



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

**KANSAS CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL -
CUSTODY TO TRANSITION**



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FAST Project Director
Families Together, Inc.

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Homeless/Foster Care Liaison
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INTRODUCTION

Background

The Custody to Transition Citizen Review Panel is one of the three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) in the state of Kansas. CRPs were established under the Child Abuse Treatment and Prevention Act (CAPTA), which was most recently reauthorized in 2010. All three panels in Kansas work in accordance with CAPTA requirements. This report summarizes the work of the Custody to Transition Citizen Review Panel from June 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024.

The Custody to Transition Citizen Review Panel (CTT CRP), hereafter referred to as CTT CRP in this report, is pleased to present its 2024 Annual Report. The CTT CRP leverages its collective knowledge, values, and expertise to collaboratively assess and evaluate the policies, procedures, and overall efficacy of the child welfare process in Kansas. With a specific focus on the period from a child's entry into custody to their transition out of care, the panel is committed to ensuring that its recommendations and insights accurately reflect the diverse spectrum of Kansas families. This report provides comprehensive insights into the recommendations and observations put forth by the panel over the course of the year, with a particular emphasis on engaging the public, ensuring youth have adequate support when aging out, and exploring the mental health needs of Kansas youth.

This panel fosters collaboration with the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) and networking within their respective communities and organizations. This collaborative effort frequently occurs during panel meetings,

where members engage in information sharing and resource collaboration to evaluate our state comprehensively. With a steadfast objective to amplify the voices of lived expertise and child welfare professionals within Kansas' child and family wellbeing system through our recommendations, the CTT CRP consistently strives to ensure representation and inclusivity. Moreover, the CTT CRP actively solicits input from concerned citizens statewide through the use of the CTT CRP's updated website. Central to the efforts is ensuring that individual and community voices are accessible and can continue to provide guidance on how the state can build on our current successes and continue to improve the child and family wellbeing system in Kansas.

For Kansas, it means we have:

- Opportunities to assess and review relevant data about children in care and outcomes post-care;
- A network of individuals who understand the need of the child protection system;
- An ability to keep focus on the trends and key issues related to supporting and serving Kansas families, children, and older youth;
- A statewide and broad perspective of systems, in part, by ensuring diverse panel membership;
- A diminished sense of isolation among organizations and individuals facing challenges in strengthening families; and
- Networks of panel members who will help educate the public about the child protection system.

Please Visit the CAPTA CRP Page:

<https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/CitizenReviewPanel.aspx>

Operations of the Panel

The inclusion of diverse members within the CTT CRP is fundamental to enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of our assessments and recommendations. To effectively strategize and plan, the panel convenes at an annual Joint Strategic Planning Retreat, typically held in August, to deliberate and leverage the diverse membership of the panel. This retreat serves as a collaborative platform, bringing together both the Intake to Petition (ITP) and Custody to Transition (CTT) panels to set goals and objectives for the upcoming year. By uniting these groups, the retreat fosters opportunities for shared expertise and perspectives, emphasizing a collaborative approach to achieving common goals.

The panel voted to keep the majority of the meetings in 2023-2024 virtual. Recognizing the operational efficiencies achieved through remote collaboration has proved instrumental in sustaining heightened membership attendance. Throughout the reporting period, the CTT CRP maintained its bi-monthly meetings with concerted efforts to facilitate more active engagement and increased hybrid meetings, resulting in hybrid meetings in December of 2023. To bolster panel engagement and deepen members' understanding of the CAPTA CRP's mandates and objectives, the panel instituted a 30-minute orientation session for every new member or upon request from any panel member. This initiative ensures equitable access for all members to familiarize themselves with the intricacies of CAPTA CRP's endeavors and address any queries they may have, resulting in discernible enhancements to our ongoing initiatives.

CTT CRP is currently making efforts to recruit the following positions:

- Child Welfare Contractor (2)
- Guardian Ad Litem
- Formerly In Care (2)
- Substance Abuse Counselor
- Tribal Representative

CTT CRP has continued to experience additions to the panel membership. Some notable additions include:

- DCF CAPTA CJA Program Manager
- Formerly in Care
- Executive Director of CASA in Sedgwick County

**Please find a list of panel members on page 3 and 4*

The panel chair, facilitator, and members have made great efforts to bring more structure to the panel to improve function and become more effective and efficient. They have instituted new bylaws and adopted approved amendments. The CTT CRP experienced transition in panel leadership, including the Chairperson and Chair-Elect.

**Please see Appendix A for a full list of approved Bylaws*

MEETING OVERVIEWS

August 16, 2023

Focus: This meeting consists of the Custody to Transition and Intake to Petition Panels coming together in a hybrid format to strategize and collaborate on 2023-2024 goals and objectives. The meeting focused on a CRP 102 session from the National CRP Committee. The panels focused the remaining time on strategic planning.

Overview: The panel was briefed by the national CRP Committee. They received legislative updates from Children's Alliance of Kansas. CRP CAPTA Program Manager provided DCF and Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) updates. Each panel had time to complete a strategic planning session and report to the other panel. Decided on panel workings, such as meeting frequency, platform, and recruitment needs for the 2024 session

October 6, 2023

Focus: This meeting was focused on understanding KCSL and how the panel can support work being done with KCSL. There was a discussion of the timeline for tasks associated with the goals and objectives.

Overview: An icebreaker was conducted, followed by an overview of the Joint Retreat, focusing on updates related to the CFSR Program Improvement Plan (PIP) workgroups and legislative information provided. Recruitment strategies in the Custody to Transition group was discussed, along with the requirement for CRP orientation for all members. The potential for more in-person meetings was also mentioned.

October 6, 2023 (cont.)

Brief announcements included the NCRP Conference and a proposed shift to a hybrid meeting format. A presentation of KCSL was provided. There was a discussion on the timeline for tasks associated with goals and objectives, aiming to review each goal, suggest changes, and establish a loose timeline for each objective.

December 8, 2023

Focus: Discussed change in panel leadership. DCF provided data and information regarding removals and foster care timelines. There was a presentation focused on goal 2, which is to ensure youth have support when aging out.

Overview: The panel was briefed on the transition from the Chair-elect into the chairperson role. Members updated the panel on service delivery and challenges, including insights into Families Together, SOUL family, and the National CRP Conference. DCF provided information and data focused on children and youth who have been removed from their homes and are in foster care. A presentation was provided regarding additional data and resources for aged-out youth and new initiatives aimed at providing increased support for older youth. The panel decided to support by writing a letter, as a proponent of the legislation for the SOUL program and the Foster Care Checking and Saving Account.

Februrary 2, 2024

Focus: This meeting focused on exploring the needs of families and children without waiver services by understanding the duty of the services provided through the new FAST program. Time was taken to explore the standing goals of the panel.

Overview: The panel opened the position of Chair-Elect and proposed and voted on Bylaw Articles VIII and IX. The panel shared general updates, including the completion of the Kansas Division of the Child Advocate 2023 Annual Report and St. Francis' management contract for regions 1,2 and 7. The panel heard from the Project Director of the Family Advocacy, Support, and Training Project (FAST) through Families Together. The primary purpose of this grant, funded through DCF, is to empower and strengthen families so that kids can stay in their family homes while partnering with family preservation and Child Protective Services.

February 9, 2023

Focus: This was a joint meeting held alongside the Intake to Petition panel. This meeting was used to facilitate collaboration on goals. Overall, the meeting covered significant updates and initiatives pertinent to the panel's collective goals and objectives.

Overview: The panel provided updates on an open position at CASA Association and changes within panel leadership. Panel member provided updates on the performance of the SOUL Family through the House and outlined next steps for the planning team. The DCF CAPTA Program Manager presented updates on the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR).

Februrary 9, 2023 (Cont.)

DCF delivered insights on Therapeutic Family Foster Homes, the Mobile Crisis Response Team, and the MRSS Pilot Program. A 5-minute Q&A session followed. The program administrator for Safety and Thriving Families provided an overview of Families in Need of Assessment (FINA) background and highlighted the changes made. The meeting concluded with a review of action steps and closing statements.

April 5, 2024

Focus: This meeting focus was to announce the new Chair-Elect, propose and vote on changes to Articles X and XI, share general updates, discuss progress on APSR and CFSP, and obtain a general overview of Therapeutic Family Foster Home Grants.

Overview: The new chair-elect was announced. Discussion shifted towards Articles X and XI; all modifications were presented. A formal vote was conducted wherein Articles X and XI were voted into the bylaws. Members provided updates, including reminders of the Kansas Child Welfare Summit and the fully staffed FAST program in 105 counties. The panel was informed about the process and purpose of the Annual Progress and Service Report (APSR) and Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). An overview of the Therapeutic Family Foster Home Grants was presented. Insights, including eligibility criteria, the application process, and potential benefits for the organization and community, were shared.

WORK OF THE PANEL

The subsequent section delineates the efforts of the panel in pursuit of objectives set forth in August 2023. It encompasses an overview of goals identified by panel members, as well as delineating specific challenges encountered, and insights gathered. The aim is to furnish stakeholders with actionable insights to promote optimal practices and foster collaboration with other entities, thereby facilitating equitable distribution and sharing of resources for the betterment of Kansas children and families. The CTT CRP has committed the 2024 session to explore avenues for information acquisition and determine the subsequent steps toward achieving the stated goals, including:

- **Engage the public** through exploring foster care and mandated reporting simulations in Kansas, as well as creative ways to educate stakeholders, funders, legislatures, and youth.
- Ensuring **youth have adequate support when aging out** by engaging DCF's Deputy Director of Youth Programs
- Explore the **mental health needs of youth** by collecting data on providers' capacity and crisis plans.

Engage the Public

The CTT CRP explored simulations, informed by the lived expertise of youth, as a vehicle for educating the general public and stakeholders regarding the implications of foster care. The panel recognizes the crucial need to inform stakeholders, funders, legislators, and the broader community about the indispensable requirements and services within this realm. The CTT CRP is committed to fostering a culture of informed discourse. This commitment begins with facilitating platforms for constructive dialogue, and the dissemination of information aimed at affording Kansas children enhanced prospects.

The panel received testimony from the Statewide Information and Resource Supervisor at Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL). KCSL's helpline, previously known as the Parent Helpline and now rebranded as '1-800-Children,' has been a vital resource for decades.

Operating as a 24-hour service, the helpline offers multiple avenues for connection. During the reporting period, KCSL emphasized the significant demand for tangible support and highlighted the critical need for additional resources. The impact of the "1-800-Children" service is reiterated by its substantial engagement, evidenced by over 3,000 database searches recorded in August 2023 alone. The panel aims to support this program as it strives to engage the public and provide support, information sharing, and connection to Kansas children, youth, and families.

The CTT CRP used the 2024 session to research what simulations are being utilized to educate the general public and stakeholders. The CTT CRP engaged in conversations with FosterAdopt Connect regarding the simulations they've provided in rural Missouri.

FosterAdopt Connect had representatives of several agencies come together to offer a Journey Home tour. As a result, the CTT CRP was put in contact with the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families in Wisconsin to discuss their Journey Home model. Through a bus tour, *The Journey Home* engages the general public and stakeholders to observe the child welfare system from a child's perspective and hear from the experts and families who assist them in finding stability.

The panel seeks to further explore collaborations and avenues for enhancing public and stakeholder awareness regarding foster care, exemplified by initiatives like the Journey Home tour. Barriers to the Journey Home or other foster care simulations to be explored in subsequent sessions include:

- regulatory constraints,
- access and equity concerns,
- training and capacity building needs,
- stigma and misconceptions,
- cost and funding issues, and
- lack of system collaboration and coordination

Regulatory Constraints: Regulatory requirements and legal considerations may hinder the development and implementation of foster care simulations. Kansas may encounter challenges related to compliance with state laws, licensing standards, and privacy regulations.

Access and Equity Concerns: Disparities in access to foster care simulations may exist based on factors such as geographic location, socioeconomic status, or cultural background. Groups may face challenges ensuring equitable access to simulation opportunities for individuals and communities across Kansas.

Training and Capacity Building Needs: Groups may lack the expertise and training to facilitate meaningful foster care simulations. Building the skills and knowledge required to conduct practical simulations may require investments in professional development and capacity-building efforts, including authentic engagement with those who have lived expertise.

***The Journey
Home engages
the general public
and stakeholders
to observe the
child welfare
system from a
child's
perspective and
hear from the
experts and
families who
assist them in
finding stability.***

Stigma and Misconceptions: Negative stereotypes and misconceptions about foster care may deter individuals and organizations from engaging in simulation activities. Fear of stigma or backlash, as well as concerns about misrepresenting or trivializing the experiences of foster children and families, can discourage participation and support for simulation initiatives.

Cost and Funding Issues: Financial constraints can impede efforts to provide foster care simulations. Developing and maintaining simulation programs may require significant financial investment in materials, training, and personnel, which may prove challenging to afford without sufficient funding or support.

Lack of Collaboration and Coordination: Limited collaboration and coordination among stakeholders within the foster care system can hinder the availability and effectiveness of simulation opportunities. Efforts to develop and implement simulations may be fragmented or duplicative without cooperation between agencies, organizations, and community partners.

Youth have Adequate Support When Aging Out

The panel engaged with the Deputy Director of Youth Services in efforts to shape goal two for the upcoming year. The panel then explored Kansas Independent Living Youth resources, including,

- Aged-out medical program,
- Tuition waiver,
- Independent Living subsidy (increased to \$1100 in the last legislative session),
- Start-up funds (limited to \$600),
- Basic Chafee,
- Vehicle repair and maintenance,
- Education and training voucher (ETV),

- Senate bill 23 (high school diploma awarded to youth in DCF custody or KDOC-JS),
- Kansas Youth Advisory Council,
- We Kan Drive (DCCCA, a child placing agency, program for youth attempting to become lawful drivers), and
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

Additionally, the panel explored information from the National Youth in Transition Database, as well as SOUL Family. In the 2024 January legislative session, the introduction of SOUL as a 5th permanency option for older youth signifies a critical step forward for Kansas. SOUL Family aims to address the concerns expressed by young people who feel torn between their biological families and adoption, emphasizing the importance of relationships in their journey toward adulthood.

SOUL aims to address the concerns expressed by young people who feel torn between their biological families and adoption

Youth have Adequate Support when Aging Out (cont)

Currently, young people are discharged from care at a disproportionately high rate in Kansas compared to other states, highlighting the urgency for change. SOUL work groups, led by young individuals themselves, are actively engaged in various aspects, including communications, law and policy, data and research, and practice and placement.

A panel member provided testimony as a lived expert in support of the SOUL Family permanency option at the January Legislative Session. Additionally, the panel drafted and submitted a support letter to the legislature in support of the SOUL Family Permanency Option.

**Please see the support letter in Appendix B*

The CTT CRP seeks to support Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) in subsequent years. FYI is a federal program rolled out to help young people overcome the barriers to housing. This provision will allow a young person 36 months of housing assistance, which they can access up to 90 days before turning 18 and up to 24. If they apply before they turn 24, they could receive assistance all the way up until age 27. Kansas has been at the end of a two-year technical assistance with the National Association of State Health Policy for their health and housing institute. The FYI implementation team has experienced barriers, including a lack of housing stock, lack of housing authorities staffing to administer a different additional voucher program, competing with other existing vouchers, and unfamiliarity with the federal language that has brought about the FYI voucher. Kansas is in the process of entering into an agreement with public housing authorities.

Mental Health Needs of Youth

The CTT CRP heard from the Deputy Director of Medicaid and Children's Mental Health, whose position was created to oversee the physical and mental health services delivered to children who were involved with DCF, on the history of that department and the area of need in Kansas. CTT CRP explored a multitude of initiatives and strategies that were institutionalized to improve, develop, and grow the specific areas of need in Kansas, which include but are not limited to the following:

- *Therapeutic Family Foster Homes*
- *Family Mobile Crisis Helpline*
- *Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS)/Quality Learning Collaborative*
- *Childrens Behavioral Interventionist (CBI)*

Therapeutic Family Foster Homes are a family-based service delivery approach, providing individualized, evidenced-based treatment for Kansas children, youth, and families. The treatment is delivered through an integrated constellation of services with key interventions and supports provided by treatment parents who are trained, supervised, and supported by qualified program staff. Many therapeutic family programs focus on services to children and youth with unique needs, which may apply to any clinical problems or disability, whether of an emotional, behavioral, medical, delinquent, intellectual, or developmental nature. DCF has around 13-15 therapeutic foster homes. However, in June of 2023, the legislature provided approximately 6 million to DCF aimed to enhance capacity-building efforts and expand access to these crucial services.

The *Family Mobile Crisis Hotline* was recently launched in October of 2021. This helpline ensures that Kansas children and young adults between 0 and 20 have access to comprehensive crisis support that anticipates needs and provides recovery-focused interventions in all phases of the crisis continuum. The rapid community-based mobile crisis intervention service is a hotline available 24/7, offering assessment, screening, and up to 8 weeks of stabilization services. Additionally, it provides connections to community-based referrals and services. The CRP CTT reviewed data from The Family Mobile Crisis Hotline.

The Mobile Response and Stabilization Services/Quality Learning Collaborative Pilot Project in Kansas is aimed at improving mental health services for youth and families. Kansas is the first state to implement a statewide certified community behavioral health clinic network within its Medicaid plan. The project, initiated in July 2022, involves collaboration between the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, various institutes, and mental health program directors. Its focus includes structural changes, peer learning, coaching, and the MRSS Model to address behavioral crises promptly, with pilot sites established at two CMHCs and involving DCF helpline 988 and health source call centers.

The *Children's Behavioral Interventionist (CBI)* initiative, which became Medicaid reimbursable on October 1, 2023, targets youth aged 3 through 18 struggling with behavioral and emotional dysregulation. Through neurodevelopmental activities tailored to individuals and families, CBI providers actively engage in rewiring neural pathways, aiming to enhance behavioral function and promote safe home environments.

These services are pivotal in preventing hospitalization or institutional treatment, reducing placement disruptions, and ensuring stability for children and youth, ultimately fostering successful outcomes in family-based settings across various locations including Independence, Kansas City, Springfield, Joplin, and Pittsburgh in Kansas.

The CTT CRP seeks to continue open and honest dialogue with the above initiatives and explore new opportunities regarding the mental health needs of Kansas youth in efforts to increase equitable services.

***Kansas is the
first to
implement a
statewide
certified
community
behavioral
health clinic
network within
it's Medicaid
plan.***

NEXT STEPS

In accordance with Section 106(c)(6) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), it is incumbent upon the Citizen Review Panel to furnish recommendations aimed at enhancing child protective measures both at state and local levels. Significant progress has been achieved by the panel in pursuit of this objective. The collaborative efforts between the Kansas Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) continue as robust partnerships, steadfastly dedicated to fostering ongoing cooperation in endeavors geared towards enhancing outcomes in child protection. These collaborative efforts are particularly focused on addressing the recommendations outlined below.

Recommendation for Goal One: Engage the Public

- The CTT CRP recommends that DCF investigate opportunities that accurately portray foster care, incorporating the voices of those with lived expertise, to enhance stakeholder and public comprehension of foster care's impact and promote equitable measures.
- The CTT CRP is committed to further examining opportunities and obstacles to provide Kansas communities and stakeholders with deeper insights into the challenges confronted by children within the child and family wellbeing system.

Recommendation for Goal Two: Youth have Adequate Support

- CTT CRP recommends that DCF conduct a thorough evaluation of both current and proposed permanency options available in Kansas, with a focus on identifying the most beneficial solutions for the State's youth population with consideration of the current biological findings on brain development.
- The CTT CRP acknowledges that a significant determinant to successful youth transition pertains to the impact of substance abuse, as well as the inadequacy of behavioral and mental health services. The CRP CTT remains committed to fostering collaboration with stakeholders in order to bolster initiatives aimed at enhancing the utilization of resources available to youth.

Recommendation for Goal Three: Mental Health Needs of Youth

- The CTT CRP recommends that DCF leverage the expertise of the panel by providing regular updates on both new and existing initiatives geared towards supporting the mental health needs of youth. This approach facilitates open dialogue, information sharing, and feedback exchange within the panel, fostering collaborative efforts toward enhancing mental health services.
- The CTT CRP is dedicated to fostering client and provider capacity building by promoting awareness of services and initiatives and exploring novel opportunities to address the mental health needs of youth.

CONCLUSION

The CTT CRP is pleased to acknowledge the significant achievements made over the past year in advancing the objectives of child welfare. We anticipate further advancements in the upcoming year. Our commitment to continual improvement and innovation remains steadfast as we uphold our commitment to excellence in all endeavors. For more information on the content of the report, please contact LynTia Gwess at lgwess@tfifamily.org

APPENDICES

Appendix A: CTT CRP Bylaws

Article IX

Standing and Other Committees

Section 1. The Panel may establish standing Committees. These committees may include, but are not limited to, the Membership Committee and Program Committee.

Section 2. The Membership Committee's duties may include contacting interested parties, processing new member background sheets, making decisions regarding nominations, providing orientation to new members, and other duties that may be delegated by the Chairperson or by membership vote. These duties may be filled by the panel or staff coordinator in such cases that a Membership Committee is non-existent. The panel may elect nominees throughout the panel session. The Nominating Committee, or panel as a whole, may be called upon to submit nominees for vacancies, which may occur throughout the year.

Section 3. Staff Coordinator or the Program Committee duties may include the development of a calendar and agenda for the panel, working with designated staff, making recommendations for presentations and research, and other duties that may be delegated by the Chairperson or by membership vote. These duties may be filled by the panel in such cases that a Program Committee or Staff Coordinator is non-existent.

Article X

Non-Discrimination

Section 1. The CRP CTT is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members and participants. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law. Special efforts shall be made to recruit persons from underutilized ethnically, economically, and racially diverse groups.

Section 2. The organization prohibits harassment or discrimination of any kind, including but not limited to verbal, physical, or written conduct, that creates a hostile or offensive environment based on the characteristics listed in Section 1.

Article XI

Amendments

Section 1. Any member in good standing may propose amendments to these bylaws by submitting a written proposal to the Panel officers or Staff Coordinator. The proposal must include the exact wording of the proposed amendment and a brief rationale for the change.

Section 2. The panel shall review all proposed amendments at its next regularly scheduled meeting following receipt of the proposal. The panel may accept, reject, or modify proposed amendments before a vote is cast.

Section 3. Voting on proposed amendments shall take place at a regularly scheduled meeting with a quorum of members. Amendments shall be adopted if approved by the quorum of members.

Section 4. If urgent circumstances demand immediate action, the Staff Coordinator or panel officers can convene a special meeting, at the request of any member, to suggest amendments to the bylaws. These temporary amendments will be presented to the full panel at the next regularly scheduled meeting to be accepted, rejected, or modified before casting a vote.

Appendix A (Cont.):

Article XII Confidentiality

Section 1. The CRP shall safeguard and treat as confidential all information (whether acquired through verbal communication, written record, or observation) pertaining to any child, relative, friend, or kinship caregiver under review of the CTT CRP. In addition, the panel shall safeguard information pertaining to individual staff or panel members believed to have a detrimental effect on families or the community at large, obtained or shared among members during regularly scheduled and committee meetings. This clause shall specifically exclude formal reports, media releases, and other information approved by the panel or to meet mandatory reporting guidelines.

Section 2. Members and staff shall sign a confidentiality agreement during new member orientation or prior to the first scheduled meeting attendance. This agreement will extend through the length of their membership.

Section 3. Failure to uphold confidentiality could result in the member's termination from the panel, as well as sanctions pursuant to State or Federal law.

Appendix B: CTT CRP Support Letter

Kansas Citizen Review Panel
Custody to Transition
220 W. Douglas, Suite 200
Wichita, KS. 67216
dnelsonmetzger@gmail.com
785-249-0675
01/03/2024

Subject: Legislative Support for SOUL Family Permanency Option

Dear Members of the Committee,

We, the Custody to Transition Citizen Review Panel members, are writing to collectively express our strong support for the Support, Opportunity, Unity, and Legal Relationship (SOUL) Permanency option, which addresses the critical needs of the aging-out youth population in our community. As a multidisciplinary team, our panel has observed the challenges faced by young individuals who age out of the foster care system and transition into adulthood without a stable support system.

Aging out of the foster care system is a vulnerable time for young people, and without adequate support, they often face difficulties in securing stable housing, education, employment, and healthcare. SOUL recognizes the unique needs of this population and aims to provide essential support to ensure a smoother transition to independence.

Key provisions of the SOUL Permanency option that we find particularly commendable include:

- **Support Services:** SOUL acknowledges that transitioning to adulthood is not a one-size-fits-all process and that many young people need continued guidance and assistance. SOUL family supports financial support, tuition assistance, health care, and other expenses comparable to other permanency options. SOUL family also recognizes the need for aftercare support if relationships with their SOUL legal adult caregiver need to be modified, allowing the young person the option to petition for mediation or modify the arrangement.
- **Youth Voice Lead:** Kansas youth advocated and led the SOUL family option. They have raised their voice for an alternative permanency option addressing the need for prosocial

Appendix B (Cont.):

bonds to increase the overall well-being after foster care. We know without these prosocial bonds, young people are more likely to be unprepared for adulthood and increase isolation and delinquent behaviors.

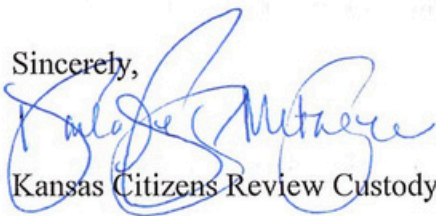
- **Community-Based Services:** SOUL recognizes the importance of community-based services that foster success for young people beyond foster care. Ensuring they have the tools they need to build successful futures, heal from trauma, and thrive in a new family as they prepare for adulthood.

We collectively believe that by supporting the SOUL Family Permanency option, we are investing in the future success of our community and ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to reach their full potential. This legislation's thoughtful and comprehensive approach aligns with our shared belief that every individual deserves a chance at a bright and fulfilling future.

We respectfully urge you to consider supporting the SOUL Family Permanency option and work towards its passage. Your advocacy for this crucial legislation will significantly impact the lives of aging-out youth in our community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing about your continued efforts to support the well-being and success of our young citizens.

Sincerely,



Kansas Citizens Review Custody to Transition Panel

Chairperson (Darla-Nelson Metzger)