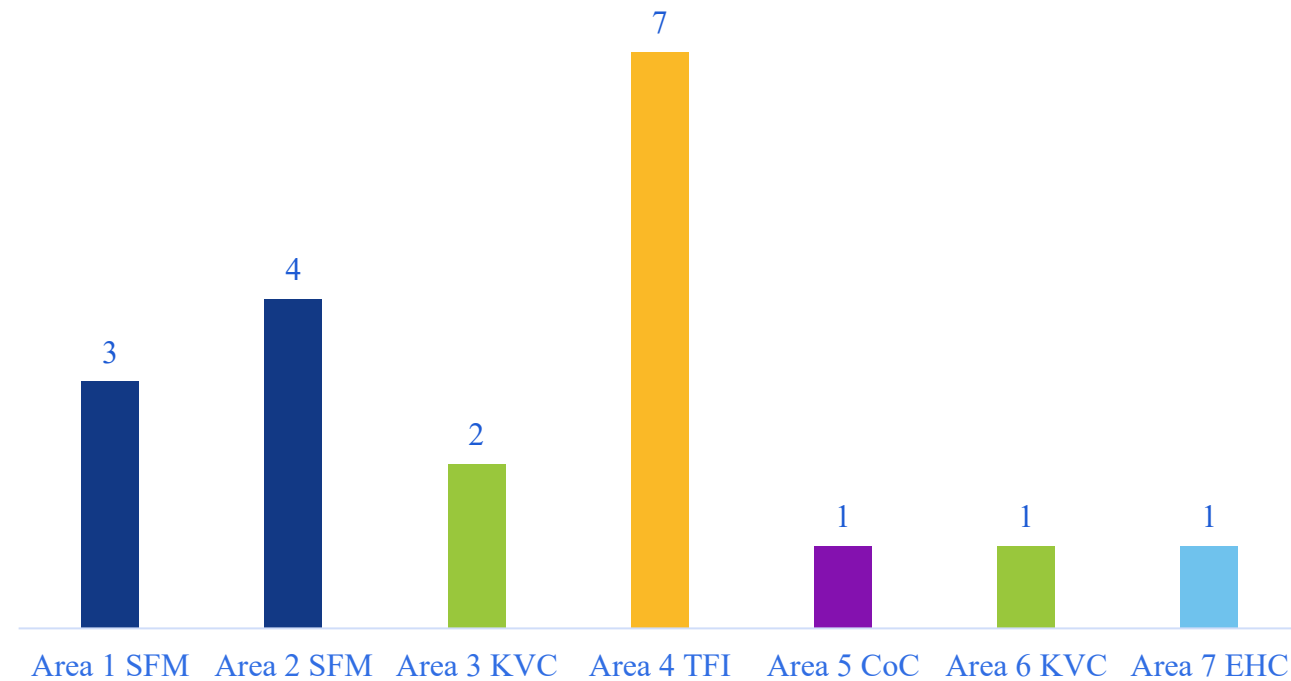
UPDATES

SOUL (Support, Opportunity, Unity and Legal Relationships)



SFY 2025 SOUL Families Finalized by Region

SFY 2025 SOUL Family Permanencies Finalized by Case Management Provider and Catchment Area



UPDATES: YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT

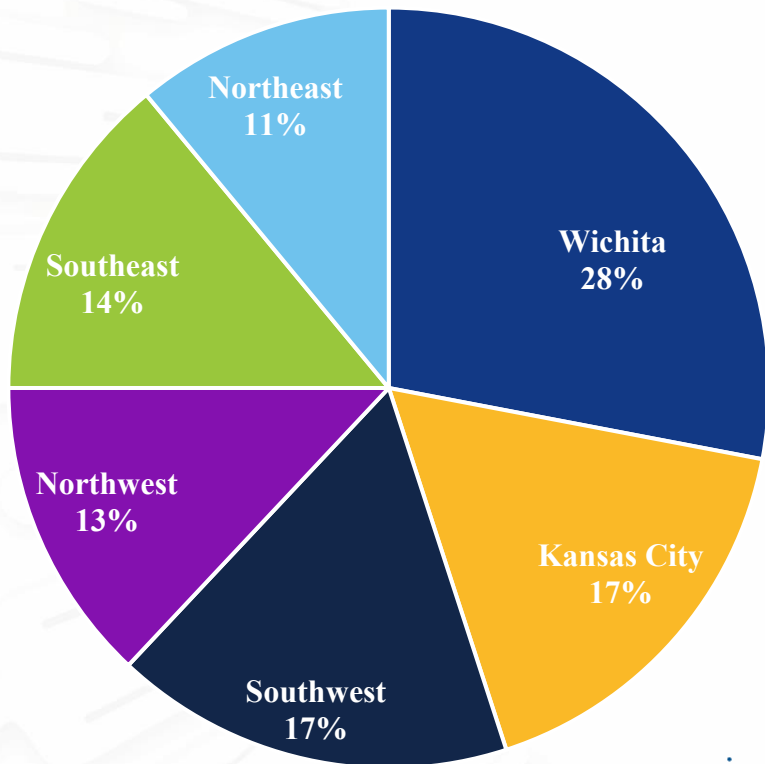
CROSSOVER YOUTH PRACTICE MODEL

Crossover Youth Practice Model Expansion – Jointly done with KDOC and OJA using Georgetown Model

- Initial implementation counties Sedgwick, Shawnee, Montgomery
- Second round implementation counties Franklin, Saline, and Atchison
 - System assessments are complete for Franklin and Saline
 - Teams in Franklin and Saline are meeting monthly and planning for:
 - Agency 101 trainings
 - Youth and parent or guardian listening sessions
 - Drafting of county specific CYPM protocols

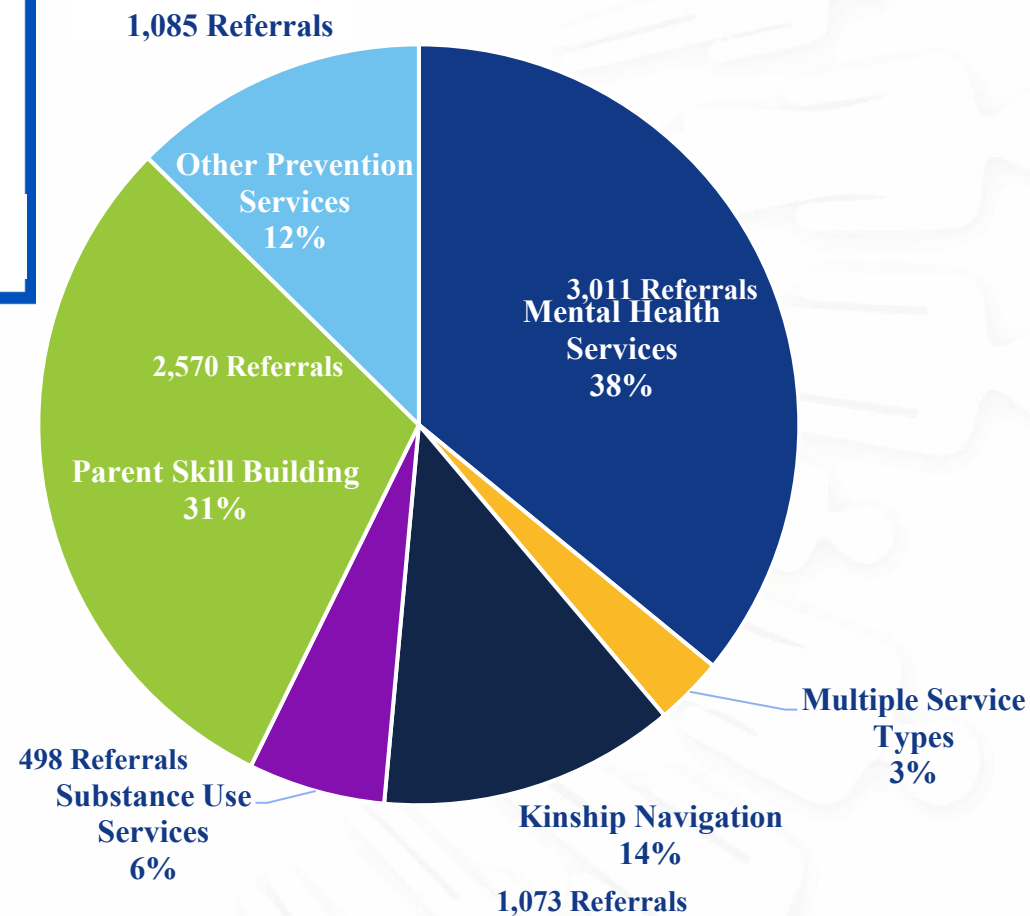
FAMILY FIRST: FAMILIES REFERRED

Referrals by Region

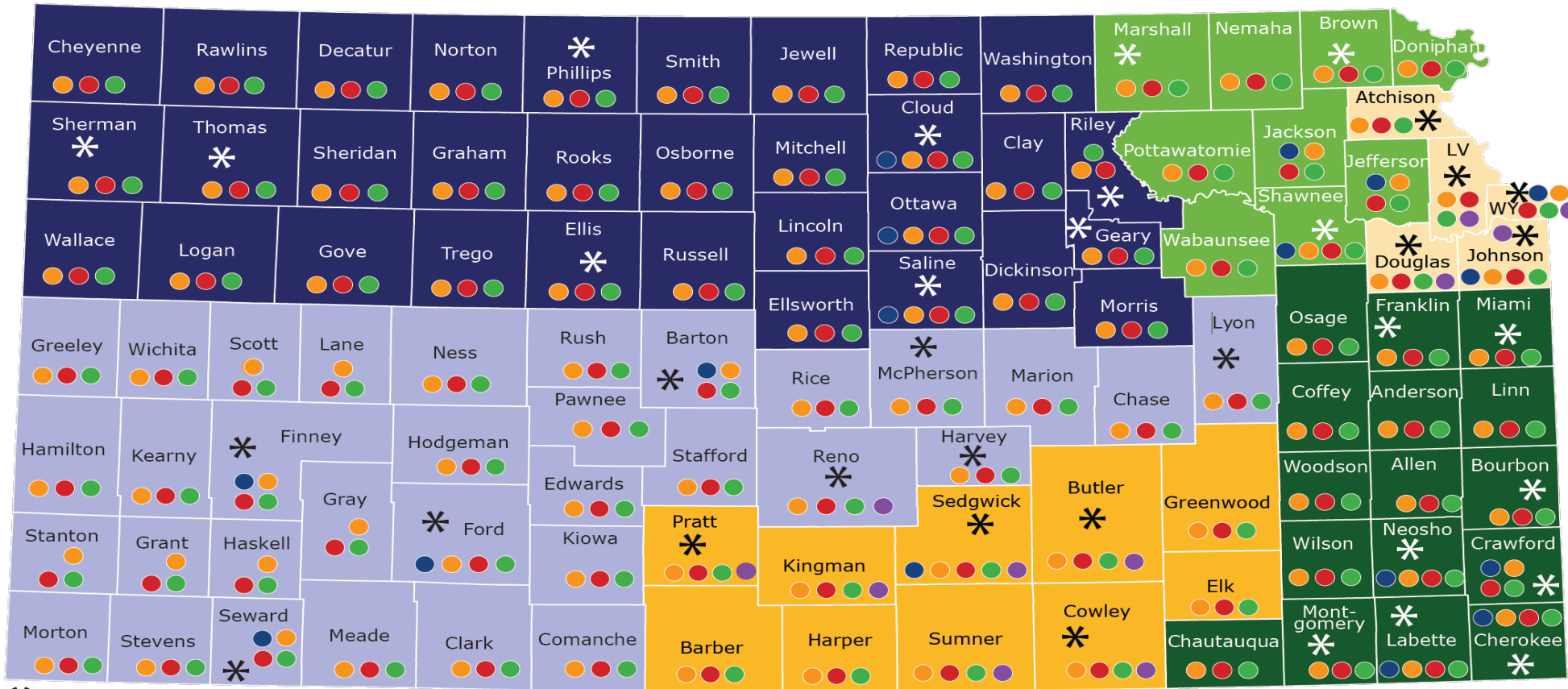


**FAMILY FIRST
REFERRALS
8,239 Referrals**

Referrals by Service Type



Family First Prevention Services Act Programs



* DCF Service Center

- Northwest
- Northeast
- Wichita
- Southwest
- Southeast
- Kansas City

- Mental Health
- Substance Use Disorder
- Parent Skill Building
- Kinship Navigator
- Other Primary Prevention Services

2025 SESSION BILL UPDATES & 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND RESPONSE

HOUSE BILL 2075 IMPLEMENTATION



On July 1, 2025, DCF began initiating contact with families every day of the week, including holidays, when there is a report from a law enforcement officer about a child who might be a victim of abuse or neglect.

DCF now responds within 24 hours by initiating contact of individuals named and responding back to the referring law enforcement agency.

As in current practice:

- If a law enforcement agency requests DCF hold off on contacting a family, DCF will not contact the family until law enforcement provides further guidance.
- If the alleged circumstance requires a joint investigation by DCF and law enforcement, the child protection specialist or investigator will coordinate with the law enforcement agency on the best way to proceed with contacting the family

HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND RESPONSE (cont.)



HOUSE BILL 2075 IMPLEMENTATION - RESULTS

- From 7/1/25-12/31/25, Kansas saw a **42.62% reduction** in Police Protective Custody's.
- 16% of all PPC's occurred on Saturday's & Sunday's.
- Wichita Region experienced half of all PPC's in the state, followed by the Southwest Region.

PPC Comparison 7/1/24-12/31/24 and 7/1/25-12/31/25

DCF Region	SFY 2025	SFY 2026	Percentage Change
Kansas City	181	125	30.94%
Northeast	125	51	59.2%
Northwest	119	106	10.92%
Southeast	253	102	59.68%
Southwest	214	159	25.70%
Wichita	938	507	45.95%
Total	1830	1050	42.62% decrease



Region	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total	Region as %
Kansas City	34	15	18	20	21	13	4	125	11.9%
Northeast	10	10	10	9	9	1	2	51	4.9%
Northwest	17	22	17	30	13	5	2	106	10.1%
Southeast	15	19	16	18	19	6	9	102	9.7%
Southwest	47	29	33	15	23	2	10	159	15.1%
Wichita	88	68	74	92	70	58	57	507	48.3%
Grand Total	211	163	168	184	155	85	84	1,050	100.0%
Day as %	20%	16%	16%	18%	15%	8%	8%	100%	

E.O. 25-01 PRESERVATION OF FEDERAL BENEFITS



Executive Order 25-01 requires DCF to **discontinue the prior practice** of reimbursing the state for the cost of foster care from benefits received by youth due to their own disability or the death, disability, or retirement of a parent.

- No funds reimbursed to DCF from benefit monies received after Jan. 1, 2025
- In partnership with the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD), the Kansas State Treasurer's Office and Kansas Council for Economic Education, we launched a statewide campaign designed to **expand access to ABLE accounts and financial literacy education to youth with disabilities in foster care.**
- For youth who do not qualify for an ABLE account, their federal benefits are preserved in a personal needs account.
- Since January 2025, DCF, in cooperation with the Kansas State Treasurer's Office, has set up more than **600 ABLE accounts** for youth in foster care.

2026 DCF LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



SB414 - EXPANDING ELIGIBLE FACILITIES FOR JUVENILE CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICE FUNDS (Currently in HB2329)

- Since the 2018 JCIC law, additional facility-based crisis intervention service program models have been innovated and implemented.
- To build capacity of facility models in communities across Kansas, more crisis intervention facilities would benefit from an ability to access the \$2M funds.
- Proposed amendment to KSA 65-536(h):

*(h) The secretary of corrections may enter into memorandums of agreement with other cabinet agencies to provide funding, not to exceed \$2,000,000 annually, from the evidence-based programs account of the state general fund or other available appropriations for juvenile crisis intervention services **provided by a licensed Juvenile Crisis Intervention Center or other residential facility licensed by the Kansas Department for Children and Families or the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services that has a program purpose of behavioral health crisis intervention for juveniles.***

2026 DCF LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



HB2557 - ADOPTION OF REVISED INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

- The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children was created in 1960 and adopted in Kansas in 1976.
- New ICPC language was adopted in 2007
 - The rulemaking commission will be made up of the first 35 states to adopt.
 - Over the past 3 years 8 additional states have adopted the new language bringing the total to 20 states including Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Colorado.
- Revisions to the ICPC will impact not just foster care children and placements but will guide and clarify language and processes for independent adoptions and parental placements both with individuals and in congregate care facilities across state borders.

QUESTIONS?
