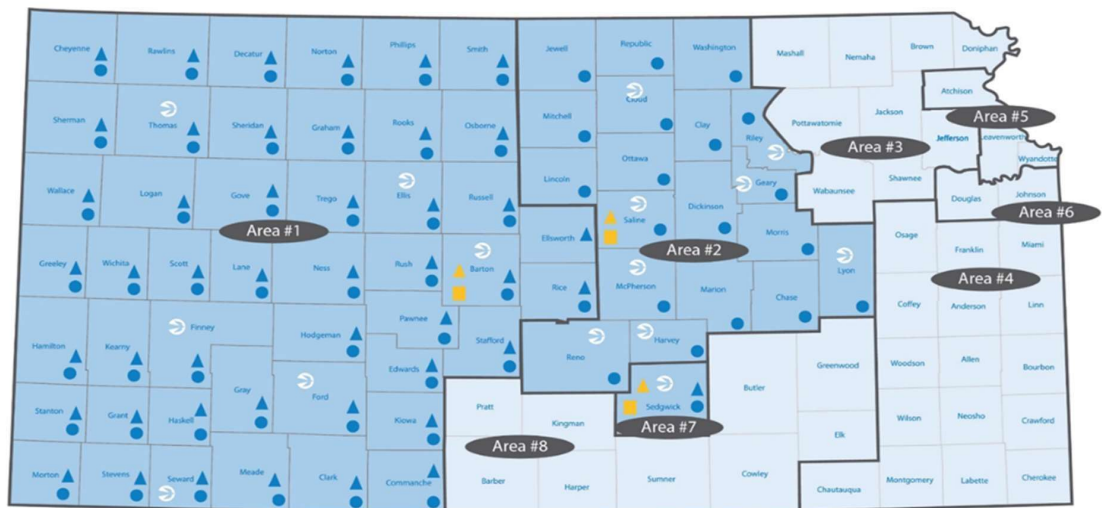


Provider Update  
 Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight  
 September 11, 2024

Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Gossage, Ranking Member Ousley, and members of the Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Matt Stephens, and I serve as the Vice President of Advocacy for Saint Francis Ministries (SFM). I am joined today by my colleague Holly Osborne, Vice President of Permanency at SFM. Saint Francis Ministries, an independent not-for-profit organization, has been dedicated to serving Kansas children and families since 1945. We are committed to delivering high-quality services and programs that address the needs of Kansas children and families. Currently, Saint Francis provides a comprehensive range of services, including prevention, permanency case management (reintegration and adoption), foster care homes, and residential care.



**● PERMANENCY CASE MANAGEMENT**

- Permanency Case Management
- Adoption
- Independent Living
- Kinship
- Permanency Clinic

**■ SUBSTANCE USE ASSESSMENT, OUTPATIENT TREATMENT AND INTENSIVE TREATMENT**

**▲ IN-HOME SERVICES FCT**

**▲ SEEKING SAFETY**

**KANSAS STATE WIDE SERVICES**

- Community Outreach Programs & services
- Foster Care Homes
- Psychiatric & Medication Management Services
- Psychological Assessment
- Salina West-Residential

## Family First Prevention Services:

Saint Francis Ministries remains dedicated to providing Family Centered Therapy (FCT), a home-based intervention designed to reduce the need for out-of-home placements. The program has been consistently refined through research, experience, and proven effectiveness. In FY24, SFM delivered FCT services to 381 families, encompassing 988 youth. The data shows that 99.3% of children remained safely at home while participating in the program, and 92.4% of youth were still in their homes one year after the referral date.

## Case Management Grantee:

Saint Francis Ministries provides case management services in catchment areas 1 and 2, encompassing most of western Kansas (refer to the map above). Currently, SFM serves 1,364 youth in out-of-home placements and offers aftercare services to 384 youth and their families. In FY24, 740 youth were referred for out-of-home case management services. The table below shows the total number of achieved permanencies including the corresponding percentages of overall permanencies during this period.

PERMANENCY TYPE	CLIENT COUNT	% OF TOTAL
Reunification	710	55%
Adoption	288	22%
Aged Out	173	14%
Guardianship	55	4%
Other	55	4%
All Perm types combined	1,281	



## Missing/Runaway Youth:

As of 9/3/2024, Saint Francis Ministries had 13 (or about 1%) youth on missing or runaway status. Saint Francis Ministries has a Special Response Team comprised of staff whose sole job is to locate, communicate with, and bring children back into care. They use several approaches to complete this work including internet searches, field observations, social media monitoring, family finding, and collaboration with DCF and Law Enforcement on retrieval operations.

## Failure to Place Data:

Saint Francis Ministries did not have children sleep in the office during July and August. In FY24, 55 youth spent 116 nights in the office. The primary reason for these stays were either the youth refusing an identified placement or the unavailability of placements willing to accept them because of violent or sexualized behavior, a history of running away, or severe mental health needs. The utilization of the Standby Bed Network and increased capacity in therapeutic foster homes are expected to eliminate instances of office stays.

## Case Load Ratios:

Saint Francis Ministries is actively working to reduce caseload sizes. Currently, there are 17 reintegration case manager vacancies across the 12 offices in western Kansas. The table below provides an overview of caseload sizes across various service lines.

	AREA 1	AREA 2	AVERAGE
Adoption	25.96	24.25	25.11
Aftercare	24.93	29.12	27.03
Reintegration	20.44	18.86	19.65



## SOUL Implementation:

Saint Francis is thrilled about the passage of the SOUL Family Legal Permanency Option. Over the past two years, we have been privileged to be part of the team that helped establish Kansas as the first state in the nation to offer this permanency option to youth in foster care. We are currently training our staff and identifying youth who may be eligible for a SOUL family. We are also excited to collaborate with lived experts who will serve as consultants, providing their insights and support as we identify potential youth and families who could benefit from the SOUL Family Legal Permanency Option.

## Residential:

Saint Francis Ministries directs a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) and two Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP). The PRTF serves up to 42 youth between the ages of 6-18 who are deemed medically unable to reside safely in the community. The PRTF currently maintains a census of 93%.

Saint Francis Ministries QRTPs are licensed to serve 16 clients ages 12-18. QRTP services in Salina provide structured environments for youth on PRTF wait lists or discharged without readiness for family-like placement. Uniquely, our QRTP is located on the same campus as our PRTF. This gives clients at the QRTP access to additional services and staff located on the campus, such as 24-hour nursing, administration, psychiatric, on-site training staff, and physical access for the equine therapy program and ropes course.

Foster Care Homes/Child Placing Agency (CPA):

Saint Francis Ministries operates a child-placing agency with homes located throughout the state. As discussed, the CPA continues to see a decrease in inquiries about foster parenting. To mitigate that decrease, SFM is implementing an evidence-based practice to equip staff and foster families to meet the complex needs of youth. The EBP will provide a coaching model for families, serve all levels, and mitigate the need for higher levels of care. It will also provide additional support to the families that SFM serves, resulting in increased retention rates of foster families.

	FOSTER CARE HOMES	INQUIRIES	SPONSORED HOMES	CLOSED HOMES
FY 19	600	1,054	238	254
FY 20	584	831	228	241
FY 21	571	615	167	241
FY 22	497	602	194	235
FY 23	456	550	162	171
FY 24	447	566	125	152



Foster Care Capacity:

To reiterate, the challenge of having an excessive number of Kansas children in out-of-home placements continues. Despite ongoing efforts to safely decrease the need for foster care, as of the end of July, there were 5,754 children in the system—still above the national per capita average. While this figure is notably lower than in previous years, it remains significantly higher than the ideal target of 3,379 children, highlighting a disparity that requires continued focus and intervention.

## Workforce:

In Kansas, Saint Francis Ministries employs 878 professionals dedicated to delivering direct services to children and families or supporting our array of child welfare services. The table below provides a breakdown of staff allocation.

TYPE	# EMPLOYEES
Case Management	514
Residential	122
Support	106
Prevention	67
Foster Care	69
TOTAL	878



Recruitment and retention are top priorities for Saint Francis Ministries, as we deeply value the specialized experience and knowledge our staff bring to protect the children in our care. To support these efforts, SFM has developed a strategic recruitment and retention plan with specific goals and strategies, including:

- A competitive benefits package that offers health, prescription, and dental insurance, a 401K plan with matching contributions, earned time off (ETO), sick time off (STO), an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and paid holidays.
- Collaboration with the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) to train and recruit additional child welfare professionals.
- A Tuition Reimbursement Policy that covers tuition and fees for college courses relevant to our work, supporting staff in furthering their education and certifications. This initiative helps SFM develop its workforce and provides staff opportunities for professional growth and advancement.
- Telework options available based on position.

Matt Stephens / Vice President of Advocacy