



Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight **March 31, 2025**

Chair Gossage and Members of the Committee,

I am Jeanette Owens, the Chief Child Welfare Officer at DCCCA. DCCCA has served Kansas communities, families, and children for 51 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 services for foster families. We currently serve 416 foster homes and 12 adoptive homes, with 462 children in foster home placements served by 61 total child placing agency staff.

DCCCA recently celebrated Foster Care Awareness Day on March 6th. We partnered with over 20 businesses across Kansas to provide information about foster care and the need for foster families. Additionally, we created social media posts that included our staff members and foster parents sharing their stories of why they do what they do. Social media reach for the event was over 30,000. Furthermore, KSN TV and KWCH (Wichita) helped us promote foster care awareness, and Cumulus Media Radio Stations (Topeka) ran an on-going advertisement for foster care awareness.

DCCCA is preparing to host our annual Foster Parent Appreciation Conference. At this event, we provide foster families with family vacation time, national training opportunities and childcare. DCCCA, DCF, and Joy Meadows volunteers provide care for more than 300 youth ranging from 6 months to 18 years of age. This year, DCCCA has more than half our agency staff volunteering over the two days to serve our foster families and children during this time. This is our 5th year hosting the large event.

New DCF Licensing regulations went into effect in June of 2024. We continue to adapt to the changes with the requirements for fingerprinting alternate caregivers remaining as our largest hurdle.

Kansas has 2,184 foster families statewide. The highest number of Kansas foster homes in the last five years was in May of 2020 with 2,935 families. Since that time, Kansas has decreased by more than 750 foster homes across the state.

We Kan Drive

We Kan Drive is a program that helps remove 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 navigate this process.

Since November 2021, We Kan Drive has provided services for nearly 2,000 youth in Kansas. We Kan Drive enrolled 723 youth in Driver's Education courses, purchased auto insurance policies for 244 youth, and supported 425 youth in obtaining some form of licensure. We Kan Drive aims to continue to exceed program goals each year and has received an additional 896 referrals since expanding statewide in November of 2023.

Therapeutic Family Foster Homes (TFFH)

DCCCA provides Therapeutic Family Foster Home (TFFH) services statewide. In May of 2024, DCCCA was one of seven agencies awarded a grant to build capacity of Therapeutic Family Foster Homes (TFFH). DCCCA's 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, or Post Adoption Support services. DCCCA currently has 28 approved TFFHs. Additionally, we have 22 staff trained in Pressley Ridge Treatment Foster Care Parent Pre-Service curriculum. We currently have 12 long-term TFFH placements happening and have provided 16 respite and stability placements.

Post-Adoption Support Services

DCCCA provides post-adoption support services statewide to families that have adopted a child or children. Respite, training and in-person support groups, as well as in-home therapy services, are resources adoptive families can now access. DCCCA currently serves 48 families. In the last quarter, DCCCA provided 35 respites with 16 families. DCCCA continues to work on ways to increase awareness about this program so more adoptive families can receive the services prior to crisis. For example, we have increased the number of service presentations and recruiting events statewide, hoping to engage more families earlier.

DCCCA provides family preservation services for the five counties in the Kansas City region and ten 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.

DCCCA currently has 243 active families in our family preservation services with 586 children in those families. We have 57 family preservation staff including case managers, support workers and administration staff. Our current average caseloads are 14.5 families. It is important to note that caseloads sizes vary based on referrals received as well as open staff positions.

Map of Kansas counties color-coded by DCF Service Center jurisdiction. The map is divided into four main regions: Northwest (dark blue), Northeast (green), Southwest (light blue), and Southeast (dark green). Each region is further divided into sub-regions. Callouts indicate specific DCF Service Centers: TFI (Topeka Family Intervention) for the Northwest and Southwest regions; Cornerstones of Care for the Northeast and Southeast regions; DCCCA (Kansas City Child Welfare Center) for the Northeast and Southwest regions; and Wichita for the Southwest region. Asterisks (*) mark counties with DCF Service Centers.

Legend: * DCF Service Center

DCCCA recognizes that our most valuable resource is our staff. We continue to seek feedback regularly to make updates that provide support and tools for better services. DCCCA continues to provide 24/7 access to their supervisors for all our child welfare program staff. Staff share that this allows them to have support when needed and reduces concern that they are on their own in decision making. Additionally in December, DCCCA provided staff bonuses, and we continue to review pay grades and salary ranges.

DCCCA provides staff with access to NeurOptimal systems for staff to use. NeurOptimal is an advanced neurotechnology designed to train the brain to function at peak performance levels. Staff that have used this technology continue to express the significant positive impact that the system has had on their well-being.

DCCCA child welfare programs staff retention rate is currently 71%. DCCCA continues to focus on staff retention and workforce needs.

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. The crisis needs of youth in the system require timely access to therapy and other services before a family can reach stabilization. This need continues for our families, as well as our staff, when they are seeking services.

The opening of Medicaid codes in July has allowed DCCCA to implement new programs including our child welfare fee for service program and Parent Peer Support services and to increase our Behavioral Intervention program.

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,

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Questions may also be directed to:

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