

Kansas
Department for Children and Families

Kansas Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

2026

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Section I: Introduction to Diligent Recruitment

This section provides an overview of Kansas's approach to diligent recruitment, including key definitions of terms used throughout the plan, key drivers and shared statewide goals that support recruitment and retention efforts across families, agencies, communities and system-wide policy.

1.01 Definitions

The following definitions are provided solely for purposes of the Kansas Diligent Recruitment Plan and are not intended to replace, supersede or modify definitions contained in DCF policy, regulation, licensing standards, contracts or state or federal law.

Adoption Exchange or Adopt Kansas Kids

Adopt Kansas Kids (AKK) serves as the Adoption Exchange for Kansas. In this role, AKK supports recruitment and matching efforts for children in need of adoptive families through its website, matching database, media features and community outreach events. AKK also provides education and support to families who are exploring adoption, including answering questions and connecting families with appropriate agencies and resources throughout the adoption process.

Adopt Kansas Kids is provided through a contract with the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF).

Adoptive Placement Resource A placement type intending to provide legal permanency through means of adoption when reunification is not achievable. Prospective adoptive families may be licensed or unlicensed.

Child Placing Agency (CPA) Contracted agencies responsible for placement of children, as well as recruiting, training, licensing and supporting foster and adoptive families.

Child Welfare Case Management Provider (CWCMP) Contracted agencies responsible for case management services for children experiencing foster care, including permanency planning, placement coordination and family support services for kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources and SOUL family connections.

Community Partner Organizations Groups or individuals that collaborate with DCF, CPAs and CWCMPs to assist with recruitment, preparation, support and retention efforts of kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources and SOUL family connections. Community partners may include adoption exchanges, post-adoption service providers, schools, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, tribal entities, businesses, kinship service providers, prevention service providers, family resource centers and individuals with lived experience.

Diligent Recruitment The strategic approach of child welfare agencies to recruit, prepare, support and retain kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources and SOUL family connections to meet the needs of children in foster care. Diligent Recruitment involves child welfare agencies using data-driven, comprehensive best practices to engage and support families.

Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council (DRAC) A statewide collaborative body established to guide, evaluate and continuously improve the state's recruitment and retention of kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources and SOUL family connections. The council is composed of representatives from Child Placing Agencies (CPAs), Child Welfare Case Management Providers (CWCMPs), the Department for Children and Families (DCF), community partners and individuals with lived experience.

Foster Family A licensed placement type approved to provide foster care for children and youth. Diligent recruitment efforts described in this plan primarily focus on families serving children experiencing foster care through the child welfare system.

Inquiry Prospective families expressing interest in getting started with the process of providing kinship care, fostering, adopting and/or providing SOUL family legal permanency.

Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) The state agency responsible for administering child welfare services in Kansas, including oversight of foster care, adoption and family support programs. DCF provides statewide leadership, policy direction and coordination with contracted CWCMP/CPA agencies and community partners to support the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.

Kinship Family For purposes of this plan, kinship family includes both non-relative adults with a significant prior relationship to the child or family and relative adults who provide placement and care when the child cannot remain safely with their parent(s). Relative Kinship families may be licensed or unlicensed. Non-relative kinship families must be licensed unless the child is 16 or older. See PPS 5234 for a definition of relative.

Lived Experience Individuals who have personal experience with the child welfare system, including youth or adults formerly in foster care, birth parents, kinship caregivers, foster or adoptive parents, including children in the home whose parents are fostering or adopting. The insights of these individuals inform recruitment, preparation, support and retention strategies.

Prospective Family/Parent An individual or family at any stage of exploring, inquiring about or pursuing the process of becoming a kinship, foster, adoptive or SOUL family.

SOUL Family SOUL (Support-Opportunity-Unity-Legal Relationships) Family Legal Permanency is a youth-centered permanency option that enables youth in foster care age 16 and older to establish a legal caregiving relationship with one or more adults (called SOUL Family Legal Permanency custodians) while maintaining existing family connections and access to important benefits to support their transition into adulthood.

Speakers Bureau The Kansas Speakers Bureau, organized by Adopt KS Kids, consists of a group of individuals with lived experience, trained in public speaking and utilized to raise public awareness about kinship care, foster care, adoption and SOUL.

1.02 Understanding Diligent Recruitment



Diligent Recruitment in Kansas is a collaborative **"one-system approach"** that unites the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), Child Placing Agencies (CPAs), Child Welfare Case Management Providers (CWCMPs), prevention service providers, community partners and individuals with lived experience to strengthen statewide recruitment and retention efforts.

Kansas's Diligent Recruitment Plan is a comprehensive strategy that outlines statewide collaboration and strategies to **recruit**, **prepare**, **support** and **retain** Kansas **kinship**, **foster** and **adoptive placement resources**, as well as **SOUL Family Legal Permanency** connections for children experiencing foster care. This plan is critical for ensuring that sufficient families are available to meet the unique needs of children in care.

Key Drivers of the Diligent Recruitment Plan:

Child-Centered strategies focused on helping each individual child heal and grow.

Lived Experience incorporated in the development of strategies for recruiting, preparing, supporting and retaining families.

Data-Driven Approaches analyze child and family data to identify recruitment and retention needs.

Leadership guiding the development, implementation and evaluation of recruitment and retention planning across agencies.

Collaboration and Transparency bring together agency leaders, community partners and individuals with lived experience to build on successes, lessons learned and goals.

Sustainability and Measurable Goals establish detailed tasks and timeframes for recruiting and retaining families while supporting long-term success.

1.03 Diligent Recruitment Goals

Shared Vision Statement



Kansas is committed to promoting the best interests of children and youth by keeping them connected to their families, communities and culture. **Children and youth thrive when they can safely remain at home or be reunified with their families.** When that is not possible, they should have a kinship, foster, adoptive or SOUL family prepared to support their healing and growth.

Micro/Mezzo/Macro Level Approach

Kansas has adopted a Micro/Mezzo/Macro framework to guide the development and implementation of the Diligent Recruitment Plan. This approach ensures that recruitment and retention strategies are comprehensive across all levels of the child welfare system—from individual families to statewide policy.

By integrating this Micro/Mezzo/Macro framework, Kansas ensures that diligent recruitment efforts are not isolated activities but part of a comprehensive **one-system approach**, where families are supported at the micro level, agencies are aligned at the mezzo level and policies reinforce success at the macro level.

This structure promotes accountability, collaboration and sustainability, while supporting continuous improvement of Kansas's diligent recruitment efforts.



Micro Level
Families and Direct Supports

Focus:

Strategies at this level **strengthen recruitment**, **preparation**, **support** and **retention** of kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources, as well as the agency staff who work directly with them.

This is accomplished through access to high-quality training, customer service and responsive support.

Goal: Strengthen Recruitment and Retention

By June 30, 2028, Kansas will **increase the total number of licensed homes** above the fiscal year 2025 baseline, measured by DCF licensing and closure data.



Mezzo Level
Agencies and Communities

Focus:

Strategies at this level address how **DCF**, **CPAs**, **CWCMPs**, **community partners** and those with **lived experience** collaborate to recruit, prepare, support and retain families that reflect the unique needs of the children in care.

This is accomplished by aligning messaging and strategies, sharing data and building community-based supports.

Goal: Strengthen Retention Data to Inform Practice Strategies

By June 30, 2027, the Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council will develop and implement a **standardized statewide process** for collecting and analyzing family-type placement closure and disruption reasons across all CWCMP and CPA agencies.



Macro Level
Systemwide Policy and Communication

Focus:

Strategies at this level focus on a data-informed system that **sustains** recruitment and retention efforts.

This is accomplished through clear policy, best practice alignment, consistent messaging, legislation, funding and a positive public perception.

Goal: Accountability and Continuous Improvement of the Kansas Diligent Recruitment Plan

By June 30, 2028, the Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council will update the Kansas Diligent Recruitment Plan to ensure ongoing collaboration, data-informed practice and measurable goals.

1.04 Foster Care Demographics

The following data presents a broad view of the foster care population in Kansas.

On June 30, 2025, there were

5,690

Youth in Out-of-Home Placements in Kansas

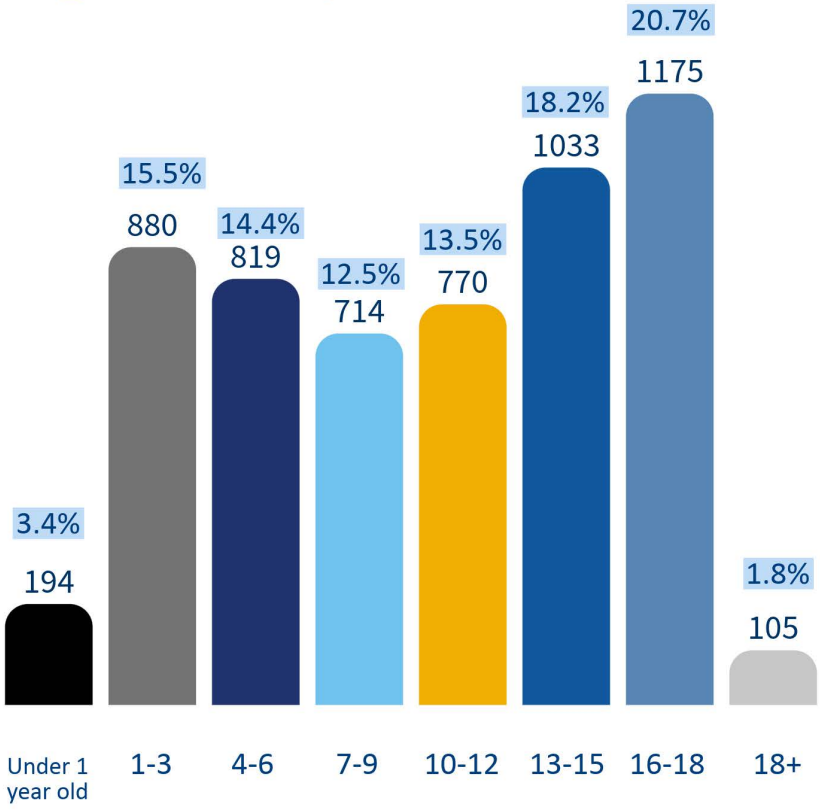


Entries/Exits

2,599
youth **entered** care in SFY25

2,473
youth **exited** care in SFY25

Number and Percentage of Children by Age Group



Gender

49% female

51% male

**Data from State Fiscal Year 2025*

Sibling Information

Data from SFY25



In SFY25, Kansas had

3,510

children in care who had at least one sibling who was also in care

As of June 30, 2025,

2,580

children were placed with **at least one sibling**



73.5%

Out of the 3,510 children in care who had siblings,



73.5%

of children **were placed with** at least one sibling

Data from SFY25

Sibling Groups

In SFY25, Kansas had

1,756

sibling groups in care

Group Sizes



2 Children

973

groups

3 Children

462

groups





4+ Children

321

groups

1070 sibling groups were placed together with their entire sibling group in SFY25

In SFY25, Kansas was able to place

60.9%

of **all siblings in a sibling group** together

Placement Geography

Data from SFY25



As of June 30, 2025,

52.97%

of children in care were placed in their home county



18.95%

of children in care were placed in a contiguous (neighboring) county

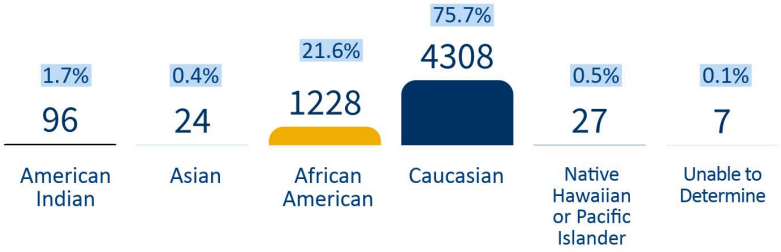


28.08%

of children in care were not placed in their home or contiguous county

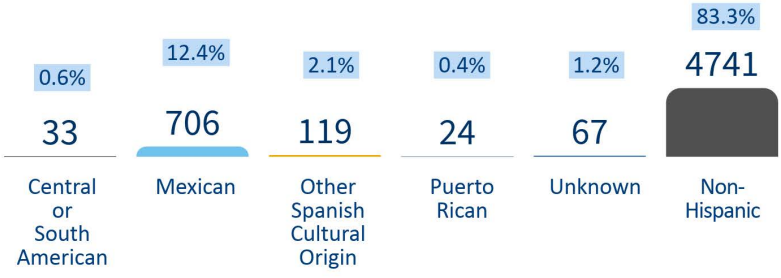
Race

DCF's SFY25 report states that it captures the child's primary race declared.



Ethnicity

DCF reports ethnicity separately from race.



Data from SFY25

Children in Care By Goal

Data from SFY25



Reunification
3,126

54.9%



Adoption
1,830

32.2%



Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement
626

11.0%



Maintain in Family
69

1.2%



SOUL Family
11

0.2%



Section II: Diligent Recruitment Plan

This section outlines Kansas's strategies for recruiting, preparing and supporting prospective kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources.

2.01 Characteristics of Children in Need of Placement

This section identifies the characteristics and needs of Kansas children and youth for whom kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources are needed and informs recruitment efforts to identify families who can meet those needs.

Older youth and teens

Youth ages 12 and older are more likely to experience placement instability and face greater challenges in achieving permanency. These youth benefit from stable placements that support ongoing development, permanency and successful transitions to adulthood.

Sibling groups

Children in care who have siblings benefit from being placed together, as these relationships provide emotional support, preserve connection and promote stability and well-being.

Children with complex needs

Children with complex medical, developmental, emotional, educational, behavioral or legal needs or juvenile justice system involvement, benefit from specialized care, trauma-informed support and placement stability.

Children who have a case plan goal of reintegration

Children with a goal of reintegration benefit from placements that support ongoing family connections, promote stability and create opportunities for safe and successful reunification.

Children needing placements near their home communities

Children benefit from placements that allow them to remain connected to their home communities, supporting continuity in education, relationships, services and a sense of belonging.

Children needing identity-affirming placements

Children benefit from placements that affirm their cultural, racial, religious and personal identities, including children subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), supporting a strong sense of self, belonging and overall well-being.

2.02 Statewide Recruitment Strategies

This section outlines strategies to reach all parts of the community, including diverse methods of disseminating information through general, targeted and child-specific recruitment types.

The following statewide recruitment strategies are designed to identify prospective families who can meet placement needs outlined in Section 2.01.

Strategies to reach all parts of the community may include awareness campaigns, partnerships with local faith-based organizations, schools, tribal nations, community organizations, culturally specific groups and individuals with lived experience. Interpretation services and multilingual materials are provided to promote inclusive engagement across the state.

The table below outlines how these strategies are implemented through general, targeted and child-specific recruitment approaches aligned with the needs identified in Section 2.01.

General Recruitment

Definition: General Recruitment involves awareness campaigns and community outreach focused on increasing awareness and promoting an accurate and strengths-based public understanding of foster care.

Specific Strategies

Awareness Campaigns

Media campaigns - social media, television, radio, transit advertising, website photolisting and other media platforms.

Community events - fairs, expos, cultural festivals, school events, faith-based gatherings, employer-sponsored events, business groups including chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, KIWANIS, etc.

Unified Messaging

Consistent language aligned with the DRAC's shared vision statement, outlined in section 1.03.

Storytelling and Lived Experience

Public awareness videos featuring youth and families with lived experience, including the Adopt Kansas Kids Awareness Video Library[1], which provides statewide recruitment and awareness videos for use by agencies and community partners.

Use of the Speakers Bureau to raise awareness of the need for kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families.

[1] Adopt Kansas Kids Awareness Playlist: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZVdiaxq0BK43qPnbI8AxFo4qjAGawURK&si=yA2hLj-7t5abCcuy

Targeted Recruitment

Definition: Targeted recruitment efforts are those that intentionally focus on identifying and engaging families who can meet Kansas Placement needs defined in section 2.01.

Specific Strategies



Community-Based Outreach:

Counties where children most frequently enter care.

Counties where a high percentage of children are placed outside of their home county or contiguous county.

Digital advertising, including social media and location-based targeting.

Professional disciplines whose training and experience align with child needs, including, but not limited to, educational and caregiving professionals, pediatric and behavioral health providers, disability service professionals, faith leaders, law enforcement, cultural organizations and tribal partners.



Specialized Messaging:

Child populations with **identified placement needs**.

Lived experience storytelling highlighting the realities and rewards.

Available supports to reduce barriers.

Foster parents' role in maintaining strong birth family connections and supporting reunification.

Maintaining **children's connections** to their home communities.

Child-Specific Recruitment

Definition: Individualized recruitment strategies focused on identifying and engaging potential caregivers or permanency resources for a specific child.

Specific Strategies





CWCMP Efforts

These efforts occur throughout the life of the case. Efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- Early identification and engagement of relatives and non-relative kinship to preserve family, cultural and relational connections.
- Family-finding tools – such as a review of historical records and prior documentation, contact with known family members to identify additional connections and review of school, medical and community contacts.
- Eco-Map – A visual or narrative tool used to identify all meaningful relationships in the child's life, including relatives, teachers, coaches, neighbors, mentors, previous placements and other significant relationships.
- Engagement of all meaningful relationships in the child's life, identified through the Eco-Map.
- Targeting efforts based on a youth's cultural, racial, religious and personal identity.
- Preparation for adoption and recruitment, including efforts to support children who are not consenting to recruitment.

Adoption Exchange:

Types of recruitment provided by the Adoption Exchange include, but are not limited to:

- Website Photolisting – including a photo and strength–based description of the child, visible to prospective adoptive families.
- Child to Family and Family to Child Matching – a comparison of child needs and family openness to identify possible matches of available families.
- Youth-Centered Profile – Children 12 and older work with an Adopt Kansas Kids Child Specialist on the development of their own in-depth profile using a variety of multimedia tools to share with prospective families.
- Out-of-State Recruitment – The Adoption Exchange will assess inquiries on youth from families residing outside of Kansas, as well as use regional and national exchanges to expand the pool of potential families.
- Adoption Exchange Efforts: These efforts occur when a child's permanency plan includes adoption and recruitment is initiated by the CWCMP. See section 2.04 for additional details.

2.03 Preparation and Support for Prospective Families

This section describes how Kansas prioritizes access to training, licensing, home studies, customer service and support for prospective kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources.

Inquiry Pathways

Prospective families are connected with agencies that guide them through the training, licensing and home study process. Agencies are encouraged to provide prompt follow-up and clear information about the next steps.

Prospective families may inquire through multiple entry points, including:

The Kansas Adoption Exchange*
Kansas Children's Alliance*
Kansas Child Placing Agency (CPA)
Case Management Provider (CWCMP)
Kansas DCF
Community partners

The **Kansas Adoption Exchange and the **Kansas Children's Alliance** maintain a comprehensive, state supported directory of CPAs[2] to assist families in identifying the appropriate agency.*

Flexible Training Options

Kansas provides **pre-service training** to prepare prospective families for the realities of caring for children impacted by trauma and the child welfare system. Pre-service training is provided at no cost and has flexible training options. Examples include:

Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) Foundations

is a 30-hour, 10-week course focused on building a support network, enhancing skills and assessing readiness for foster caregiving.

Pressley Ridge Treatment Foster Care (PR-TFC)

is a 12-unit competency-based program for treatment foster care centered on the importance of a strong relationship between the treatment parent and youth and uses a trauma-informed approach to teach parents that behavior can change and the youth can learn the skills necessary for effective living.

Deciding Together (DT)

is a one-to-one professional and family meeting series, covering important MAPP concepts with Agency Sponsors in a flexible schedule setting over approximately 7 weeks.

Kinship Path

is an optional training pathway for kinship caregivers designed specifically to support caregivers as they navigate licensing and caregiving responsibilities for children in kinship care.

Kinship Bridge

is an optional training for Kinship Path trained caregivers who are interested in becoming licensed foster/adoptive parents for unrelated children

[2] CPA Directory - https://www.childally.org/about-foster-care

Kansas offers **continuing education opportunities**, at no cost, to support trauma-informed and permanency-competent families. Families are supplied with a list of resources for free training opportunities from their Child Placing Agency. Training may be offered in in-person, virtual, hybrid or self-paced formats to increase accessibility for families across Kansas.

Examples include:



Kinship Origins, designed to provide essential tools and resources to help adjust to the role of a kinship caregiver. Topics include navigating difficult emotions, supporting children through trauma, understanding the court system and related agencies, practical caregiving skills and helping children stay connected.



Core Teen, designed for caregivers raising teens with moderate to severe emotional and behavioral challenges. Focused on trauma-informed care, strengthening placement stability, fostering permanency and enhancing youth well-being through interactive sessions that build skills for managing challenging behaviors and nurturing developmental needs.



Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), an attachment-based training focused on helping caregivers and children build trust, feel safe and improve behavioral self-regulation.



Mastering Adoption Through Trauma-Informed Care and Healing (MATCH), helping build adoption-competent caregivers by focusing on the foundations of trauma and loss, preparing for the realities of adoption and building skills for sustainable parenting.

Customer Service and Support for Prospective Families

Timely response to inquiries and referrals, with agencies encouraged to acknowledge initial contact and provide next steps as quickly as possible.

Clear, consistent communication to prospective families throughout the inquiry, training, licensing and home study process, including expectations, timelines and required steps.

Designated points of contact within agencies to help families navigate questions related to training, licensing, home studies and available support.

Trauma-informed, family-centered engagement that respects families' experiences, cultural identities and individual circumstances.

Access to language support, to reduce linguistic and communication barriers, see 2.07 for additional details.

Connection to support services and resources that assist families throughout placement and permanency, including peer support, advocacy, training opportunities and community-based resources.

Access to resources and support services that are **responsive to each family's needs**, ensuring the right support is provided at the right time to promote stability and permanency.

Ongoing coordination between CPAs, CWCMPs and community partners to support smooth transitions and continuity of services for families as they move through the system.

2.04 Timely Search for Adoptive Families

This section outlines procedures used to conduct a timely search for prospective adoptive families for children and youth in Kansas with identified adoption needs.

CWCMP efforts include, but are not limited to:

Active Engagement

Continuing active family-finding and kinship engagement efforts throughout the life of the case.

Identifying and Assessing

Identifying and assessing kinship and non-related kinship families that emerge throughout the case, updated assessments, school contacts, community supports and family interviews.

Thoroughly Reviewing

Completing a thorough review of the child's file to identify and reassess kinship and non-related kinship families, including those previously considered, as well as previous placements for the child, to determine potential interest in adoption.

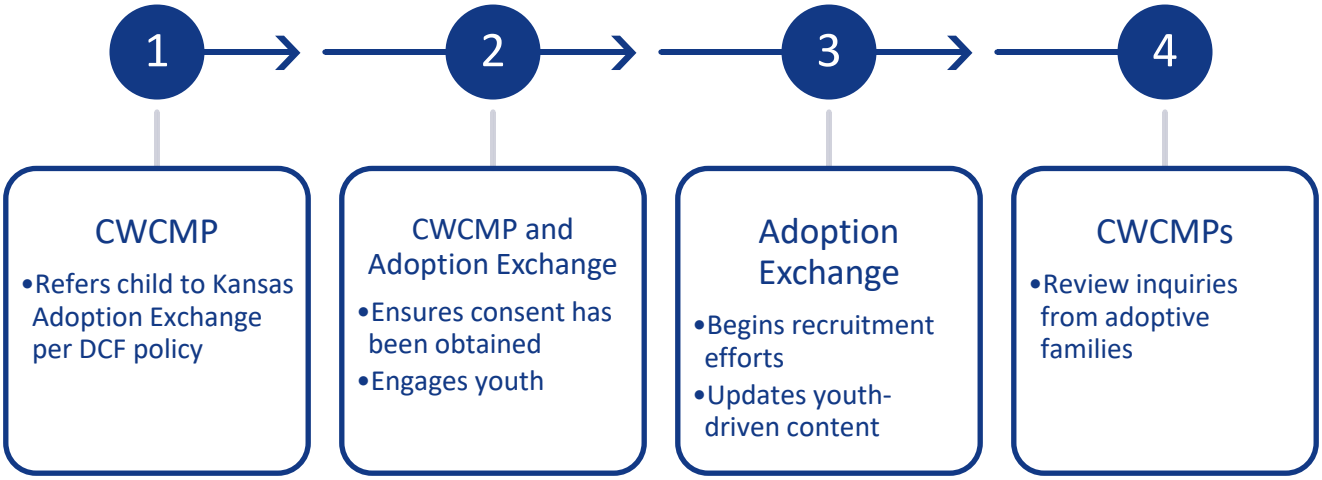
Preparing and Supporting

Preparing, supporting and engaging children in the adoption process in an age- and developmentally appropriate manner, including obtaining consent from children, ages 10 and older, for Adoption Exchange recruitment and maintaining ongoing efforts to explore permanency options with youth who are not consenting.

Referral to Adopt Kansas Kids:

When a child is legally free for adoption and has a permanency goal of adoption without a potential identified adoptive resource, the CWCMP will **refer the child to the Kansas Adoption Exchange**, per DCF policy, PPM 5313 Specialized Recruitment Activities[3].

- In partnership, the CWCMP and Adopt Kansas Kids will **ensure consent** for adoption recruitment has been obtained for youth ages 10 and older before initiating Adoption Exchange recruitment, with the CWCMP continuing to lead consent discussions and youth engagement.
- The Adoption Exchange will **begin recruitment efforts** within 30 business days of the completed referral being received. See 2.02 "Child-Specific" for additional details on recruitment efforts available through the Adoption Exchange.
- Photolistings, narratives and youth-driven recruitment content will be **updated at least annually** or sooner if circumstances change.
- CWCMPs **will review all inquiries from prospective adoptive families** within 5 business days of receipt from the Adoption Exchange and collaborate with the Adoption Exchange to assess and engage with the family.



Procedures to Eliminate Barriers to Interjurisdictional Placements:

- Kansas will collaborate with neighboring states, tribal governments and national exchanges to support timely interjurisdictional placements.
- DCF will work toward reducing barriers such as delays in information sharing, inconsistent documentation requirements or unclear communication between jurisdictions.
- Kansas will support agreements that streamline home study transfers, utilize Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) efficiently and increase access to the widest pool of suitable families.

[3] PPM 5313 - https://content.dcf.ks.gov/PPS/robohelp/PPMGenerate/CFS_PPM2.htm#t=PPS_Policies%2F5000_Child_Welfare_Case_Management%2F5313_Specialized_Recruitment_Activities.htm&rhsearch=5316&ux=search

2.05 Workforce Training and Development

This section describes strategies used to strengthen workforce capacity to effectively recruit, prepare and support families. These strategies align with federal requirements related to training staff to effectively work with diverse communities, while also reflecting Kansas's broader commitment to workforce development.

Kansas prioritizes strengthening the capacity of the child welfare workforce to effectively engage and support children, youth and families through ongoing training and professional development that addresses cultural responsiveness, trauma-informed practice and permanency-competent service delivery.

Training implementation is managed by individual agencies. Agencies are encouraged to identify and provide training opportunities that include, at a minimum, the following content areas:



Effective communication and engagement with families from varied backgrounds, including reflection on personal and systemic biases and their impact on decision-making and family engagement.



Engagement with multilingual families, including appropriate use of qualified interpreter services and language access requirements.



Trauma-informed practice, including an understanding of childhood trauma, secondary trauma and how trauma impacts behavior, attachment and family systems.



Permanency-competent practice, including the unique needs of children and families and the lifelong implications of separation, loss and permanency.



Differentiated approaches to working with kinship, foster and adoptive families, recognizing the distinct roles, expectations and support needs associated with each caregiving relationship.



Kinship-specific training opportunities that address family dynamics, grief and loss, caregiver stress and the unique relational experiences of kinship caregiving.



Compliance with federal and state requirements, including the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and applicable civil rights protections.



Customer service and family-centered engagement, emphasizing respectful and timely communication, transparency and partnership with families.

Professional training opportunities are available through the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), contracted partner agencies and statewide organizations such as the Children's Alliance of Kansas. These include permanency-focused initiatives such as the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) and Training for Adoption Competency (TAC), which support workforce development in trauma-informed and permanency-competent practice.



Kansas further encourages continuous learning through supervisory coaching, peer consultation and the inclusion of lived-experience perspectives to strengthen staff's understanding of the children, families and communities they serve.

2.06 Addressing Linguistic and Communication Barriers

This section outlines strategies to reduce linguistic and communication barriers that may affect prospective families' ability to access information, engage in services and participate in the recruitment and licensing process.

Kansas recognizes that communication barriers may include differences in language, dialect, literacy levels and familiarity with child welfare terminology or processes.

Strategies include:

Translating key recruitment, training and support materials into commonly used languages.

Supporting staff in using clear, accessible and culturally responsive communication.

Utilizing qualified interpreter services or multilingual staff to ensure effective communication throughout the licensing, placement and permanency process.

Engaging and recruiting families who reflect the linguistic diversity of communities served.

Training staff to engage effectively with families who have varied language and communication needs.

Avoiding the use of children, family members or informal supports as interpreters for critical or sensitive communications.

2.07 Non-Discriminatory Fees

This section describes policies and practices that reduce financial barriers and support access to services and supports.

Kinship Care

- Reduce financial barriers for kinship caregivers, recognizing that many enter caregiving roles unexpectedly.
- Placement or licensure-related costs, including required background checks, training and home studies, are provided at no cost. However, families may incur some costs associated with meeting placement requirements.

- Kansas supports kinship caregivers through access to financial assistance, including foster care maintenance payments, in accordance with state policy.
- Kansas provides state funded subsidies for kinship caregivers who become permanent custodians or SOUL Family Legal Permanency custodians.

Foster Care

- Maintain a no-fee application and licensing process through Child Placing Agencies (CPAs), though families may incur some costs associated with meeting licensing requirements.
- Provide required background checks, training and home studies at no cost.

Adoption

- Kansas seeks to minimize financial barriers to adoption for children experiencing foster care through the child welfare system, with most adoption-related costs covered or supported by DCF, though some expenses, such as attorney fees beyond the state-paid rate or required health assessments, may be the responsibility of the family.
- Eligible adoption-related expenses may be reimbursed through the adoption assistance program, including nonrecurring adoption expenses as allowed under federal and state policy.
- Families receive written information explaining adoption assistance, nonrecurring expenses and available post-adoption supports.

2.08 Tribal Considerations

Kansas is committed to full compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and to fostering respectful, collaborative partnerships with tribes. Recruitment and placement efforts for Indian children are guided by the principles of tribal sovereignty, cultural preservation and tribal engagement.

Kansas supports tribal-responsive recruitment and placement by:

- Collaborating with tribal governments and tribal representatives to identify placement resources consistent with ICWA placement preferences.
- Prioritizing placements that maintain children's connections to their tribe, extended family and tribal community.
- Coordinating with tribal partners in recruitment, placement decisions and permanency planning.
- Providing training and workforce development on ICWA requirements, effective tribal engagement and collaboration with tribal partners.



Section III: Retention and Family Support

Following recruitment and preparation efforts for prospective families, this section outlines how Kansas supports and retains kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families through coordinated, ongoing services across the caregiving continuum.

3.01 Retention and Family Support

Kansas recognizes that recruiting families is only the first step and that meaningful, ongoing support is essential to sustaining caregiver engagement, promoting placement stability and achieving positive permanency outcomes.

Retention of kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families is a core component of diligent recruitment, supported through responsive, coordinated services across the caregiving continuum.

The strategies outlined in this section apply broadly across all caregiving family types. Additional considerations specific to kinship caregiving are outlined in Section 3.02.

Caregiver Preparation and Readiness

As discussed in section 2.03, Kansas is committed to providing support and preparation for all prospective families. Kansas promotes early and proactive support to strengthen caregiver readiness and reduce preventable disruptions by:

Providing clear expectations	Supporting alignment	Connecting families early
and transparent communication prior to placement.	between child needs, family capacity and preferences and placement decisions.	to peer supports, training opportunities and agency resources

Early preparation and accurate information sharing are critical to supporting sustainable placements.

Caregiver Retention and Support

Following licensure and/or placement, Kansas supports families by encouraging CPAs and community partners to:

Provide ongoing education opportunities	including trauma-informed and permanency-competent training, as outlined in Section 2.03.
Facilitate access	to peer support, mentorship opportunities and support groups.
Connect families	to community-based resources, behavioral health services, advocacy, respite and available financial supports.
Provide supports	that are responsive to the communication, language and service needs of children and families, as outlined in Section 2.06.
Promote responsive communication	through caregiver engagement and customer service practices that foster partnership, transparency and timely support.

Kansas values lived experience feedback, which highlights the importance of clear communication, responsiveness and feeling supported. Support strategies are guided by these insights, input from system partners and the principles of the Kansas Foster Care and Youth Bill of Rights[4] to strengthen collaboration and family retention.

Crisis Response and Placement Stabilization

Kansas recognizes that timely, coordinated support, especially during periods of increased stress, is critical to strengthening caregiver capacity and promoting placement stability.

Agencies are encouraged to:

Provide responsive support, advocacy and transparent communication during placement challenges, crises or transitions.

Facilitate access to respite care and short-term stabilization resources.

[4] https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/Foster-Care-Bill-of-Rights.aspx

Coordinate access to after-hours support, the statewide **Family Mobile Crisis Helpline**[5] and emergency behavioral health services.

Utilize collaborative and family-centered teaming approaches, including Placement Stability Team Decision-Making (PS-TDM) during time in care or Team Decision-Making (TDM) following permanency.

Coordinate across CPAs, CWCMPs, behavioral health providers, schools and community partners to address emergent needs and promote placement stability.

Support thoughtful transition planning and continuity of services during placement changes or periods of instability.

Promote trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate responses to behavioral escalation and crisis situations, including caregiver education on de-escalation strategies, crisis response pathways and community-based crisis services.

Connect families with post-permanency support programs and services.

These efforts aim to support children, youth and caregivers through challenges while promoting long-term family stability and permanency outcomes.

3.02 Kinship Care

Family connections are critical to the well-being and stability of children and youth. Kinship care supports continuity in relationships, culture, identity and community while promoting stable placements.

Kansas recognizes that kinship caregivers often enter this role unexpectedly and may navigate complex family dynamics. Ongoing, trauma-informed support is essential to sustaining these placements.

While many of the retention and support strategies outlined in Section 3.01 apply to kinship caregivers, kinship care presents unique considerations related to family relationships, permanency planning and caregiver engagement.

Kansas supports kinship efforts that prioritize early identification and ongoing engagement of relatives and non-related kin throughout the life of a case, as outlined in Sections 2.02 and 2.04.

[5] Family Mobile Crisis Helpline: dcf.ks.gov/FCR/Pages/default.aspx

Additionally, kinship caregivers are supported through placement and permanency with the following strategies.

Support

Provide financial support	for kinship caregivers, as outlined in Section 2.07.
Increase awareness	of licensing requirements and available training opportunities for kinship caregivers, including distinctions between licensed and unlicensed homes, as outlined in Section 2.03.
Coordinate	with agency staff and system partners to support navigation of educational, behavioral health, legal and permanency-related processes.
Recognize	that kinship caregivers face many of the same challenges as other caregiving families and benefit from ongoing support, trauma-informed education, advocacy, concrete resources, respite and responsive communication.
Engage	permanency support providers during stabilization planning.
Promote collaboration	among caregivers, CPAs, CWCMPs and community partners to strengthen placement stability and retention.
Provide workforce development training	that addresses the unique relational dynamics of kinship caregiving, as outlined in Section 2.05.
Promote meaningful engagement	of kinship caregivers in case planning, permanency discussions and court processes.

Permanency

Provide information	to kinship caregivers about available permanency pathways, including adoption, SOUL Family Legal Permanency, custodianship, guardianship and other permanency options, as appropriate.
Support caregivers and youth	in exploring permanency options that are age- and developmentally appropriate and responsive to the needs and circumstances of the youth and family.
Recognize	that permanency planning is an ongoing process that may evolve over time based on the changing needs and circumstances of the child, youth and family.
Promote	the maintenance of important family and relational connections, regardless of the permanency option pursued, when safe and appropriate.



Section IV: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

4.01 Lived Experience and Youth Voice

This section describes how Kansas evaluates the effectiveness of diligent recruitment and retention efforts and uses data, lived experience and collaboration to support continuous improvement.

Kansas recognizes that individuals with lived experience offer essential insight into effective recruitment, preparation, support and retention strategies. Kansas is committed to incorporating lived experience and youth voice across planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement efforts related to diligent recruitment.

Incorporation of Lived Experience

Individuals with lived experience contribute unique perspectives that inform how Kansas recruits, engages and supports families.

Kansas incorporates lived experience by:

Engaging lived experience representatives in recruitment strategies to help **identify, connect with and recruit families** who can meet the needs of children and youth.

Utilizing lived experience perspectives to **inform and evaluate caregiver support and retention strategies**, including identifying barriers, assessing effectiveness of services and supports and improving the overall caregiver experience.

Supporting initiatives such as the Speakers Bureau to **elevate authentic stories and increase public understanding** of kinship care, foster care, adoption and permanency.

Reducing participation barriers by encouraging compensation, flexible meeting times and use of accessible materials and language.

These efforts ensure that recruitment and retention strategies are grounded in real-world experience, responsive to family needs and continuously improved based on feedback from those directly impacted.

Youth Voice and Engagement

Kansas recognizes youth as key partners in their own permanency planning and in the improvement of diligent recruitment practices. Youth voice is especially critical in adoption and permanency efforts, as youth can provide insight into what support, communication and placement characteristics matter most to them.

Kansas promotes youth voice by:

Supporting age and developmentally appropriate engagement of youth in **permanency planning and recruitment activities**.

Incorporating youth feedback into **evaluation of recruitment and placement practices** by engaging groups such as the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC).

Elevating youth perspectives in **public awareness and education efforts** to promote accurate, strengths-based understanding of foster care and permanency.

Youth engagement efforts are guided by principles of respect, choice, safety and empowerment.

4.02 Data-Driven Evaluation

Kansas operates within a privatized child welfare system in which data related to children, families, recruitment, licensing and retention is collected and maintained across multiple systems and contracting entities. As a result, no single data system captures all elements necessary to fully evaluate diligent recruitment efforts statewide.

To support consistency, transparency and accountability, Kansas has identified key data elements used to inform diligent recruitment planning, implementation, evaluation and continuous improvement.

Data will be collected from the following: AFCARS, DCF, CPA/CWCMP reports and Adoption Exchange data and will be reviewed by DRAC on a quarterly basis.

Child Needs and Placement Data

Data related to child characteristics, placement history and permanency goals are primarily derived from **DCF** and **CWCMPs** systems.

This data informs:

1	Characteristics of Kansas children in need of placement, defined in section 2.01.
2	Timely search for adoptive families, defined in section 2.04.
3	Strategies to reach all parts of the community, defined in section 2.02.
4	General, targeted and child-specific recruitment strategies defined in section 2.02.

Family Recruitment Data

Data related to family recruitment, inquiries and adoption specific matching is maintained by the **Adoption Exchange** and **CPAs.**

Recruitment data is used to:

1	Assess the effectiveness of general, targeted and child-specific recruitment strategies defined in section 2.02.
2	Inform strategies to reach all parts of the community, defined in section 2.02.
3	Support tribal-responsive recruitment and placement, defined in section 2.08.
4	Inform adjustments to outreach methods and messaging outlined in section 2.02.

Family Licensing and Capacity Data

Information related to foster and adoptive family licensure, placement preferences and capacity is maintained by **CPAs** in coordination with **DCF Licensing**.

This data is used to inform:

1	Strategies used to identify capacity for characteristics of children for whom homes are needed, defined in section 2.01.
2	Strategies to provide access to preparation and support, defined in section 2.03.
3	Gaps that inform needs for general, targeted and child-specific recruitment strategies defined in section 2.02.

**Capacity data is an important indicator of available placement resources but does not independently determine placement matching, which also considers family preferences, child needs and other placement-specific factors.*

Family Retention and Support Data

Data related to family retention, home closures and ongoing support is primarily collected by **CPAs** and varies in structure and consistency across agencies. Kansas recognizes this as an area for continued development, evidenced by the states' goal outlined in Section 1.03, to strengthen retention data to inform practice strategies. Kansas is using available data, qualitative feedback and lived experience input to inform recruitment and retention improvements.

This data is used to:

1. Identify strategies for workforce training and development, defined in section 2.05.
2. Identify family support strategies to improve retention efforts, defined in section 3.01.
3. Strengthen kinship caregiver support, defined in section 3.02.
4. Identify trends related to family disengagement or closure.
5. Inform retention-focused support strategies.
6. Strengthen agency practices related to caregiver support and stability.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Feedback from the Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council (DRAC) has informed the identification of key data elements used within this plan. DRAC members provide ongoing guidance related to data use, emerging trends and data gaps.

Kansas will continue to use DRAC input to:

1. Review data trends related to recruitment and retention outcomes.
2. Identify opportunities to improve data consistency and accessibility.
3. Recommend adjustments to recruitment and retention strategies.

Kansas recognizes that data systems and collection methods will continue to evolve and remains committed to improving data coordination and expanding the use of data to support equitable, responsive and effective recruitment and retention efforts statewide.

4.03 Kansas Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council

The Kansas Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council is a statewide collaborative body that guides, evaluates and strengthens recruitment and retention of kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources, as well as SOUL family connections.

The Council includes representatives from CPAs, CWCMPs, DCF, community partners and individuals with lived experience, ensuring diverse perspectives are reflected in decision-making. The council meets quarterly to review data, assess strategy effectiveness, identify emerging needs and recommend updates to the Diligent Recruitment Plan.

Advisory Council Membership

Adopt Kansas Kids

CALM

Children's Alliance of Kansas

Cornerstones of Care

DCCCA

DCF

Dorothy's Lane

Eckerd

EmberHope

FosterAdopt Connect

Kansas Caregivers Support Network (KCSN)

Kansas Family Advisory Network (KFAN)

Kansas Post-Adoption Resource Center (K-PARC)

Kids R First Kansas Inc.

KU School of Social Welfare

KVC

Lived Experience Individuals

O'Connell

Office of the Child Advocate

Racial Equity Collaborative

Rainbows United

Restoration Family Services

Saint Francis Ministries

TFI

Tribal Specialists

Wichita Children's Home

4.04 Commitment and Shared Responsibility

Achieving meaningful and lasting progress in recruiting and retaining kinship, foster and adoptive placement resources, as well as SOUL family connections, requires a coordinated commitment from all partners across the Kansas child welfare system.

Each entity plays a vital role in ensuring that strategies are data-driven and family-centered. The commitments below reflect a shared responsibility to collaborate, innovate and continuously improve.

Efforts by All Parties:

Collaborate	to share best practices, coordinate messaging and reduce duplication of efforts.
Promote	a customer service-oriented culture that treats families as valued partners in achieving permanency through open communication and transparency.
Foster	a shared understanding of the role kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families play in supporting child well-being.
Participate	in workforce development efforts to strengthen staff competence and consistency across agencies.
Engage	in the work of the Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council.

Efforts by the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF):

Provide statewide leadership and oversight for diligent recruitment planning, implementation and evaluation.

Collect, analyze and share data to inform recruitment, retention and continuous improvement efforts.

Facilitate collaboration among CPAs, CWCMPs, community partners and individuals with lived experience, through the Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council.

Maintain family-centered policies and practices that align with federal requirements and Kansas's vision for permanency.

Support public awareness, outreach and legislative advocacy efforts that strengthen family recruitment and retention statewide.

Efforts by Child Placing Agencies (CPAs):

Implement targeted, data-informed recruitment and retention strategies that respond to the unique needs of children in care.

Provide high-quality preparation, training and support for kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families.

Engage kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families in peer mentorship, advisory roles and feedback opportunities, such as the Speakers Bureau, to strengthen services and recruitment efforts.

Partner with CWCMPs to support timely placement matching that considers the individual needs of children and the strengths of prospective families.

Promote placement stability and caregiver retention through consistent communication, resource connection and trauma-informed practice.

Efforts by Child Welfare Case Management Providers (CWCMPs):

Partner with CPAs to support timely placement matching that considers the individual needs of children and youth and the strengths of prospective families.

Promote placement stability and permanency through consistent communication, resource connection and trauma-informed practice.

Provide data, feedback and insights to inform recruitment priorities, identify barriers and support continuous improvement efforts through DRAC.

Efforts by Community Partners:

Leverage community networks to **raise awareness and recruit** kinship, foster, adoptive and SOUL families.

Contribute lived experience, community knowledge and professional expertise to **inform recruitment, support, training and evaluation efforts**.

Advocate for policies, practices and community-based supports that strengthen families and improve outcomes for children and youth.

4.05 Plan Development and Ongoing Review

This Diligent Recruitment Plan was developed through a collaborative, **one-system approach** guided by the Kansas Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council (DRAC).

The plan was facilitated and coordinated by **FosterAdopt Connect**, in partnership with the **Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)**, with input from CPAs, CWCMPs, community partners and individuals with lived experience.

The Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to monitor implementation, review data and evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies in Kansas, with a formal review and update anticipated by June 2028.



This Diligent Recruitment Plan was developed through a collaborative, one-system approach guided by the Kansas Diligent Recruitment Advisory Council (DRAC). The plan was facilitated and coordinated by FosterAdopt Connect, in partnership with the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), with input from CPAs, CWCMPs, community partners and individuals with lived experience.

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