

Prevention in Kansas



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DCF.FamilyFirst@ks.gov

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Family Preservation advisory group meets

The Family Preservation Advisory Workgroup held the first in-person meeting under the new contract on March 5th. The goal of the meeting was to obtain frontline worker and supervisor input when crafting Family Preservation policy and practice. Participants included both DCF and Family Preservation staff.

Prior to attending, each participant shared their favorite aspects of Family Preservation and ideas for improvement. Popular responses included variations on the theme that Family Preservation provides families support to stay together safely. Also mentioned was the need and benefit of consistent communication between DCF and the Family Preservation providers.

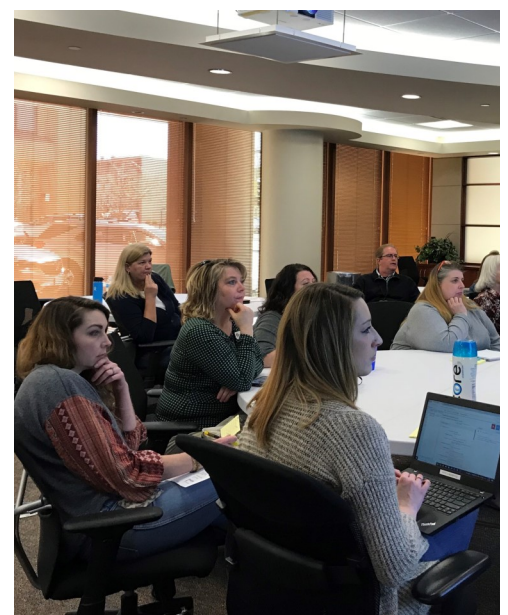
During the meeting, the group shared their favorite prevention success stories and broke out into small groups to discuss ways to make the

case plan more family-friendly.

Like the DCF staff, many of the Family Preservation providers are familiarizing themselves with the new Family First services, services in their regions. Coupled with the knowledge of community providers, this is beneficial during the case closure process to ensure families are set up for success.

Jill Widenham, East Region CPS Specialist from the Chanute office attended and said the “Family Preservation Advisory meeting was a great way to get everyone together and brainstorm a variety of ways that can enhance Family Preservation in the future. Everyone came together with the same goal, to advocate and partner with families we work with.”

Workgroup members will review draft policy and forms as they are updated prior to the July 2020 policy update.



The Family Preservation workgroup in break-out teams focused on case plans, forms, and policies.

Family Finding: Stepping out of casework as usual



Coached by Kevin Campbell, DCF staff and provider staff collaborated in small mixed teams to help actual families involved in the child welfare system. Over 100 Kansas families were examined using the Family Finding approach with the goal to connect foster youth to family and community supports.

With support and sponsorship from Aetna Better Health of Kansas, one of three Managed Care Organizations for Kansas Medicaid, Kansas has begun implementation of Kevin Campbell's Family Finding model approach. DCF and provider staff attended a 4-day boot camp, which included coaching, support, and a chance for attendees to work as teams to help real families involved in the child welfare system. The first boot camp took place in October of 2019 and brought together over 90 professionals from different child welfare agencies. The latest, in February, brought together more than 185 professionals.

Workers came with real cases in mind of children who were thought to have no one or known to be estranged from any supports, familial or otherwise. This collaborative approach across organizations who intersect with families, amplifies safety networks for children and assures the right supports at the right time to prevent the need for foster care. Working in mini-teams, the goal was to step out of casework as usual and identify how the lives of these children could be enriched by family and community supports, review their calendars to find opportunities to enhance their lives with activities that connected to the youth or to their interests, and how to "map" possible connections with youth or

family members to find connections.

When working as a team, individual cases could be significantly improved with approximately an hour of work.

Michelle Warner, Foster Care Program Manager attended both boot camps and was excited to hear Family Finding success stories across the state. "When we empower children and families to connect and work together to find their own solutions, we can see the first tentative steps of healing begin. Truly, the possibilities for workers to make a difference in children's lives and see the positive impact for families is endless."

Kansas has purchased Kevin Campbell's Family Finding manual and is strategizing how to continue to infuse the collaboration of Family Finding into every facet of the child welfare system, including contracted agencies, juvenile justice, CASAs, and other partners.

Example of how Family Finding affected a real case

Identified Youth Nickname (not child's actual initials): T.M.

Setting: Group home, then moved to emergency respite placement after group home disruption. Very isolated, lots of self-harm, including suicidal ideations.

Before Family Finding

Connections/Supports: 2; a father who the youth was removed from and a non-related uncle

Weekly calendar: Sparse; included waking up, online school, meds, free time, dinner, meds and then bedtime. Therapy was rare.

After Family Finding

Connections/Supports: 15 connections (both in state and out of state) which provided more information including an aunt, grandmother, youth pastor, brother, sister. T.M was able to provide Mother's and Aunt's phone number. At this time, only Aunt and youth pastor have connected. Case manager is hoping to place T.M a local aunt.

Weekly calendar: Emergency respite placement (nightly, so far it's been the same home each night), meds, school at the day program until school starts back up, meds, dinner, back to emergency respite placement. Case manager is also working on therapy and looking to get T.M. to Church weekly with the youth pastor.



Prevention Provider Spotlight: FosterAdopt Connect

FosterAdopt Connect works with children, youth, and families as they navigate the complexities of the child welfare system. With the help of innovative tools, a dedicated professional staff, and over 20 years of experience working in the Kansas and Missouri foster care systems, FosterAdopt Connect is equipped to connect children with families that provide love, healing, and stability for a brighter future.

Beginning as a small support group formed by an experienced Foster Parent and a brand

-new energetic Foster Parent, FosterAdopt Connect has grown into an agency that has the desire to fill gaps in child welfare services, increasing the quality of life experienced by all children who experience abuse and neglect.

With five branch offices throughout Missouri and Eastern Kansas and multiple novel programs, FosterAdopt Connect serves children in the areas of youth support, family permanency, and family support.



Family First Selected Program Fostering Prevention

Fostering Prevention offers support to families in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, preventing children from entering foster care while safely stabilizing families. Fostering Prevention Specialists work with families in their homes, assessing the client's needs and mutually setting goals toward success. The program does not have a time limit, as it is catered towards the needs of the family, and each family works at their own pace. Family accomplishments are initially tracked weekly with the family during in-home visitations. As the families achieve more stability and independence, visitations are less frequent.

Fostering Prevention efforts begin with stabilizing families who are enduring hardship. Advocacy, health care, mental health, finances, transportation, educational assistance, legal referrals and social supports are just a few of the areas in which a Fostering Prevention Specialist may provide support to a family. Caseloads are small, allowing Specialists to have dedicated time to spend with families assuring their needs are met. Families with youth ages 6-16 are eligible for services; however, this age range can be flexible, and families won't be turned away who have youth outside of this age range. Fostering Prevention is also not limited to work with birth parents, they work with all caregivers.

Once the family is stabilized, parents/caregivers are asked to complete the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI), which is designed to assess the parenting and child rearing attitudes of adult and ad-



Top Right: (L to R) Liz (Ross) Luce, Director of Philanthropy; Lori Ross, FosterAdopt Connect CEO; Jennifer Johnson, FosterAdopt Connect COO; Above: Taneeka Hill and Angela Swetnam, Fostering Prevention Specialists, and Aly Romero, Program Manager Lenexa location.

olescent parent and pre-parent populations. Based on the known parenting and child rearing behaviors of abusive parents, responses to the inventory provide an index of risk for practicing behaviors known to be attributable to child abuse and neglect. In an effort to eliminate the risk of child abusing behaviors, Fostering Prevention Specialists work one-on-one with the families, delivering the evidence-based Nurturing Parenting Program, activities are tailored to the family, based on children's age and parent/caregiver needs. Fostering Prevention Specialist's practice trauma responsive and cultural competent activity delivery at all times.

The team works closely with DCF to assure a warm hand-off of families to the program. When families are hesitant to engage in services, they are reassured that prevention and keeping their children in the home is the goal. Families who have chosen to engage in Fostering Prevention services have admitted to originally not having any interest in working with the

program, however, when they realize there is consistent support, they are extremely grateful and motivated to make positive change within their family.

One example of this initial hesitation families display is a story of single parent who is a survivor of domestic violence and grew up in foster care. Thankful for the program, they have actively engaged in services and are working on goals to keep their children safe at home. Another successful connection is that of a grandparent who struggles with mental health and has been caring for two grandchildren. Apprehensive to let a Fostering Prevention Specialist enter the home at the beginning of the relationship, they now abundantly thank FAC for coming into their lives, helping navigate school, mental health, and legal services for the family.

After giving the program a chance, many families see how a Fostering Prevention Specialist is an advocate for them in many aspects of their lives. Families look forward to weekly visits and working toward accomplishing their goals.

“We are so excited for the opportunity to have this program funded. Fostering Prevention has the potential to change the trajectory of so many lives and interrupt multi-generational negative patterns. We can't think of more important work than helping parents so they can keep their children safely with them,” said Jennifer Johnson, Chief Operations Officer for FosterAdopt Connect.

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To learn more, view the [FAC Foster Prevention video](#)

From the Field: Examples of prevention during the Covid-19 crisis

As the spread of the viral illness, COVID-19, sweeps the nation, balancing child safety with public health requires careful planning and coordination. Prevention providers and DCF Frontline staff have adapted and stepped-up to go the extra mile to serve families during this ultra challenging time.

Here are just a few real stories from the frontline workers, both providers and DCF staff, who are modern day heroes. Thank you for all you do for Kansas families!

DCF West Region Director, Pamela Beach: *A CPS was following up on a Family in Need of Assessment (FINA) case and the mother became emotional. She had lost her job, the children were home with her all day and eating more food than she'd budgeted for. The CPS was able to explain how to apply for assistance online and also where the pick-up and drop-off boxes were at the office for applications. The mother emotionally told staff they were really struggling for food and had not been able to get anything from local resources. Our CPS got a text list of items to get her through for a short while, bought and delivered them to her doorstep. They discussed the food benefits and employment program, [GOALS](#), as the mother is a great candidate. We will make a referral to GOALS after the Covid-19 interruption. The mother and children were so appreciative to the CPS, who was able to make a difference in this*

family's life today. So proud of this team!

Cornerstones of Care, Functional Family Therapist: *Earlier this week I had a FaceTime session with a parent and teen. During the session we discussed a lot about chores/responsibilities and about what "home" will look like when online learning starts. We discussed the topic of enabling and consequences when it comes to chores. Later that night the parent asked if they could speak with me about things we covered in our session. I was tired and not exactly wanting to continue work past 7 pm, but it sounded like they needed it. We spoke/texted for what seemed like a while and they said their "eyes opened during our past few sessions about what to do in order to fulfill their duty of being a good parent." I was surprised to hear this and completely overjoyed because I was not aware at how much this FFT therapy had been helping, not only the targeted child but also the parent. At the end of the session, they said, "You are heaven sent, a listening ear and exactly what my family needed and I thank you." This brought tears to my eyes, because this was the same family where the 13-year-old demanded for me to leave the house during our first in-person session.*

Family Preservation worker: *The day it was announced that children would*



not go back to school, one of my mothers called me worried about food and the extended length of time the kids would be home. I told her we would take it a day at a time together. Meanwhile, our manager brought food to our office for families in immediate need. I thought of that mother and knew the family relied on food from the school to keep the children from being hungry, so we brought them food to help. Before COVID-19, they had already been hit with trauma after trauma and were only living day-to-day at this point. To that end, I felt that actually walking through the process to help the mother treat her daughter's hair for lice, rather than just providing the treatment would help alleviate some stress. Just those two simple things, being there in that way and talking them through, has given them some light during this time. We will continue doing all that we can for all of our families in the safest ways possible.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

COVID-19 guidance for **DCF Programs** can be found at <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/COVID19/Pages/default.aspx>

You can also visit the **Kansas Department of Health and Environment's** COVID-19 website www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus or the **Centers for Disease Control's** COVID-19 website at www.coronavirus.gov

KDHE also has a phone bank available to answer questions from the public or health care professionals, Monday thru Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
The toll-free number is: 1-866-534-3463 (1-866- KDHEINF)

Family First Selected Program KIN-TECH

KIN-TECH, provided by Kansas Legal Services, is the new statewide kinship navigation program for Family First. As with all Family First services, DCF will need to be the referral source.

Kansas Legal Services KIN-TECH program works to remove legal barriers for non-parental caretakers of children which if not resolved, could result in a child's placement in foster care. When KLS receives a KIN-TECH referral, they may help families by filing for guardianship cases, adoptions, prepare powers of attorney, or resolve any other matters that if not addressed, could result in out of home care. In these cases, the biological parent **must** be willing to participate in the decision for these children.

An example of a KIN-TECH case is of a parent who was unable to provide care for a child and grandmother that was willing, but the state could not officially allow the child to live with grandmother because she had a prohibited, but expungable offense. The KIN-TECH program could represent the grandmother to obtain an expungement.

Assuming full-time caregiver responsibilities for a child can be physically and emotionally overwhelming for kin caregivers. Not having legal custody of the child presents an additional barrier to accessing medical and educational services. In one case, simply telling a grandmother that she now had legal guardianship of her grandchild at no cost to her lifted a huge burden from her shoulders. With guardianship, the grandmother was able to obtain a developmental assessment for the child who qualified for early childhood intervention services.

The program allows families to resolve their own issues without the formality of placement in the foster care system.



Kansas Legal Services met DCF staff and introduced the new KIN-TECH program during the fall meet and greets. Pictured left to right: Dorothy Burgess, Kerrie Lonard, Linda Lichter, and Kellie Hogan.



Prevention Provider Spotlight Kansas Legal Services

Kansas Legal Services, a statewide non-profit corporation, is devoted to helping low income Kansans meet their basic needs through the provision of important legal and mediation services. KLS is legal aid in Kansas, providing equal access to justice for the most vulnerable Kansans.

KLS served more than 18,500 persons in all 105 counties last year through two mediation offices and eleven legal services offices across the state.

Utilizing a trauma-informed lens and motivational interviewing techniques improves the attorney-client relationship. Staff have a better understanding of why clients make the decisions they make and come to appreciate the client's resiliency. Motivational interviewing helps align attorney and client goals for the representation. It leads to greater compliance with court expectations because clients direct the goals and define how to achieve the court's expectation.

—Kellie Hogan, Attorney at
Kansas Legal Services