



Wichita Police Department
Central Bureau
Community Support Specialist

March 27, 2025

The Community Support Specialist (CSS) program was established in response to a rise in child abuse cases and a recognized gap in communication between the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the Wichita Police Department (WPD). Additionally, it became evident that some families, while not meeting the threshold for DCF intervention, still required support to ensure their long-term stability and success.

As Community Support Specialists with the City of Wichita, our primary role is to work directly with these families to promote child safety within the home and reduce the need for involvement from DCF or law enforcement. We achieve this by strengthening the family's social and safety networks and fostering a supportive community around them.

Scope of Services:

- **Liaison Work:** Strengthen communication and foster positive relationships between the Wichita Police Department (WPD) and the Department for Children and Families (DCF).
- **Education & Training:** Provide education to law enforcement, DCF staff, community partners, and the public on WPD and DCF policies and procedures. Certified in Safe Sleep training.
- **Advocacy:** Collaborate with partner agencies and advocates to ensure families receive comprehensive support during times of crisis.
- **Community Engagement:** Actively participate in community events and outreach activities to raise awareness about available services and resources.
- **Program Facilitation:** Lead a monthly women's self-defense class to empower community members and promote personal safety.
- **Coalition Involvement:** Contribute to local initiatives by participating in groups such as the Sedgwick County Drug Endangered Children (DEC) program and the Sedgwick County Health Department's Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Team.

Challenges:

- **Restricted Information Access:** Limited ability to obtain critical case information from the Department for Children and Families (DCF), which can hinder timely and effective support.
- **Staffing Constraints:** Only two Community Support Specialists are available to serve the entire City of Wichita, impacting the program's capacity to meet growing community needs.

- Resource Limitations: Insufficient access to tangible resources and support services to adequately assist families in crisis.

Successes:

- Increased Family Independence: Families reach a point where they no longer require support from Community Support Specialists (CSS).
- Self-Sufficiency: Families develop the skills and stability needed to independently manage challenges and access resources.
- Reduced DCF Involvement: Families experience limited or no further contact with the Department for Children and Families (DCF).
- Enhanced Safety and Well-Being: Families report feeling safer and more supported within their communities.
- Decreased Law Enforcement Interaction: Significant reduction in law enforcement contact as family dynamics and behaviors improve.
- Effective Engagement Approach: A non-intrusive, supportive approach fosters trust and increases families' willingness to accept assistance.

One of the families we began working with in 2020 had frequent involvement with both law enforcement and the Department for Children and Families (DCF). At the time, the family's teenage son was exhibiting severe behavioral issues, including regular physical altercations with peers and adults, one incident resulting in a school principal sustaining a serious injury. These challenges led to weekly law enforcement contact and monthly DCF involvement.

Through consistent weekly engagement, we supported the family by helping the mother establish structure, implement healthy boundaries, and maintain consistent parenting practices. As a result, the son is now thriving in school, with no law enforcement contact for over a year and no DCF involvement for more than 18 months. In addition to her son's progress, the mother has achieved several personal milestones: she has earned her driver's license, is just two credits away from completing her GED, and is enrolled to begin college this summer.

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