



Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight **September 11th, 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 services today.

Child Placing Agency (CPA) Services

DCCCA provides child placing agency services which includes recruitment, training, licensing, and support service for foster families. We currently serve 432 foster homes and have 489 children in placement. We have 58 total child placing agency staff.

Kansas has 2,297 foster families statewide. The highest number of Kansas foster homes in the last four years was in May of 2020 with 2,935 families.

DCCCA recently partnered with the Center for Healing from Childhood Trauma to give foster parents access to over 50 on-demand training courses around the topics of early childhood adversity and trauma. Foster parents can choose the topics and/or speakers they are interested in and can watch and learn at their own pace.

New DCF Licensing regulations went into effect June 7th. DCCCA has continued to work diligently to inform and train staff and foster parents of the new regulations as well as assist staff and families with the changes. DCCCA has hired an additional position to assist with the increased home assessment requirements. Furthermore, we are continuing to work through the new steps for the background check process for substitute caregivers.

Therapeutic Family Foster Homes (TFFH)

DCCCA provides Therapeutic Family Foster Home (TFFH) services statewide. DCCCA is one of seven agencies awarded a grant to build capacity to increase the number of Therapeutic Family Foster Homes (TFFH). DCCCA TFFH is a family home which provides

24-hour care for high needs children and youth. The 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.

We Kan Drive

We Kan Drive is a program that helps to remove the barriers youth in foster care and independent living face when working towards obtaining their driver's license. DCCCA provides educational and financial support to help teens and young adults.

Since November 2021, We Kan Drive has provided services for nearly 730 youth in Kansas. We Kan Drive enrolled 478 youth in Driver's Education courses, purchased auto insurance policies for 139 youth, and supported 221 youth in obtaining some form of licensure. We Kan Drive aims to continue to exceed program goals each year and has received an additional 543 referrals since expanding statewide in November of 2023.

In July, DCCCA offered youth a new opportunity where some program participants attended B.R.A.K.E.S (Be Responsible And Keep Everyone Safe). The primary goal of this class is to prevent injuries and save lives by training and educating teenage drivers and their caregivers about the importance of safe and responsible driving. Youth that have participated in this class are approximately 64% less likely to be in a car crash their first three years of driving. We Kan Drive hopes to offer this opportunity again in FY25.

Post-Adoption Support Services

DCCCA provides post-adoption support services statewide to families that have adopted a child or children. Respite, training and support group, as well as in-home therapy services are resources adoptive families can now access. Often, families hear about post-adoption services after significant disruptive events. We are working on a new marketing campaign in a preventative effort to reach families with support earlier. DCCCA currently serves 46 families. Since July, there have been 20 families provided respite care.

Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC)

Beginning July 1, 2024, DCCCA began managing the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC). KYAC is a statewide, youth-led council who provide positive recommendations and changes to the child welfare system. The mission of KYAC is to unite and empower young people directly impacted by the child welfare system and enable them to advocate for themselves and others while developing life and leadership skills. DCCCA has added a website and is currently working on encouraging KYAC membership.

Family Preservation Services

DCCCA provides family preservation services for the five counties in the Kansas City region and 10 counties in the Wichita region. Our Family Preservation services focus

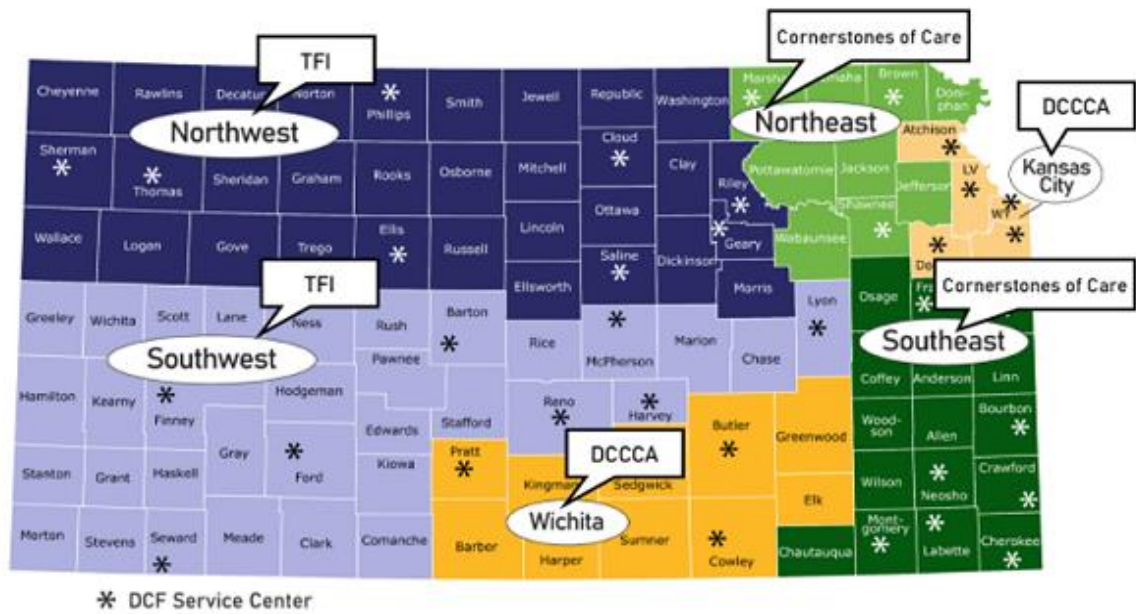
specifically on providing voluntary in-home support for families with a child at risk of entering out of home placement.

Newly awarded Family Preservation contracts started July 1, 2024. DCCCA has continued to use evidenced based practice Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) and has added evidenced based practice Functional Family Therapy (FFT). DCCCA FFT therapists are currently receiving clinical training and practice oversight with weekly video conference consultation.

DCCCA has designated specific weeks to assist staff with enhanced learning. The designated weeks are to also allow staff to have a brief pause from their daily duties that involve families in significant crisis and focus on learning and growth opportunities. DCCCA has 17 speakers presenting to staff during the first week. We have also built in 10 hours of documentation time in efforts to assist any staff that has any outstanding documentation that is over the 48-hour timeline.

DCCCA currently has 203 active family preservation families in our services with 465 children in those families. We have 61 family preservation staff including case managers, support workers and administration staff. Our current average caseload is 12 families. It is important to note that caseloads sizes vary based on referrals received as well as open staff positions.

Family Preservation in DCF Regions



Continued Area of Need:

Access to Resources:

Similar to past testimony, one of the most difficult barriers for our families is timely access to mental health services and other community resources. The crisis needs of youth in the system require timely access to therapy and other services before a family can reach stabilization. We are excited that the Medicaid codes opened to additional providers in July. This will allow more access and choice for children and families. We are conducting weekly internal meetings, have hired a few additional staff and are navigating the system that is adjusting to the newly opened codes.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanette Owens
DCCCA, Inc. Chief Child Welfare Officer
3312 Clinton Parkway Lawrence, KS 66047
jowens@dcca.org

Questions may also be directed to:
Stuart Little, Little Relations, stuartjlittle@mac.com