

INTAKE TO PETITION ANNUAL REPORT

20
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Prepared by

Kansas Intake to Petition Citizen Review Panel

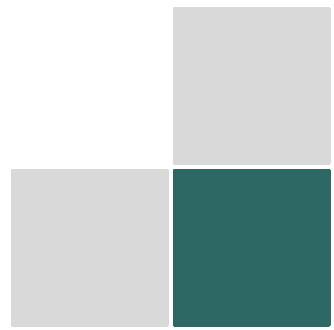


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Panel History

The Kansas Citizen Review Panel – Intake to Petition (ITP) continues to serve as one of the three federally recognized Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) in Kansas. Alongside its CRP responsibilities, the panel also functions as the state’s Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Task Force, as outlined in Section 107(c) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The Task Force brings together a broad coalition of professionals and community members—including attorneys, judges, social workers, medical experts, child welfare advocates, and engaged citizens—who share a commitment to strengthening the safety and well-being of Kansas children.

As the officially designated CJA Task Force under Section 107(e) of CAPTA, the panel plays a critical role in maintaining the state’s eligibility for federal funding through the Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime. These funds support statewide efforts to enhance the investigation, prosecution, and judicial response to cases of child abuse and neglect.

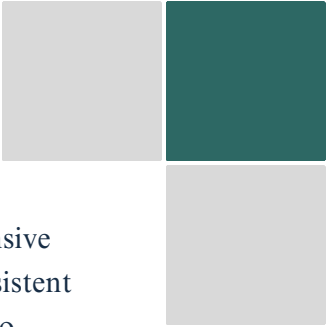
In accordance with CAPTA requirements, the Intake to Petition Citizen Review Panel presents its 2026 Annual Report, offering an updated review of the panel’s activities, recommendations, and key findings from the past year. A central priority of the ITP CRP in the 2026 session was to focus on improving training access, availability, and utilization across the child welfare system

Panel Function & Improvements

Kansas has continued to experience shifts in membership throughout the year. While the panels have welcomed a strong group of new volunteers who bring fresh perspectives and energy to the work, several members have stepped away due to professional transitions, personal commitments, or the natural conclusion of their terms. These changes have required ongoing attention to ensure that the panels maintain the diverse representation.

To meet these requirements, the panels and coordinator have been proactive in managing transitions. Outgoing members are encouraged to help identify potential successors, allowing the Panel to maintain continuity and preserve institutional knowledge. This collaborative approach has strengthened the recruitment pipeline and supported smoother onboarding for new members.

The Panel has also expanded its outreach efforts by taking a more visible role at the Kansas Children’s Service League 2026 Governor’s Conference in Wichita, KS. Participation in this statewide event has provided valuable opportunities to highlight the mission and accomplishments of the Task Force, engage with professionals across multiple disciplines, and connect with individuals who may be interested in serving. These in-person interactions have proven especially effective in generating interest and building relationships with potential candidates.



In addition to in-person recruitment, panel coordinators continue to rely on a comprehensive email outreach strategy to broaden engagement. This campaign has helped maintain consistent communication with individuals who may not attend statewide events but are still eager to contribute. Together, these efforts have strengthened the Panel's ability to recruit, retain, and support a committed and diverse membership base.

To continue strengthening panel member engagement and supporting the overall effectiveness of the Citizen Review Panels, the CRP Coordinator has maintained the practice of developing and distributing quarterly newsletters throughout 2026. These newsletters remain a central communication tool, offering a consistent way to share important updates, highlight accomplishments, and reinforce key priorities across the panels.

Each edition provides members with timely reminders, upcoming deadlines, and relevant training opportunities that support their ongoing development. The newsletters also celebrate progress made throughout the year, recognizing both collective achievements and the dedication of individual members. By keeping information accessible and regularly flowing, the newsletters help sustain a sense of connection and shared purpose among participants. Additionally, A new flow chart was created and distributed to panel member in efforts to clarify dual ITP and CJA roles.

This continued communication effort ensures that all members, whether newly appointed or long-standing, have the resources, context, and support they need to fully engage in their roles and contribute meaningfully to the work of the Panel.

**Please see Newsletter in Appendix A*

Throughout the 2026 session, the ITP CRP has continued to meet primarily through virtual platforms. This format remains essential for supporting strong attendance and ensuring that members across the state can participate consistently and without barriers. The panel continues to recognize the operational advantages of remote collaboration, and members have expressed a clear preference for maintaining virtual meetings for the majority of sessions.

In 2026, the panel also refined its meeting agenda to strengthen connection and improve workflow. A new agenda structure was introduced that intentionally incorporates brief opportunities for members to connect with one another at the beginning of each meeting. These moments of informal interaction help build rapport, support relationship-building, and create a more cohesive panel environment. Additionally, the updated agenda includes dedicated time during each meeting for members to focus on specific tasks, recommendations, or ongoing work products. This built-in work time has allowed the panel to make steady progress on key priorities while ensuring that members have space to collaborate, ask questions, and move projects forward in real time.



Through these structured efforts, the panel has strengthened onboarding and system clarity by delivering CRP purpose refreshers, role flow charts, and shared resources, including Crossover Youth and 1-800-Children presentations, the Title IV-E Training Plan, and NCJFCJ links. It has generated actionable questions and data requests on training cadence and content, cross-education among agencies, parent navigation supports, de-escalation resources, risk/safety assessment integration, and service awareness gaps. Together, these adjustments have contributed to more engaging, productive, and connected virtual meetings throughout the 2026 session.

To develop a comprehensive and effective strategy, the panel gathers for a Joint Strategic Collaboration meeting, which takes place each February. This event provides an opportunity for in-depth discussions, where members review progress and collaborate on key goals and objectives for the year ahead. The meeting is a collaborative platform, uniting both panels, Intake to Petition (ITP), and Custody to Transition (CTT). The Joint Strategic Collaboration meeting encourages the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and diverse perspectives, fostering a collective approach to shared goals and aligning the efforts of both panels for greater impact and success.

A new flow chart was created and distributed to panel members in efforts to clarify dual ITP and CJA roles, and distributing the quarterly CRP newsletter highlighting subgrantee activities, including Child First/CACKS forensic interviewing trainings, KCSL events, and offerings from KDADS, the Kansas Judicial Branch, and Children's Alliance.

The panel has maintained robust CJA Task Force functions, including subgrantee oversight via newsletter updates, planning for the June 2026 National CRP Conference with funding support for attendance, and budget discussions for panel needs such as events and travel. Member engagement has been sustained through icebreakers, breakout and root cause work, newsletter features with rotating spotlights, and recruitment activities, including reposting the CRP Coordinator position. Click [Here](#) to read the CJA 3 year assessment and learn more about the CJA function and subgrantee work.

Membership Listing

Task Force Membership Designation	Name	Title	Organization	Relevant Background/Experience
Law Enforcement	Recruiting			** Please see bios in Appendix B
Criminal Court Judge	Sarah Stewart	District Court Judge	6 th Judicial District	
Civil Court Judge	Amy Coppola	District Magistrate Judge	8 th Judicial District	
Prosecuting Attorney	Katy Britton	Assistant District Attorney	DG CO DA's Office	
Defense Attorney	Recruiting			
Attorney for Children	Brynn Blair	Managing Attorney	Kansas Legal Services	
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)*, Chairperson	Kristin Hines	State Trainer	Kansas CASA	
Health Professional	Danielle Horton	Child Abuse Pediatrician	Children's Mercy Hospital	
Health Professional	Emily Killough	Child Abuse Pediatrician	Children's Mercy Hospital	
Mental Health Professional	Anna Brown	Director	Growing Nurturing Families	
Mental Health Professional	Helen Meats	Functional Family Clinical Manager	Cornerstones of Care	
Child Protective Services	Docia Small	CAPTA/CJA Program Manager	DCF	
Child Protective Services	Kimberly Davis	CAPTA/CJA Public Service Administrator	DCF	
Individual Experienced in Working with Children with Disabilities	Recruiting			
Parent/ Representative of Parent Group	Jenny Broyles	*Formerly in Care		
Parent/ Representative of Parent Group	Ashley Storrer	Family Preservation Supervisor	TFI Family Services	
Adult Former Victim of Child Abuse and Neglect**, Chair-Elect	Amber Jewell	School-based Social Worker	USD 245	
Individual Experienced in Working with Homeless Children and Youth	Recruiting			
Optional Categories				
Office of Judicial Administration	Dena Russell-Mariano	Court Improvement Program Manager	OJA	
Guardian Ad Litem	Danielle Davey	Staff Attorney	DDVM Law	
Office of the Child Advocate	Kerrie Lonard	Kansas Child Advocate	Office of the Child Advocate	
Family Preservation	Shelli Bean	Quality Improvement and Evaluation	DCCCA	
Education Advocate	Kelly Stanford	Chief Program Officer	Communities in Schools	
Other State Agencies	Recruiting			
Tribal Representative	Melissa Swanson	Tribal Specialist	CASA	
Child Welfare Advocate	Deniece Flemming	Family Engagement Supervisor	KFAN	
Substance Abuse Counselor	Jennifer Gassmann	Parent Child Assistance Program Supervisor	Kansas Children's Service League	
Advisory Member	Recruiting			
Advisory Member, Interim Chairperson	Sara Hortenstine	Executive Director	Kansas Child Death Review Board	
Foster Parent	Jenny Broyles	--	--	
CRP Coordinator	Savannah Withrow	CRP Coordinator	Mainstream Nonprofit Solutions	
CRP Support	LynTia Gwess	Marketing	Mainstream Nonprofit Solutions	

Meeting Overviews

Summary of August 15, 2025 Meeting

The Kansas Citizen Review Panel held a joint retreat to strengthen collaboration between the Custody to Transition (CTT) and Intake to Petition (ITP) panels, review annual reports, and set strategic priorities for the upcoming year. The meeting focused on enhancing engagement through interactive activities, rotating leadership roles, and integrating small-group work into the agenda. Key discussions included voting on new panel leadership, revising meeting schedules, and updating the panel handbook to reflect expectations and responsibilities. The CTT panel emphasized continuity of mental health care for adolescents, recommending structured referral processes, expanded provider access, and targeted training for professionals. It also proposed incentivizing mental health provider participation and exploring alternative support models.

The ITP panel prioritized protective factors and advocated for improved intake processes, expanded service connections, and enhanced provider training. Both panels identified systemic gaps in referral pathways, capacity challenges, and the need for cross-agency collaboration. Strategic planning breakout sessions outlined measurable goals, including policy reviews, engagement with DCF on mental health practices, and inviting subject matter experts to future meetings. The retreat concluded with actionable steps to improve meeting effectiveness and advance recommendations aligned with CAPTA compliance and child welfare system improvements.

Summary of October 24, 2025 Meeting

The Kansas Citizen Review Panel (Intake to Petition) convened on October 24, 2025, to review the panel's purpose, discuss ongoing strategic priorities, receive updates from DCF and panel partners, and conduct small-group work to develop questions related to community mental health, crossover youth, training access, and child welfare service delivery. Members received updates on the statewide rollout of new family-focused case plans, Children's Justice Act funding, upcoming conferences, and training needs, while breakout groups identified concerns such as mental health waitlists, service coordination, immigrant family barriers, data gaps, and tracking of provider training. The panel concluded by outlining action items—including gathering additional data, planning a CJA Lunch and Learn, preparing targeted questions for future presenters, and sharing historical resources—to support the next meeting on December 19, 2025.

Summary of December 19, 2025 Meeting

The Kansas Citizen Review Panel met on December 19, 2025, to review recent updates, clarify the panel's dual roles under CAPTA and the Children's Justice Act, and conduct a root cause analysis to better understand systemic barriers affecting families and service access. Members discussed workforce turnover, lack of centralized resource information, long waitlists, voluntary service drop-off, and competitive dynamics among providers, all of which contribute to fragmented support for families, especially those with older or high-needs youth experiencing repeated crises.

The panel also reviewed CJA subgrantee activities, highlighted training opportunities, shared concerns about rising mental-health-related emergencies among youth, and explored potential improvements such as enhanced collaboration requirements, updated contract expectations, and clearer cross-agency communication. The meeting concluded with action items including distributing key materials, gathering additional information from DCF and 1-800-CHILDREN, sharing Family First service breakdowns, and preparing next steps for the joint retreat in February 2026.

Summary of February 13, 2026 Meeting

The Joint Meeting focused on strengthening panel effectiveness through education, coordination, and planning. Members reviewed their legal responsibilities under CAPTA, discussed funding strategies, and shared opportunities for training and community engagement. After this, the panel heard a presentation on 1800 CHILDREN from Michelle Reichardt and were given the opportunity for discussion and questions. After this, the panel broke into its subpanels. The breakout conversation centered on decision-making around funding and how to best support grantees. Members also explored gaps in early-stage family support, questioning how resources are introduced and whether families trust or use them. Training, communication, and accessibility were recurring themes.

Summary of April 10, 2026 Meeting

The CRP Intake to Petition/CJA Task Force virtual meeting focused on reviewing progress toward the CRP Annual Report and gathering input from key partner presentations to inform panel recommendations to DCF. Presentations from CJA subgrantees, Children's Advocacy Centers of Kansas (CACKS), Kansas Child First, and the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL) highlighted statewide training efforts, persistent challenges with rural access, workforce capacity, and the need for consistent, trauma informed, cross disciplinary education. The panel reviewed the purpose of the annual report and engaged in an in-depth discussion on drafted recommendations. Ultimately, the panel shifted away from proposing a new centralized resource directory and instead emphasized DCF led collaboration with existing resource systems to address gaps in awareness, usability, and coordination. Key outcomes included agreement on refining recommendations to focus on improving utilization of current resources, enhancing website clarity, distinguishing community based versus DCF specific services, providing caseworker training, and incorporating user centered feedback.

Work of the Panel

This section outlines the Kansas Intake to Petition’s activities and accomplishments in advancing the objectives established in August 2025. It presents an overview of the priority goals identified by panel members and highlights the critical insights and lessons learned throughout the year. The primary purpose is to provide stakeholders with clear, practical, and evidence-informed recommendations to adopt and scale best practices in the response to child abuse and neglect.

The section also underscores the ongoing commitment to building strong, collaborative partnerships across sectors and organizations. By promoting equitable resource allocation, knowledge sharing, and coordinated efforts, these partnerships aim to strengthen systemic protection and improve outcomes for children and families throughout Kansas.

The panel has continued to advance its strategic priorities established in August 2024 and reaffirmed in 2025, with a primary focus on improving training access, availability, and utilization across the child welfare system—particularly for crossover youth—while addressing related issues such as service awareness, cross-system coordination, community mental health navigation, de-escalation supports for parents, and statutory definitions of neglect and harm that remain under legislative consideration.

The panel’s overarching goal is to develop evidence-informed recommendations on the access, availability, and utilization of training for all stakeholders, with special emphasis on crossover youth, to reduce behavioral issue removals and improve outcomes. To support this goal, the panel outlined a structured timeline beginning in September 2025 that includes targeted action items, guest presentations, and cross-agency outreach. In September, the panel sought DCF clarification on current policies, procedures, and practices related to training, as well as expectations for contracting agents, and identified appropriate contacts at KDADS (for community mental health) and the Department of Corrections (for juvenile intake) to explore additional training and resource-sharing opportunities. October discussions built on these responses by inviting DCF representatives to present on training initiatives, while exploring whether sufficient cross-education exists to ensure families and service providers are aware of available services across systems.

Training and Cross Collaboration

Panel members reached a consensus regarding challenges in identifying available services and determining waitlist status across Kansas. This observation prompted discussions on the collaboration and stakeholder education requirements embedded in grantee agreements under relevant funding streams, including those aligned with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

Following receipt of detailed information and clarifications from DCF on training protocols and expectations for contracting agents, extended email discussions ensued to explore how these elements manifest in practice throughout Kansas. It was noted that while each award agreement is customized to align with the specific program or service being funded, collaboration requirements are consistently incorporated. However, implementation varies regionally, reflecting local contexts and partnerships.

Recognizing these variations as opportunities for enhancement, the Citizen Review Panel – Intake to Petition (CRP ITP) expressed interest in examining models of strong collaboration. The panel aims to identify effective practices, highlight successes, and explore replicable strategies that could promote greater uniformity and cohesion among agencies statewide. The panel acknowledges that FFPSA-related recommendations must be channeled through DCF processes, which appropriately shapes the nature and scope of training and collaboration with community-based resources that maintain open intake.

Kansas benefits from a robust array of positive prevention and family support programs. To build on these strengths, CRP ITP intends to review the following exemplary initiatives:



Agencies Working Together (Southeast Kansas): *A collaborative project that promotes coordination and mutual support among agencies serving children and families in the region, fostering integrated service delivery.*



Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention (WCCAP): *Overseen by the Kansas Children's Service League, this coalition unites multiple agencies to advance child abuse prevention efforts, raise awareness, and implement community-wide initiatives.*



The Family Strong Project: *A federally funded universal prevention demonstration in Southeast Kansas, emphasizing community-based supports to normalize help-seeking, alleviate family stressors, and prevent child welfare involvement through proactive, family-centered approaches.*



Family First Family Council: *A statewide body comprising individuals with lived expertise in child welfare and prevention systems, which provides valuable guidance on FFPSA implementation, oversight, and recommendations to strengthen family support.*

Through a focused examination of these and similar efforts, the panel seeks to amplify effective collaboration models, enhance stakeholder awareness of available services, reduce barriers to access, and contribute to a more unified, responsive prevention ecosystem across Kansas, aligned with broader state priorities under Family First and related child welfare reforms.

Panel Member Discussion - Community Challenges

Panel members shared field observations highlighting persistent challenges involving older youth and crossover youth. These included parental exhaustion contributing to entries into care, recurring emergency room visits without viable long-term resolutions, parental behaviors exacerbating safety concerns, voluntary discontinuation of services following the conclusion of court oversight and significant regional disparities.

This led to a conversation about the responsibilities for equipping parents to effectively navigate community mental health centers. Discussions focused on whether parents receive sufficient information and training, particularly de-escalation strategies, for those parenting crossover youth and teens. Shelli Bean was assigned to contact Ashley Brown at the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to obtain relevant information for subsequent deliberations.

Drawing on these collective observations from panel members' respective communities, the coordinator facilitated the development of a fishbone diagram to systematically identify and visualize potential root causes of the identified issues. This tool supports structured root cause analysis and informs targeted improvement strategies.

Panel member Danielle Davey highlighted a newly launched pilot program in Douglas County that provides targeted support to parents. The initiative pairs parents with a peer supporter who has lived experience navigating similar challenges, offering encouragement, guidance, additional resources, and practical assistance. This program represents an innovative local effort to strengthen family resilience and engagement. The panel intends to closely monitor its implementation, including tracking outcomes and evaluating the effectiveness of its strategies.

Identified Barriers:

- Information and communication gaps
- High turnover in staff that know how to use the resources and which ones are out there
- The ever changing list of resources, and changes to said resources
- Lack of centralized resource awareness (and knowledge of alternatives resources for waitlisted resources)
- Competitive dynamics in a privatized provider environment

Panel members expressed optimism that this peer-based support model could help address existing gaps in access and communication, ultimately improving outcomes for families, particularly those parenting older youth or crossover youth involved in multiple systems.

Additionally, discussions on the 1-800-Children helpline raised questions about its usage, primary audience, and mandated reporter status, prompting requests for updated data and a potential presentation from Michelle Reichardt. This was highlighted as a program that is bridging the communication and information gap.

During a recent presentation by Michelle Reichardt, the representative from 1-800-CHILDREN, operated by the Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL), highlighted this valuable statewide resource. She examined usage, primary audience, call functions, access points, impact, and future direction. In a broad sense, the program serves as a centralized, no-cost support system that bridges communication gaps between families and providers by offering immediate, judgment-free assistance and streamlined connections to essential services.

1-800-CHILDREN provides 24/7 confidential support through a dedicated helpline (1-800-CHILDREN or 1-800-332-6378), text/email options, a mobile app, and an online resource directory at 1800childrenks.org. This comprehensive database lists thousands of verified local, statewide, and national programs across categories such as health, education, child care, housing, food, financial aid, and mental health. Families and professionals can search by zip code, explore resources, and even submit self-referrals directly to programs. As the centralized access point for Help Me Grow Kansas, it facilitates easy navigation to community supports, developmental screenings, and preventive services, ultimately strengthening family-provider connections and promoting child well-being across the state.

Overall, the panel's work reflects a commitment to evidence-informed, collaborative improvements in Kansas' child welfare system. By systematically identifying systemic barriers—particularly around training equity, cross-system coordination for high-needs and crossover youth, information gaps, and parent supports, the panel is well-prepared to deliver targeted, practical recommendations that enhance access to effective training and resources statewide.

Recommendations

These recommendations address two primary system concerns:

- *Clarity and coordination of available community provided and/or DCF provided services and resources, and*
- *The practical experience of families attempting to access and utilize those services.*

This framework aligns with the state's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) plan priorities, including enhancing multidisciplinary collaboration, and supporting prevention-focused system capacity. Inconsistent awareness of available services across partner systems limits effective prevention and response efforts.

CRP recommendations are focused on ensuring families are connected to community provided or DCF provided services and resources and are able to access and utilize them effectively.

Recommendation 1: Identify and coordinate with statewide, centralized resource directories such as IRIS, 1800CHILDREN, lift up KC, FindHelp, and United Way 211 to encourage these resources to include:

- Community-based prevention services
- Differential response resources
- Behavioral health and substance use services
- Parent skill-building programs
- Domestic violence supports
- Early intervention and family support programs

We encourage DCF to consider providing the following for DCF staff, contract agencies, mandated reporters, and community partners as it relates to statewide resource directories:

- Clearly define referral pathways
- Identify eligibility criteria
- Specify which services are prevention-focused versus post-investigation
- Be accessible to DCF staff, contract agencies, mandated reporters, and community partners **See Appendix A for other people to consider*
- Providing training on how to utilize and navigate these resources annually or biannually

The panel commends the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) for its efforts to improve access to services through resource navigation tools, including the “How Can DCF Help Me” webpage. The panel recognizes this platform as an important step toward increasing transparency and connecting individuals and families to available supports.

At the same time, the panel identified opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness of this resource. Panel discussions indicated that the DCF website may benefit from improved usability, clearer navigation, and more explicit differentiation between DCF-administered services and community-based resources.

CRP recommendations are focused on ensuring families are connected to community provided or DCF provided services and resources and are able to access and utilize them effectively.

Recommendation 2: To inform these improvements further, the panel recommends that DCF engage parents, families, and community members through structured focus groups or similar feedback mechanisms. These efforts should assess the DCF website, including:

- Awareness of self services options through the website
- Barriers to accessing or navigating resources and services for families, including “How can DCF Help Me” Webpage
- User perspectives on clarity, organization, and ease of use
- Recommendations for improving content layout and language
- Strategies that would increase utilization and trust among families and communities
- How the use of AI-supported tools could improve access to supports and engagement with families and communities
- ITP encourages DCF to implement changes based on community feedback of website

Implementing Recommendation 1 and Recommendation 2 together will create a more integrated, accountable, and responsive child protection framework that directly advances CAPTA’s emphasis on multidisciplinary and cross-system collaboration.

DCF coordination with various centralized resource directories will provide providers, supervisors, and partners with transparent, standardized access to services, protocols, and best practices, reducing fragmentation and supporting consistent application of CAPTA requirements for interagency coordination, multidisciplinary teams, and family-centered prevention and response.

It is ITPs expectation with the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2 that DCF will improve accessibility and utilization of resources for communities and families.

ITP CRP Future Work

Panel members identified several opportunities to enhance access to resources for families navigating juvenile and crossover youth systems, with a focus on improving legal information dissemination and technological supports.

Potential areas for future discussion include:

- **Collaborative opportunities:** Identify potential partnerships with other organizations, initiatives, or stakeholders currently advancing court technology, digital access, or family support efforts to accelerate implementation and avoid duplication.
- **Targeted dissemination of hotline information:** Consider strategies for broadly sharing details about any relevant toll-free resource with frontline stakeholders, including law enforcement, judicial personnel, court staff, and community partners, to increase awareness and utilization.
- **Strengthened Multidisciplinary Feedback:** The panel will further explore strengthening multidisciplinary coordination, as encouraged by CAPTA. This includes expanding the collection of feedback and significantly increasing prevention and response reviews through deeper, more structured supervisor collaboration.

These forward-looking proposals aim to reduce barriers to legal information and procedural navigation, promote equity for underserved families, and support better outcomes for youth and parents involved in multiple systems. The panel will prioritize reviewing these concepts, gathering input from OJA and other partners, and identifying next steps during the upcoming session.

Conclusion

The Kansas Citizen Review Panel—Intake to Petition reaffirms its unwavering commitment to incorporating citizen and community input into the ongoing refinement of our state's child and family wellbeing system. Through continued collaboration with DCF, the ITP panel remains a source of information essential for informing policy development and enhancing practices. Looking ahead, the panel remains steadfast in its pursuit of opportunities to elevate the impact of its work. For more information on the content of the 2026 report, contact Savannah Winthrow.



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Appendix A

Additional people to consider are:

- Hospital social workers,
- Department of Youth Affairs (DYA),
- Mental Health Centers (MHC),
- Community Health Centers (CHC),
- School personnel,
- Contracted provider agencies,
- DCF case managers and supervisors,
- Intake and screening staff.

Appendix B

Judge Amy Coppola, Geary County District Magistrate Judge – Judge Coppola recently received the honor of becoming an implementation site with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). This is the first one in Kansas, and it focuses on the Enhanced Resource Guidelines in judicial leadership of conducting quality hearings concentrating on the well-being and permanency of all Child in Need of Care (CINC) and cross-over juvenile (JV) cases. Judge Coppola hears all CINC and JV hearings in Geary and Marion County. She received her Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Kansas and her Juris Doctorate at Washburn. She has worked as a private practice attorney focusing on domestic law and a prosecuting attorney before taking the bench in January of 2021.

Kerrie Lonard, Office of the Child Advocate, Topeka – Kerrie is the Child Advocate/Director of the Kansas Office of the Child Advocate. Kerrie began with the Division of the Child Advocate in December 2021. She was confirmed as the Child Advocate for the Office of the Child Advocate in February 2025. Kerrie spent 14 years with Kansas Legal Services serving as both Staff Attorney and Managing Attorney. Kerrie has represented children and youth as Guardian ad Litem (GAL), as well as parents, and interested parties in child-in-need-of-care proceedings. She has facilitated and presented at statewide GAL and Child Welfare practitioner continuing legal education trainings and served as a member on the Kansas Supreme Court Taskforce on Permanency Planning. Kerrie is the former state coordinator for the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC). During law school she interned as a CINC prosecutor and volunteered as a CASA. Kerrie holds BSW and MSW degrees and worked as a school social worker for several years as well as positions within foster care and mental health.

Miranda Johnson, Caffey, Johnson & Ingels, P.A. – As a Guardian Ad Litem and defense attorney in Kansas for more than 15 years, Miranda has witnessed a need to ensure the safety of the child prior to court involvement. On this panel, she works to review and improve the policies not only from intake to petition, but before, to help keep families intact and children safe. Her knowledge of the court system as it relates to CINC cases is extensive.

Amber Jewell, School Social Worker K-12, USD 245 – With the Kansas Child Welfare System, I have had a three-prong experience. Initially, I was a youth in foster care that was reliant on the parts of the foster care system. Next, I became a LMSW and a case manager within the foster care reintegration system that worked with families and youth who had experienced an out of home placement. Now, I function as a trainer, foster parent and advocate for people impacted by the foster care system with the hope to better the foster care system and those it serves. I am a K-12 school social worker and collaborate with many providers to train professionals as needed within and for the foster care system. I also participate in CPS groups and boards and maintain a foster care home license.

Dr. Emily Killough, Child Abuse Pediatrician, CMH – I am a child abuse pediatrician and specialize in the forensic medical evaluation of children who may have been abused or neglected. I work closely with other professionals in the child welfare field including DCF and law enforcement and help explain the medical significance of injuries and other findings. I am considered a regional expert in the medical evaluation of child maltreatment.

Appendix B

Kelly Stanford, Chief Program Officer for CIS of Mid-America and has been with the organization since 2013. She holds a B.A. in English and history from Texas A & I University, along with a M.Ed. in Education Administration from Angelo State University. She brings many layers of experience to CIS of Mid-America, including teaching at alternative schools in Texas, school and district leadership at both the director and assistant superintendent level in Texas and Colorado and, most recently, five years as the Executive Director of Routt County United Way in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. She is a 2017 graduate of the Allstate Foundation's Greater Good Non-profit Leader's Program in conjunction with the Kellogg School of Management's Center for Non-profit Management at Northwestern University and a 2022 Northwestern University Executive Scholar.

Sara Hortenstine, Kansas Child Death Review Board, Topeka – Sara Hortenstine is Executive Director of the State Child Death Review Board, housed in the Office of Kansas Attorney General. The CDRB is the third of the three Citizen Review Panels in Kansas. Sara attends the meetings of the other two panels, acting as a liaison and sharer of information and resources. The CDRB examines trends and patterns that identify risk factors in the deaths of children, from birth through 17 years of age, that occur in the state of Kansas.

Kristin Hines, Kansas CASA Association, Wichita – Kristin has worked in social service nonprofits for 20 years. She served as the Executive Director of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program serving all six of the rural and frontier counties of the 16th Judicial District in Southwest Kansas for 15 of those years. She holds an MBA and scored in the top 10% of students on the National Field Test for MBAs in 2015. Kristin is well-known as a professional willing to help those within and outside the CASA network. In 2021, she moved into the position of State Trainer for the Kansas CASA Association. In this role she is able to support children and families through building the capacity of all CASA programs and their volunteers across the state of Kansas.

Jennifer Gassmann, KCSL Jennifer Gassmann is the supervisor of the Parent Child Assistance Program in Shawnee County with Kansas Children's Service League. She has worked as a social worker for twenty-six years and has a variety of experience in providing services to families, including foster care, adoption, family preservation, and substance use. She received her bachelor's in social work Degree at Kansas State University, and also has certification in substance use case management. Jennifer is the board chair of the state Kansas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. She is a licensed foster parent and also volunteers as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children in the court system.

Jenny Broyles, Jenny has been a single licensed foster parent for 6 years to troubled teens and special needs kiddos. I have also been in the Army National Guard for the past 11.5 years and really enjoy it. It has been a privilege to be a part of this committee and learn from the amazing professionals. I also work a full-time job as a Targeted Case Manager for individuals on the IDD waiver. I enjoy being outdoors and having fun with my kiddos.

Brynn Blair, A licensed Kansas Attorney and worked as a Staff Attorney at Kansas Legal Services-Topeka from May 2018 until February 2023. As of March 1, 2023, Brynn became the managing attorney for the KLS Topeka office. While Brynn practices a variety of law at Kansas Legal Services, about 50% of her cases consist of Child In Need of Care (CINC) work. Brynn receives CINC cases through Kansas Legal Services' participation in the Douglas County Child in Need of Care Appointment panel. Through the Douglas County panel, KLS attorneys are appointed as either Guardian Ad Litem or parent attorneys.

Helen Meats, Cornerstones of Care, Overland Park- Helen is an experienced clinical social worker with a strong background in mental health therapy and program management. With over 25 years in the field, Helen has provided compassionate, evidence-based care to individuals, families, and communities across diverse clinical settings. Helen holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from the University of Kansas and maintains active licensure as a clinical social worker. She is dedicated to ongoing professional development and advocacy for equitable mental health services. Specializing in Functional Family Therapy, play therapy and trauma-informed care, Helen has worked extensively with clients facing a range of mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance use disorders. In addition to direct clinical work, Helen has held leadership roles in program development and administration. With a talent for building collaborative teams and fostering community partnerships, Helen brings strategic vision and operational expertise to behavioral health initiatives.

Appendix B

Judge Sarah Stewart, 6th District Judge- Judge Stewart has a B.S. in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology from Truman State University. She served on the Law Review, and graduated Cum Laude, from the University of Missouri, Kansas City School of Law in 2007. Prior to taking the bench, Sarah E. Stewart dedicated her career to serving the people of Kansas, either in her role as prosecutor or by taking court appointed cases to represent indigent individuals appearing before the courts. Sarah E. Stewart is a District Court Judge for the 6th Judicial District of Kansas. She was appointed to the bench by Governor Laura Kelly in 2023. She is assigned a range of cases including domestic, criminal, juvenile, and child in need of care.

Shelli Bean, DCCCA, Lawrence- Shelli has worked for a total of 17 years for DCCCA, both in Family Preservation Services and in the Child Placing Agency. She currently is the Program Improvement Specialist in the Quality and Evaluation Department and works specifically with the Family Preservation Program. She provides FPS with opportunities for improving goals and objectives, performs DCF Quarterly Case Read reviews, forges collaborative professional relationships with statewide DCF executives, and works with the evidence-based START (Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams) program. She has professional experience with the homeless population, adults with SPMI, children and families, SED services, and medically fragile children and adults as a case manager, social worker and supervisor.

Anna Brown, Grow Nurturing Families, Topeka- Anna graduated from Friends University in 2013 with a Masters of Marriage and Family Therapy and has a Clinical license. She has been working in child welfare since 2013, starting as a therapist in the Aftercare program at KVC in Topeka, Kansas. She has been with TFI Family Services for 5 years where she served as the Director of Program at Pathway Family Services and then moved to Grow Nurturing Families. She also served as a foster parent for 8 years and adopted her oldest daughter.

Danielle Davey, Attorney and Managing Member of Downing, Davey, Vokins & Mann, LLC, Lawrence- Danielle serves on the Douglas County Child in Need of Care panel, where she regularly accepts appointments to represent children's interests as their Guardian ad Litem, or to represent parents. She also serves on the Community Leadership Council for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Douglas County and the Board of Directors for Early Childhood Collective of Douglas County.

Ashley Storrer, TFI Family Services, Manhattan- Ashley graduated with a BSW in May 2018 and completed a undergraduate practicum in reintegration with SFM. She was a case manager in reintegration and aftercare until she moved into a supervisor position in March 2020. She did her clinical practicum with SFM's Behavior Health drug and alcohol program and graduated with a MSW in May 2020. She missed direct service work so she moved to TFI's Grow Nurturing Families program to do Parent/Child Interaction Therapy in July 2022. She has been a supervisor with Family Preservation for almost two years. In addition, she has been a foster parent for two years, specifically for high-risk teens.

Dr. Danielle Horton, Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and the Medical Director of the SANE Program in the Division of Childhood Adversity and Resilience at Children's Mercy Hospital- Dr. Horton is a board certified in General Pediatrics and Child Abuse Pediatrics. She completed her Pediatrics Residency training and Child Abuse Pediatrics Fellowship at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri. Dr. Horton provides medical care to children when there has been a concern for abuse. Additional aspects of her career are focused on child abuse prevention and educating others about child maltreatment. She is part of multiple multidisciplinary teams engaged in education, community-based child sexual abuse prevention efforts and practice improvement.

Sean Lionette, Court Program Specialist in the Kansas Office of Judicial Administration (OJA)- In his role, Sean supports the OJA's Court Improvement Program projects, with specific focus overseeing the regulatory compliance of the state's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) programs. Throughout his career, Sean has led program management and process improvement efforts in nonprofit and state agency settings, performing needs assessments for state social welfare initiatives, and administering grant funds for state development projects. Sean's background includes experience in state and federal policy development through involvement with innovative pilot programs and contributions to the design and drafting of federal rules, state statutes, and program policies and procedures.

Appendix B

Katy Britton, Chief Assistant District Attorney at DG CO DA's Office- Katy has extensive experience in child welfare and criminal law, having worked in the court system for 18 years, including 10 years in criminal law and 8 years as a Child in Need of Care (CINC) prosecutor. She is the only full-time prosecutor in Douglas County and collaborates daily with case managers, investigators, attorneys, and guardians ad litem. She values the prosecutor's gatekeeping role and loves collaborating with various stakeholders such as DCF, law enforcement, CASA, and parent attorneys. Katy is passionate about child welfare and lessening trauma to keep kids at home or with caregivers that they know.

Dena Russell-Marino, Oversees and implements court improvement program projects related to child welfare, serve as staff to the Supreme Court Task Force on Permanency Planning, and serve as a liaison to various agencies.

Docia Small - DCF Appointee

Ariele Erwine- DCF Appointee

Kimberly Davis- DCF Appointee