



Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight **September 11, 2024**

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Ousley and Members of the Committee, my name is Jeanette Owens, and I am the Chief Child Welfare Officer at DCCCA. DCCCA has served Kansas communities, families, and children for 50 years. We provide child welfare programs including family preservation and child placing agency services. Additionally, we provide mental health and substance use disorder treatment, traffic safety, prevention, and research services. Thank you for the opportunity to share about our Therapeutic Family Foster Homes grant today.

DCCCA is one of seven agencies awarded a grant to build capacity to increase the number of Therapeutic Family Foster Homes (TFFH). TFFH is a family home which provides 24-hour care for high needs children and youth. DCCCA's TFFH program includes intensive support for children at a therapeutic level including children in foster care, children receiving Family Preservation, Family First Prevention Services, or Post Adoption Support services. Requirements for being a TFFH family include working with the child's parents when applicable, have a maximum of two custody children placed in the home, complete additional training, communicate daily with professionals, work on the child's treatment plan to improve the child's functioning, and participate in weekly in-person meetings in the home. The goal of TFFH care is to help stabilize and improve the child's behaviors.

Since beginning this grant less than six months ago, DCCCA has established the program including hiring and training staff, recruiting families, setting up support groups and creating flyers. DCCCA has obtained approval from the Department for Children and Families (DCF) for seven TFFH homes and has served 6 children at the therapeutic level of care in those homes. DCCCA is in the process of placing a seventh child in one of the newer approved homes and an eighth child has been matched with a home and will be placed once released from a PRTF. DCCCA has not yet provided this service to non-custody children but is scheduling training for

prevention providers that will be able to utilize TFFH. Our goal is serving fifty children or youth a year.

DCCCA has been intentional about recruiting TFFH parents from experienced foster homes to start the program. We have broadened those recruitment efforts to other foster families and targeted new families who may have training and experience with higher needs children. In addition to training and experience with higher needs children and youth, we are looking for parents who have the temperament, documentation abilities, desire, and are interested in only taking one or two therapeutic level children or youth in their home. When families meet these criteria and can meet the licensure requirements and approval of DCF, we are able to begin matching a child to their home.

DCCCA recognized prior to the TFFH grant the importance of having additional training for foster families that were caring for higher needs children. We invested in February 2023 by having 12 staff complete the Pressley Ridge Trainer Certification. In June of this year, we were able to host the first Pressley Ridge Trainer Certification Training (another TFFH grantee) in Lawrence where we had 6 additional staff complete training. Since that time, we have had additional staff trained as well as scheduled four more staff to be trained later this month. DCCCA is working with Pressley Ridge to finalize locations and dates for additional training in October or November of this year. DCCCA is appreciative of DCF's recent announcement allowing Pressley Ridge to be accepted as a pre-service training. We have scheduled our first Pressley Ridge training for potential and current TFFH to begin on October 15th.

DCCCA utilizes additional resources to support TFFH families and children including access to therapists and our Behavioral Interventionist (BI) program. Additionally, DCCCA offers incentives through the grant to both the TFFH parents and youth when they reach milestones or reach certain goals. These extra supports and incentives are utilized to wrap around the family and the child in efforts to create positive and lasting change. Furthermore, DCCCA provides TFFH support groups, allowing both the family and child to have intentional time with others to broaden understanding and skills.

DCCCA is excited about the grants, knowing the focus is specifically for stabilizing and supporting some of the highest needs children and youth we work with. Often, these children do not maintain in traditional placements which leads to the inability to provide additional services and resources at the level necessary, creating the potential for long term concerns and negative outcomes. TFFH grants bring opportunities to interrupt the negative trend of instability for these children and wrap the child, family, supports and resources together.

Thank you for your time. We appreciate the invitation to join today's conversation about Therapeutic Family Foster Homes and we appreciate the commitment to improving the lives of Kansas children.

Respectfully submitted,

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Questions may also be directed to:
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