



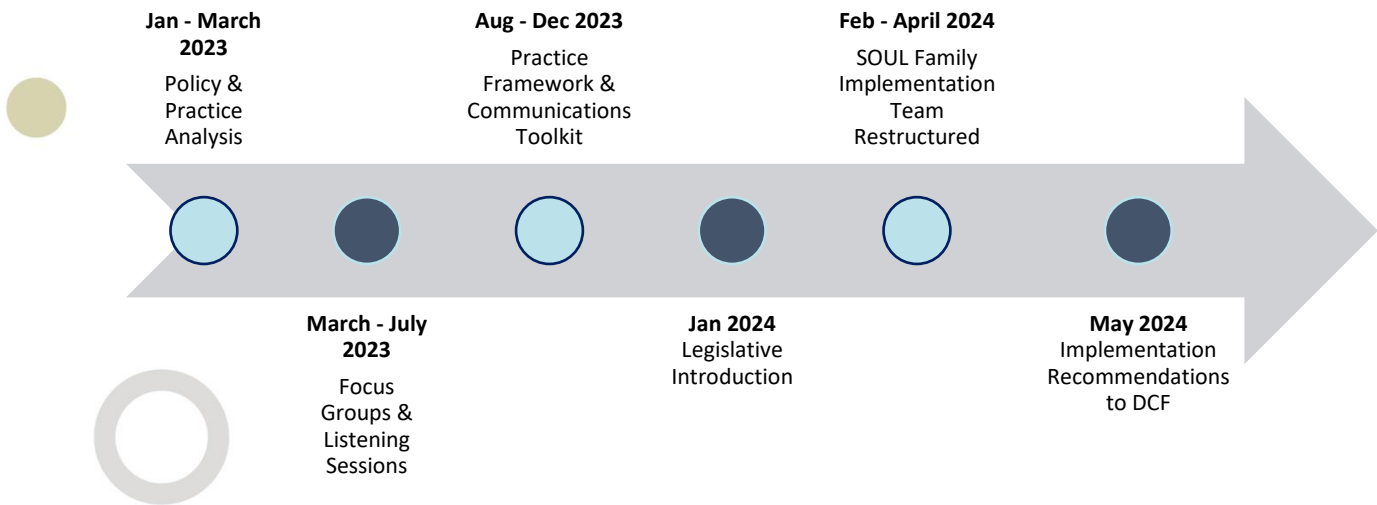
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**JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM OVERSIGHT**  
**Update: SOUL Family Legal Permanency Option**  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2024

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Minority Member Ousley and Members of the Committee, my name is Kristalle Hedrick. I serve as the Vice President of Kansas Programs with FosterAdopt Connect (FAC). FosterAdopt Connect (FAC) is a non-profit social service agency developed by foster parents and others with lived experience to focus exclusively on filling gaps in the child welfare system. Our objective is to assure positive outcomes for kids who have experienced abuse or neglect, and the families caring for them.

Starting in the Fall of 2022, FAC has partnered with the Department for Children and Families and the Annie E. Case Foundation as a member of the Kansas SOUL Family demonstration site team. While our primary role was supporting and leading the youth engagement components of SOUL, we also walked alongside other stakeholders and child welfare experts to cultivate a thorough practice and implementation plan.

Below is a timeline of those statewide efforts:



SOUL Family Implementation Team Restructure	
<i>Practice Sub-Groups</i>	<b>Purpose/Goal</b>
<b>Authentic Youth &amp; Family Engagement</b>	Strengthen youth and family engagement practice. Inform training needs. Identify available resources.
<b>Community Partnership and Collaboration</b>	Strengthen partnership and collaboration with community partners. Inform training needs. Conduct resource mapping. Identify and engage allies in the work.
<b>Intentional Integration of Racial equity and Inclusion</b>	Inform training and data needs. Gather and analyze disaggregated data relevant to SOUL Family. Identify SOUL related policies and practices contributing to disparities.
<i>Implementation Sub-Groups</i>	<b>Purpose/Goal</b>
<b>Benefits and Payments</b>	Strengthen/Inform infrastructure and process for delivery of benefits and payments.
<b>Data for Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	Strengthen infrastructure and process for collection and evaluation of data.
<b>Training &amp; Workforce</b>	Coordinate and inform training across sub-groups.
<b>Judicial Practice</b>	Educate and support judiciary and legal community in using the SOUL Family permanency option

SOUL Family Implementation Recommendations to DCF	
TRAINING & WORKFORCE READINESS	
	<b>Recommendations</b>
Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce a standardized SOUL Family training for front line staff (to include SOUL case planning process, court requirements, integrating racial equity, available benefits, etc.).</li> </ul>
Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a Train the Trainer model to develop standardized training for DCF and CMPs to incorporate into routine training and onboarding.</li> <li>Update MAPP training to reflect SOUL Family and extend all existing caregiver training to SOUL Family caregivers.</li> </ul>
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement an authentic youth engagement coaching model to strengthen understanding, support and youth engagement in case planning.</li> <li>Develop &amp; implement a child welfare racial equity training to educate and support individual, child welfare staff and organizations implementing SOUL Family in understanding the historical context of race and ethnicity in child welfare and considerations for working with diverse populations.</li> </ul>
STAFFING & STRUCTURE	
	<b>Recommendations</b>
Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a committee with SOUL Family points of contact for DCF, CMP's, and partner organizations (<i>as confidentiality allows</i>) to problem solve and advise on case-specific needs of SOUL Family cases in Year 1.</li> </ul>

Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund a “SOUL Family Navigator” role in a community organization to support young people, families, and case workers in navigating the SOUL Family process and ongoing supports.</li> </ul>
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund “SOUL Family Ambassadors” in targeted communities to build understanding of SOUL Family among critical SOUL Family stakeholders like schools, religious communities, service providers, and others.</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>	
	<b>Recommendations</b>
Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With input from lived experts, produce SOUL Family materials for young people, families, potential SOUL Family caregivers, and general audiences (<i>to include various formats: social media, handouts, video, etc.</i>).</li> </ul>
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a state-wide SOUL Family mobile app as a resource for SOUL Family youth and caregivers to navigate supports, benefits, and legal questions about SOUL Family.</li> </ul>
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	
	<b>Recommendations</b>
Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate updates to data systems for common data collection and reporting across DCF and CMP’s</li> <li>• Revise, develop and implement DCF policies in support of SOUL Family implementation</li> <li>• Provide guidance and communication about SOUL Family benefits and payments</li> </ul>
Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead a decision point analysis in the SOUL Family process to ensure equity is present and bias from the process.</li> <li>• Provide a monthly report on SOUL Family detailing number of cases eligible for SOUL Family, number of goals changed, and status of finalized SOUL Family cases with breakouts by geographic and demographic information (<i>i.e age, race, gender</i>).</li> </ul>
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish SOUL Family state-wide sustainability functions in a community organization (<i>i.e. host SOUL Family advisory board to review SOUL Family progress, disaggregated data, engagement and impact on families of color, fidelity to the vision of SOUL Family, and to inform continuous improvement efforts over time</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>JUDICIAL PRACTICE</b>	
	<b>Recommendations*</b>
Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a presentation about SOUL Family during the OJA joint training scheduled in June.</li> <li>• Create a Bench Card related to SOUL Family Legal Permanency to support Judges as they make decisions related to permanency for youth.</li> <li>• Revise all Judicial Council forms utilized by the courts and legal stakeholders to reflect SOUL Family.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the general court report to reflect requirements of information that must be submitted to the court.</li> </ul>
Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In partnership with lived experts, develop and coordinate materials and training for courts, Citizen Review Boards, legal community and CASA.</li> <li>Deliver a 50-minute presentation on SOUL Family Legal Permanency at the OJA Best Practices Training on 8/20/2024.**</li> <li>OJA Plans to review and revise (as needed) their GAL Training modules to include SOUL Family Legal Permanency.</li> </ul>
<p>*Some items in this section are not recommendations for DCF's consideration but rather planned activities by OJA and the Courts.  **<a href="https://kscourts.gov/About-the-Courts/Programs/Child-Welfare-Law-Training/Summer-Training-in-Child-Welfare-Law">https://kscourts.gov/About-the-Courts/Programs/Child-Welfare-Law-Training/Summer-Training-in-Child-Welfare-Law</a></p>	

Serving on the Kansas SOUL Family demonstration site team has been a privilege. We remain eager to support the implementation of SOUL Family through these recommendations and look forward to seeing more positive outcomes for young adults exiting foster care in Kansas.

Thank you for your time, I'm happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

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