

Improving the Kansas Permanency Process



Introductions

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Goals, Objectives, Exceptions

1

Improve understanding of relatives and non related kin and how their involvement impacts youth in foster care.

2

Explore state wide data indicators that indicate areas where improvement in Kansas Child Welfare.

3

Explore solutions and introduce strategies to improve the Kansas Permanency Process.

This presentation will not:

- Provide a “to do list” that will work for every county and every situation.
- Suggest that every idea presented will work for every county or every case

Baked in Biases

Poor = Bad

Our standards are the norm

Foster care is a good, safe alternative

Kids in Foster Care

- Have more compromised developmental outcomes than children who do not experience placement in foster care (Harden, 2014)
- Are half as likely to pay a mortgage or rent as compared to peers, and more than 1/5 experience homelessness
- Score 16-20% below their peers in state standardized testing and only 3% go on to post secondary education.
- Have higher rates of grade retention, poor social competence, use of special education, and drop out rates.
- Have a higher incidence of health problems including hospitalization due to illness, accident, injury, drug use, emotional problems.
- 1/3 report mental health disorders.
- Are at a heightened risk for early onset delinquency. One study showed of 100 youth with foster care histories, within 6 months of being on their own 45% had been involved with LE, 41% had spent time in jail, 26% had formal charges filed, and 7% were incarcerated.

But we can't leave them all at home...So, then what?

Programs that can help...

- Fostering Prevention (FAC) and other DCF funded prevention initiatives
- 30 Days to Family (FAC) and other DCF funded family finding initiatives
- Kinship Navigator (FAC) and other DCF funded family support initiatives

But if parents are struggling, Are relatives/kin really better for kids?

Studies have found that children thrive with relatives and kin. In comparison to children in non-relative foster care, kids with relatives experience:

- **Increased Stability**
 - Fewer placement changes
 - Better educational outcomes and educational stability
 - Less likelihood of re-entry into the foster care system
- **Permanency**
 - Relatives are willing to adopt or become permanent guardians. 34% of children adopted from foster care are adopted by relatives.
- **Better Behavioral and Mental Health Outcomes.**
- **More Feelings of Belonging and Acceptance**
 - Report they 'always feel loved'
 - More likely to like who they live with (93% v. 79% for non relative foster care)
 - Less likely to run away
 - More likely to want to maintain connection and placement with kin
- **Increased likelihood of living with or staying connected to siblings.**
- **Greater preservation of cultural identity and community connections, and connections to their families.**

Relatives

For purposes of notification of DCF custody and placement, DCF defines a relative as follows:

1. A person who can trace a blood tie to a child. Persons related by blood may include, but is not limited to, a parent, grandparent, sibling, great-grandparent, uncle or aunt, nephew or niece, great-great grandparent, great uncle or aunt, cousin, great-great-great grandparent, great-great uncle or aunt, or similar relation. Termination of parental rights does not alter or eliminate the blood relationship to relatives.
2. A person who is or was related to the child through marriage or previous marriage (terminated by death or divorce). This includes, but is not limited to, step-parents, step-grandparents, step-aunts, step-uncles or similar relation.
3. Legally adoptive parents and other relatives of adoptive parents as designated in groups (1) and (2).
4. Parents or relatives of siblings or half-sibling, including but not limited to grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or similar relation.
5. Adoptive parents and grandparents of siblings or half-siblings.
6. A court-appointed guardian or permanent custodian of a sibling or half-sibling.

Non-Related Kin

For purposes of notification and of DCF custody and placement, DCF defines a non-related kin as another adult with whom the child or the child's parent already has a close emotional attachment or ties.

Success starts in Prevention

Four Questions – pre custody

1. What can we do to remove the danger instead of the child?
2. Can someone the child or family knows move into the home to remove the danger?
3. Can the caregiver and child go live with a relative or nonrelated kin?
4. Could the child move temporarily to live with a relative or nonrelated kin?

- Evidence Based Prevention Services
 - Family First Prevention Services (FFPSA)
 - Family Preservation
- Team Decision Making
- Foster Care doesn't equal failure.
 - Safely remaining in home for additional time, even if there is an eventual need for foster care is still success.

Crisis Intervention Services

- DCF Family Mobile Crisis Helpline 1-833-441-2240
 - Available to all Kansans 20 years of age or younger
- 988
- Local CMHC Crisis Lines
- MRSS “Just Go” Pilot
 - Wyandot Center for Community Behavioral Health (KCK) and Compass Behavioral Health (Garden City)
 - Launch scheduled for 3/1 with a goal of covering 80% of Kansas by July 2025.
 - CMHCs are to dispatch (with parent or youth permission) a mental health team directly to the caller.

Gauging the Need for Improvement

- Kansas CFSR Results
 - Child and Family Services Review
 - Case review of 65 cases (40 foster care and 25 in home) in Brown, Crawford, Sedgwick Counties.
 - Focus groups
 - Interviews
 - Review of Statewide Data Indicators
- Improvements will require collaboration of all Child Welfare Stakeholders – multiple areas needing improvement are chosen from the statewide data and are the focus of the Performance Improvement Plan.
- Settlement Outcomes
- State and Federal Law (Adoption and Safe Families Act, Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families among others).
- County and State level data

Well-Being Outcomes

- Substantial conformity at 95%
- Families Have Enhanced Capacity To Provide For Their Childrens Needs
 - Kansas 32%
 - Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents (34%)
 - Child and family involvement in case planning (56%)
 - Caseworker visits with child (77%)
 - Caseworker visits with parent (52%)
- Children receive appropriate services to meet educational needs (88%)
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs (52%)

Qualitative measurement through case reads and interviews with foster care and family preservation clients.

The Children's Bureau has established very high standards of performance for the CFSRs. The standards are based on the belief that, because child welfare agencies work with our nation's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be considered acceptable.

Permanency Outcomes

- Placement Stability (moves/1000 days in care)
 - Kansas 5.72 v National 4.48
- Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care
 - Kansas 30.2% v National 35.2%
- Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months
 - Kansas 43.8% v National 40.1%
- Permanency in 12 months for children in care 24 months or more
 - Kansas 32.8% v National 37.3%
- How is permanency measured?
 - Release of DCF custody regardless of permanency goal
 - State performance is compared to the national performance

CFSR Program Improvements

Safety

1. Standardize definitions relating to risk and safety
2. Improve policy and practice regarding drafting and monitoring safety plans.

Placement Stability

1. Safely decrease youth entering care due to non abuse neglect concerns (FINA) and through non DCF referrals.
2. Service array analysis and allocation of services to address service gaps.
3. Explore increases in relative supports for older youth with a focus on supports in the first 90 days of care.
4. Standardize definitions to improve data collection and placement matching.
5. Review and possible revision of level of care attributes and tools.
6. Increased use of Placement Stability TDM

CFSR Program Improvements

Permanency

1. Four Questions – Permanency
2. Process Mapping and evaluation of barriers to timely termination filing
3. Revisions to the Court report to identify clearly how long a youth has been placed out of home.

Well-Being

1. Expansion the Kansas Practice Model through Case Management and achievement of permanency for youth.
2. Strengthen behavioral health services through support to KDADS transition to the CCBHC model of care and MRSS supports for families.
3. Support increases in availability of Children’s Behavioral Interventionist services.
4. Expansion of Therapeutic Family Foster Home capacity

CFSR Improvement Domains

Quality Assurance

1. Increase collaboration between performance improvement teams at CMPs and DCF.
2. Improve case read reconciliation and feedback structure.
3. Increase characteristics gathered to allow for additional reporting out of systemic data.
4. Creation of a multiagency alliance to support continuous quality improvement.

Training

1. Adopt and implement a shared set of core competencies for child welfare practitioners at both DCF and CMPs.
2. Create a shared process across DCF and CMPs for tracking and ensuring training requirements are met.

CFSR workgroup themes

- Collaboration - Quality engagement is needed between stakeholders and families and amongst stakeholders.
- Consistency - Kansas needs shared competencies, definitions, education, and data collection between child welfare stakeholders.
- Capacity - Kansas needs both a systemic integrated way to assess community needs and the resources to meet those needs once they are identified.

How do we improve?

- Cascading improvements
 - Disproportionately represented groups
 - Improvements to smaller outcomes effect larger outcomes
- Collaboration
- Monitoring how improvement in one area effects other outcomes
 - Does this change negatively effect another outcome

Time is of the essence

- To achieve permanency timely we need to consider how families can be reunited more quickly. Changing the reintegration timeline by 30, 60, or 90 days can improve outcomes for all Kansas families.
- Are we using landmark dates for reunifications or other permanency achievement? If so, why?
 - Beginning or end of school year?
 - Breaks in the school year?
 - Beginning of a month or end of a month?
 - National Adoption Day
- 15 of 22 months of out of home placement as a benchmark for consideration of termination of parental rights.
- Permanency achievement

Four Questions - Permanency

- 1) What is the current safety concern that prevents us from sending the child home today?
- 2) If there is a current safety concern, could aftercare or other in-home services that could address the concern?
- 3) If the concern cannot be addressed today, what would need to happen to allow the child to be reunified with their family by next Tuesday?
- 4) If there is no way for the child to be reunified in the immediate future, is the current case plan goal the appropriate one?

Case Plans

- Are there tasks that are on every case plan?
 - If so, why are they there?
 - Agency expectation that every family requires this service?
 - Court expectation that every family requires a service?
- Are the case planning tasks growing with the family?
- Can families understand the tasks that they are being asked to do and why the tasks are assigned?
- Are we expecting parents to do the work of raising children alone?
- Concurrent case plan goals – while concurrent goals can lead to more timely permanency for youth experiencing a need for care, doing this in a way that everyone understands requires engagement with parents, placement providers, and age appropriately for youth in care.

Court Reports

- These are the primary place that many of the legal partners receive information about what work is happening with youth and families.
- What information is included?
 - History of the case
 - Case plan tasks and progress
 - Family time occurrences and observation
 - Recommendations
- What information does your local jurisdiction wish was included in the Court report?
- Length of time a youth has been out of home – is this included – would it be helpful
- Interim Reports and communication with the Court

Court hearings and Journal Entries

- Docket Calls v. Individual Hearings
- Continuances
- Length of time between hearings
- Journal Entries
 - Primary way of communicating information from the Court back out to Case Managers, DCF, and families.
 - Kansas Judicial Council Forms
 - Standard Court Orders
 - Timeliness of orders
 - Clarity of orders
- Engagement of parents/youth/foster parents in the hearing process
 - Youth Court report
 - Foster Parent Court report