

# Prevention in Kansas



Above: Family First grantee, Great Circle, with DCF Safe Sleep instructors Jim Harmon & Linda Gallagher. Great Circle provides Healthy Families America in Northeast Region counties; Brown, Doniphan, Jackson, Marshall, Nemaha, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee. Southeast Region counties; Anderson, Chatauqua, Coffey, Franklin, Linn, Osage, Woodson; and Kansas City region counties, Douglas, Atchison.

## DCF Safe Sleep training going strong virtually

In 2019, DCF set out on a goal to train all employees and providers of DCF services in the Safe Sleep curriculum. Though COVID initially slowed down the training process, DCF Safe Sleep instructors re-aligned to present the same training in an engaging virtual format.

Tracy Enochs, a second year Safe Sleep instructor and Human Services Specialist for EES in the Wichita region, said she's seeing benefits of virtual by having an array of availability options and regional barriers being broken down.

"We can reach more people with these trainings. It's not just the agency benefitting but community resources are as well. As the saying goes, it takes a village and virtual trainings have really helped expand our village."

The training, created by KIDS Network and facilitated by DCF Safe Sleep instructors, familiarize participants with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUIDS) and what steps can be taken to reduce sleep related infant deaths. Participants explore strategies to reduce sleep related deaths such as smoking cessation, back sleeping, proper temperature control, encouraging breastfeeding, proper use of pacifiers, creating a safe sleep policy, and support information from the KIDS Network.

[See the January issue of newsletter](#) to learn more about the KIDS Network

Contact [kaleena.erwin@ks.gov](mailto:kaleena.erwin@ks.gov) for info about Safe Sleep training

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[Newsletter Archive](#)

Email us at:

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## ABCs of Safe

ALONE, on the BACK, in a  
CLUTTER-FREE CRIB

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

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

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



# A Call for Collaboration: Kansas Birth Equity Network

*The African American maternal and infant mortality rates today are worse than they were fifteen years before the end of slavery.*

The United States is facing a crisis of high maternal and infant mortality rates. African American women are three to four times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes. Compared with infants born to white women, infants born to African American women are more than twice as likely to die within their first year of birth. Researchers at the University of Kansas (KU) are working with Kansans across the state to reverse this deadly trend.

In 2017, Sharla Smith, Ph.D., MPH, and Michelle Redmond, Ph.D. M.S., established the Kansas Sisters and Brothers for Healthy Infants Initiative to address maternal and fetal health disparities among African Americans in Kansas. K-SBHI includes members of graduate/alumni chapters of historically African American fraternities and sororities in Wichita that aim to raise awareness about the causes of infant mortality and link individuals with needed services and programs.



Before COVID, members from the Kansas Sisters and Brothers for Healthy Infants during a spring meeting.

To strengthen the education and outreach efforts of K-SBHI, Dr. Smith is leading the efforts to launch the Kansas Birth Equity Network.

The Kansas Birth Equity Network is a collaborative network between KU, K-SBHI, African American mothers, fathers, and caregivers, minority researchers and health care providers, faith leaders, community health centers, and policymakers in Kansas. K-BEN aims to understand the impact of racial discrimination and chronic stress on maternal and infant outcomes. The mission of K-BEN is to eliminate health disparities for African Americans in Kansas by increasing awareness of the high rate of African American maternal and infant mortality and connecting individuals with local resources.

Through community-based education and outreach, K-BEN seeks to have a greater impact on underrepresented families and engage diverse stakeholders of color in health prevention and promotion activities to reduce maternal stress and preterm birth and improve the well-being of African American families. Events are held throughout the year to provide opportunities for engagement, education and empowerment.

Each year, K-SBHI hosts “Celebrate Day 366: A Community Birthday Party Celebrating Baby’s First Year” a special event where the community celebrates African American babies who made it to their 366th day of life. The event focuses on



Broderick Crawford, (Top Left) Kappa Alpha Psi, Executive Director of NBC Community Development Corporation, opens with a call to action during the virtual Celebrate Day 366 and a meeting of parent panelist presenters.

strengthening African American families through education and empowerment on the infant mortality crisis in America and Kansas and the importance of fatherhood and co-parenting. This October was the fourth annual Celebrate Day 366, which featured a live [virtual panel](#) to educate communities on resources and the state of African American parents in Kansas, sharing their own experiences of health inequities and systemic racism. The overall goal of the collaborative is to ensure every African American mother, father and infant celebrates the baby’s first birthday.

**Together, we can make a difference in the lives of African American families across the state of Kansas.**

To learn more about the K-BEN, visit: <http://www.kumc.edu/school-of-medicine/population-health/kansas-birth-equity-network.html>

Join K-BEN, visit this [link](#) and take the survey

K-SBHI is on [Facebook](#), Twitter @KansasSBHI, and [YouTube](#)

Special thanks to Sharla Smith, Ph.D., MPH, principal investigator for sharing this information. To learn more about K-BEN or K-SBHI: [ssmith@kumc.edu](mailto:ssmith@kumc.edu)  
Michelle Redmond, Ph.D., MS, co-investigator: [mredmond@kumc.edu](mailto:mredmond@kumc.edu)  
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# TANF Grant Spotlights: Youth and Family Stability Grants

*This is our second installment of TANF Grant spotlights. Visit the [September issue](#) for information about the TANF funded in-school and after-school programs in Kansas.*

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, or TANF program, are block grants supplied to states by the Office of Family Assistance, an office of the Administration for Children & Families. Enacted in 1996, these grants are designed to help families achieve self-sufficiency. Within the Kansas Department for Children and Families, TANF grants are managed by the Economic Support Services division.

States are meant to use federal TANF funds with their own state funds to meet the four purposes set out in the 1996 law: “(1) provide assistance to needy families

so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of unplanned pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families.”

The following spotlighted grants represent the TANF supported Youth and Family Stabilization Programs, provided on behalf of DCF for State Fiscal Year 2021. Services are provided to youth and their families across the state for a variety of programming under TANF purposes 3 and 4. Youth ages 14-24 can be served independently from their families if they

have been a part of the foster care system and/or have been in the juvenile justice system but have since been released from custody.

Most grants are selected competitively every four years, and many of these partners have been serving Kansans for several years. Each grantee has a different set of goals and services they offer to clients but all work with at risk families and youth to build skills for employment, promote healthy relationships, and support clients in overcoming barriers on their path to self-sufficiency. Partners will also refer clients to additional services, both within DCF and outside, as needed, and provide crisis stabilization for clients that have a specific moment of hardship.

**Connections to Success** provides a holistic network of services and support to help families gain economic independence and achieve their dreams. Established in 1998, Connections to Success works alongside hundreds of individuals and families each year through their offices in Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois.

Connections to Success meet people where they are and help them move to a place of personal, economic and social strength. DCF grant funding supports the Pathways to Success program, an evidence-based set of services that helps participants create a bright future for their families through career advancement, goal-driven planning, and a supportive network. Through the partnership with DCF, Connections to Success works alongside unemployed/underemployed parents who have children up to 24 years old and at-risk youth ages 14-24.

Core services include Personal and Professional Development Training (PPD), an interactive course in which participants take a deep dive into their life goals and career interests while building soft skills, practicing interview skills, and creating a resume. Participants are provided free professional attire through their men’s suiting boutique and Dress for Success Kansas City women’s boutique.

Soft skills practiced in PPD can create benefits beyond the workplace. Participants learn about fostering emotional wellbeing, practicing affirmations, and evaluating choices, and the trainers highlight how these skills can support positive parenting and family relationships. PPD also includes discussions around priorities in co-parenting relationships and how parents can position themselves to provide the needed supports for their children.

Along with PPD, participants gain lifelong access to job development services to help them advance into living-wage careers. Participants can further enhance their skillset through industry-recognized certification programs offered at no-cost



through the organization and their partners.

To boost long-term success, alumni are paired with a life coach who provides guidance on reaching goals, accessing community resources, furthering education, and overcoming obstacles. The nonprofit also hosts community events that support family engagement and provide opportunities to build friendships.

“By partnering with the Kansas Department for Children and Families, we can provide more families with holistic services that set them up for generational success,” said Vice President of Programs, Brandi Jahnke. “As parents obtain living-wage employment and gain economic mobility, their hard work expands opportunities for their children and positions the next generation to achieve their own goals - like graduating college or becoming a homeowner.”

*(continued next page)*

# TANF Grant Spotlights: Youth and Family Stability Grants (cont.)

**The International Rescue Committee (IRC), Trauma Adapted - Family Connections**– IRC in Kansas serves refugees, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking and at-risk individuals and families. The organization annually supports more than 2,500 adults, children and families located throughout the greater Wichita area as well as state-wide. The IRC in Kansas offers a variety of programming within five primary categories: Health, Safety, Education, Economic Wellbeing and Power.

The Trauma Adapted – Family Connections (TA-FC) program is part of the IRC’s family preservation pipeline for at-risk families. The goal is to assist

families increase caregiver functioning, positive parenting practices, social supports and services, while strengthening family stability and reducing family disruption.

Through partnership with DCF, the IRC works alongside families who are struggling to meet the basic needs of their children and who have been impacted by trauma. Staff members meet weekly with family members in their homes and within their communities. A trauma-focused comprehensive family assessment yields service plans tailored to the family’s defined needs with consideration of every household member. Activities include individual,

family and group activities that enhance family cohesion and strengthen relationships, with particular focus on the families’ capabilities to provide safety for every member.

“We are extremely excited to be a part of this initiative in the greater Wichita community, alongside DCF,” said Morgan Palace, TA-FC Program Manager. “We truly believe that investing in families not only has a positive impact on their lives, but enhances the entire community. Assisting families in finding stability and increasing positive parent-child interactions will help ensure families remain together, even through difficult times.”



Zach Carter and Jery Márquez, LDCPH, Healthy Dads

**Lawrence Douglas County Public Health (LDCPH), Healthy Dads/ Healthy Moms**- Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health has served the community for more than 130 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all.

In the previous grant cycle, LDCPH offered a Healthy Dads program. In June of 2020, LDCPH was awarded a new grant, which expanded from fathers to including mothers and youth. The Healthy Dads/ Healthy Moms program promotes motherhood, personal and professional development program for mothers, young men and young women. This program also includes case management, one on one meetings, assistance to find employment and helping clients maintain a job. The goal is to equip the families in Douglas County to build or rebuild healthy and or civil relationships.

“We are very fortunate to have been awarded a new grant. Not only will we continue to serve fathers, but mothers and youth as well,” says Jery Márquez , Healthy Dads/Healthy Moms coordinator.

**Kansas Children’s Service League (KCSL), Healthy Families America**– KCSL is a statewide agency providing Healthy Families America (HFA) services in 30 Kansas Counties including Allen, Barton, Bourbon, Butler, Chase, Cherokee, Coffey, Crawford, Greenwood, Harvey, Jefferson, Johnson, Labette, Leavenworth, Lyon, Marion, McPherson, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Osage, Pawnee, Reno, Rice, Shawnee, Sedgwick, Stafford, Sumner, Wilson and Wyandotte.

KCSL has a TANF grant to provide HFA home visiting services to pregnant women or families with a child under age 3 months in the 30 counties listed above. Families must enroll in the program prenatally or within 3 months of birth, then may receive services until the child is 5 years of age or transitioning into a preschool, Head Start, or similar

program. Services include weekly home visits that decrease over time. Visits are provided by trained staff who support the family and help develop family driven goals. The focus of the services is on the

prevention of child abuse and neglect, which is provided through strengthening the parent child relationship and increasing family functioning. Services are strengths based and family focused, helping families to begin to discover and build upon their existing strengths to build strong families and thriving children.



Starla, a Family Support worker in Great Bend, makes a delivery to a family this past summer.

“Our partnership with DCF is so important as we are working together towards the same goal of strengthening families and helping parents become more self-sufficient”, states Kelly Hayes, Director of Healthy Families America services at KCSL. DCF staff in local offices have become valuable referral sources for the program, helping to identify new parents who are need in of some extra support. To qualify for the program, families must be at or below 200% of the

federal poverty level, so all families receiving TANF services should qualify for the Healthy Families America program.

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# TANF Grant Spotlights: Youth and Family Stability Grants (cont.)



Front left to right, Nicole Nesmith, Social Worker; Deb Dolsky, Program Director; Joven Sanchez, Case Manager; Cameron Taylor, Case Manager

**The Mirror Inc, Work for Success Program**– The Mirror Work for Success Program provides services to low-income families with children and youth ages 14-24 who have been involved in either the juvenile justice system and have been released from custody or the foster care system as a minor. Services include work readiness, case management, parenting skills, financial education, healthy relationships, and domestic violence prevention. The program starts with an intensive four-week training session. By committing to the program, participants are taking the first step in becoming more involved parents who are active in their children’s lives.

Personal and Professional Development curriculum in the training helps participants maximize their talents and skills. During this self-exploration process, participants learn how great attitudes and positive choices can lead to success, help them achieve their dreams and give hope for the future. They learn how to look for a job, how to dress for success and how to answer interview questions.

Training includes the National Partnership for Community Leadership (NPCL) Relationship Skills for Strong Families, Young Mothers and Parenting, and Fatherhood Development curriculum. Participants gain skills to communicate more effectively, resolve conflict, manage stress and anger, and gain an understanding of the stages of successful committed relationships, and the benefits of marriage and co-parenting.

Mirror Work for Success Program partners with HCCI to provide financial literacy classes to the participants. HCCI teaches about budgeting, money management, predatory lending, and credit reports. They present on tenant and landlord rights as well as educating about rights and responsibilities as renters in the

community. The program also partners with the K-State Extension Office for nutrition classes, and the YWCA Center for Safety and Empowerment for domestic violence prevention.

When participants complete the training, they have a new set of skills to help them with their job searches, interview clothing and skills, a resume and job leads, but most of all they have hope and a new outlook on life; they have a purpose and a plan. They also have a great support system to help them achieve their goals, and the self-esteem and the confidence to make it happen.

Deb Dolsky, Program Director, stated “We are so excited to be able to continue helping low-income Kansans. It’s great we are able to expand our services to help families succeed.”

For more information about the Mirror Work for Success Program, contact Deb Dolsky at 785-246-5737 or [ddolsky@mirrorinc.org](mailto:ddolsky@mirrorinc.org). Qualified applicants must be a parent with a minor child or a youth between the ages of 14-24 who was involved in the juvenile justice system and has been released from custody or the foster care system.

**The Mental Health Association (MHA), Strengthening Families**– The Mental Health Association of South Central Kansas is located in Wichita, KS and services the DCF Wichita Region. MHA’s Youth Stabilization program primarily serves families and youth who are in low-income households and youth who have left custody of Juvenile Correction Services who are at-risk and may be experiencing the effects of poverty, mental health and substance abuse issues, low graduation rates, lack of parental skills, single parent homes and domestic violence. Clients are offered evidence-based services targeting healthy relationships, parenting skills, personal and professional development, financial literacy, case management and assistance geared toward gaining employment. The comprehensive model assists youth and families in realizing healthy relationships, parenting, communication, bonding and the reduction of youth aggression, depression, and substance abuse. Strengthening Families is utilized to provide 14 sessions to increase protective factors and strengthening children’s life skills to reduce risk factors and strengthening family life skills to enhance parenting and family functioning.

The program includes sessions for parents, youth and families and is enhanced with family supports, mentoring, referral to community resources, crisis stabilization, and case management. Group sessions focus on parents and children separately, and joint sessions follow to reinforce skills learned in separate groups. Parenting sessions address appropriate developmental expectations, teach parents to interact positively, positive family communication, effective and consistent positive discipline, stress reduction, problem solving and anger management skills. Children’s skills training consists of communication skills, problem solving, identifying emotions, how to deal with criticism, how to reduce stress, anger management and coping skills. Additional focus will be placed on the prevention of drug and alcohol usage. Case management services are aimed to find support for participating families leveraging existing partnerships with outside agencies. The goal of services is to stabilize families, promote good communication and to reduce alcohol and drug use for youth.

# DCF and KDOC Crossover Youth Practice Model update

*This is the second update from Crossover Youth Practice Model Coordinators. Refer to [October newsletter](#) for their previous update about the Crossover Youth State Policy Team.*

The Statewide Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) Coordinators, Ashley Brown (DCF) and Michelle Montgomery (KDOC) have participated in virtual multidisciplinary meetings with other representatives from child welfare, juvenile justice, and various other service providers along with parents to discuss roles and responsibilities and to brainstorm to jointly address challenges and needs of specific crossover youth. Collaborating and coordinating with other professionals creates enhanced opportunities to establish common goals for case plans, identify appropriate services, increase accountability and the satisfaction of youth and their families.

CYPM has kicked off in two counties selected as pilot sites: Montgomery (14<sup>th</sup> judicial district) and Shawnee (3<sup>rd</sup> judicial district). Both districts have selected an individual to act as their Local Crossover Coordinator, and other individuals to participate on their Local Leadership Teams and/or Local Implementation Teams.

The Local Leadership Team's role is providing direction and support for the model. The Local Implementation Team members are charged with the development and implementation of the model. The role of the Local Coordinator is to act as a liaison between the local and state teams.

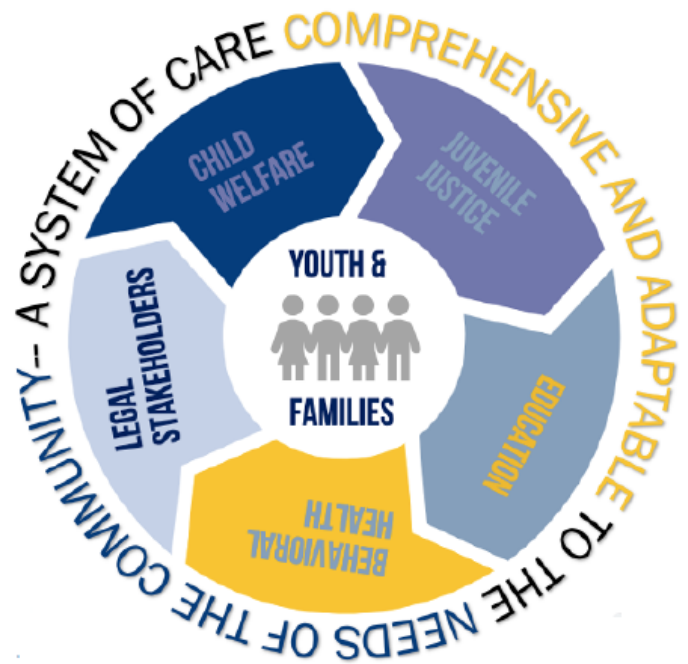
The Leadership and Implementation Teams mirror the make-up of the State Policy Team and is comprised of representatives of the judiciary (e.g., judges, court administrators), juvenile justice (e.g., intake, probation, corrections) child welfare (e.g., investigations, intake, case manager, permanency) education, mental health & substance abuse providers, law enforcement, and attorneys.

Both pilot sites are meeting individually with Georgetown University to examine current practices, review data, and set goals and priorities for working with the crossover youth population.

The Statewide Coordinators are available and open to answering questions, assisting in identifying appropriate responses, addressing, and troubleshooting concerns, and/or participating in meetings and collaboratives around issues regarding all crossover youth. They can be reached at [Ashley.brown@ks.gov](mailto:Ashley.brown@ks.gov) and [Michelle.montgomery@ks.gov](mailto:Michelle.montgomery@ks.gov).

To learn more about the Crossover Youth Practice Model and information regarding past and upcoming meetings of the State Policy Team visit:

<https://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/crossover-youth-practice-model>



**Kansas**  
Department for Children and Families

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