



Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight

March 31, 2025

Chair Gossage, Vice Chair Howerton, and members of the Committee:

My name is Linda Bass, and I'm honored to serve as President of KVC Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and to share how KVC Kansas is advancing our shared vision of strengthening and supporting Kansas children, teens and families.

About KVC Kansas

KVC Kansas is a nonprofit organization with over 50 years of heart-centered service to Kansas children, teens and families. We are proud to partner with the state of Kansas and the Kansas Department for Children and Families to deliver foster care case management services in catchment areas 3 and 6, which include Kansas City, Lawrence, Topeka, Hiawatha and surrounding communities.

Today, our team of 440 child welfare and mental health professionals is committed to offering a comprehensive continuum of services, including family strengthening and foster care prevention, foster care case management, outpatient mental health and substance abuse recovery, residential mental health treatment and child placing agency services.

Referral and Permanencies

Total Number of Referrals
March 2024 – March 2025
557 referrals

Permanency Outcomes	
March 2024 – March 2025	
Reintegration	376 youth
Adoption	169 youth
Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)	120 youth
Permanent Custodianship	12 youth
Other	12 youth
SOUL	2 youth
Total	691 youth



Data on Youth in Offices Overnight

Since September 2024, KVC Kansas has had no occurrences of youth staying overnight in an office. We continue to use expanded day programming at our Kansas City, KS residential facility (licensed as a YRCII through DCF Licensing) to provide stability for KVC youth awaiting long-term placements. This program is available to youth ages nine and older.

Data on Missing and Runaway Youth

On average, fewer than 1% (approximately 10-12 youth) of the 1,374 youth in KVC Kansas' care are missing or have temporarily run away. This is consistent with the national average. Current youth missing from care range from 15-18 years old. KVC Kansas employs two full-time Missing Youth Specialists (MYS) who work intensively to build trust and reduce running behaviors.

Workforce Recruitment, Retention and Caseloads

This fiscal year, KVC Kansas currently has an annual retention rate of 88%, well above the national average of 50-60%. At the end of FY24, KVC Kansas achieved a 75% employee retention rate. **Staff retention means consistency, trust and high-quality care for the children, teens and families we serve.**

We're proud KVC is a place where people want to work and stay. Based on employee feedback, we've earned an 82 Work Wellbeing score on

Indeed, **placing us in the top 1% of employers nationwide.** But we know that a great workplace doesn't happen by chance—it takes ongoing investment in our team, their wellbeing and their development. To strengthen employee engagement, KVC continues to partner with Gallup to regularly measure and improve workplace satisfaction. In our most recent survey, 90% of KVC Kansas employees participated, and we saw an increase in engaged staff compared to the last survey period.

When we support the people who care for youth and families, we create a stronger, more stable child welfare system. Investing in our team means they can continue making a difference every day.



98.7%

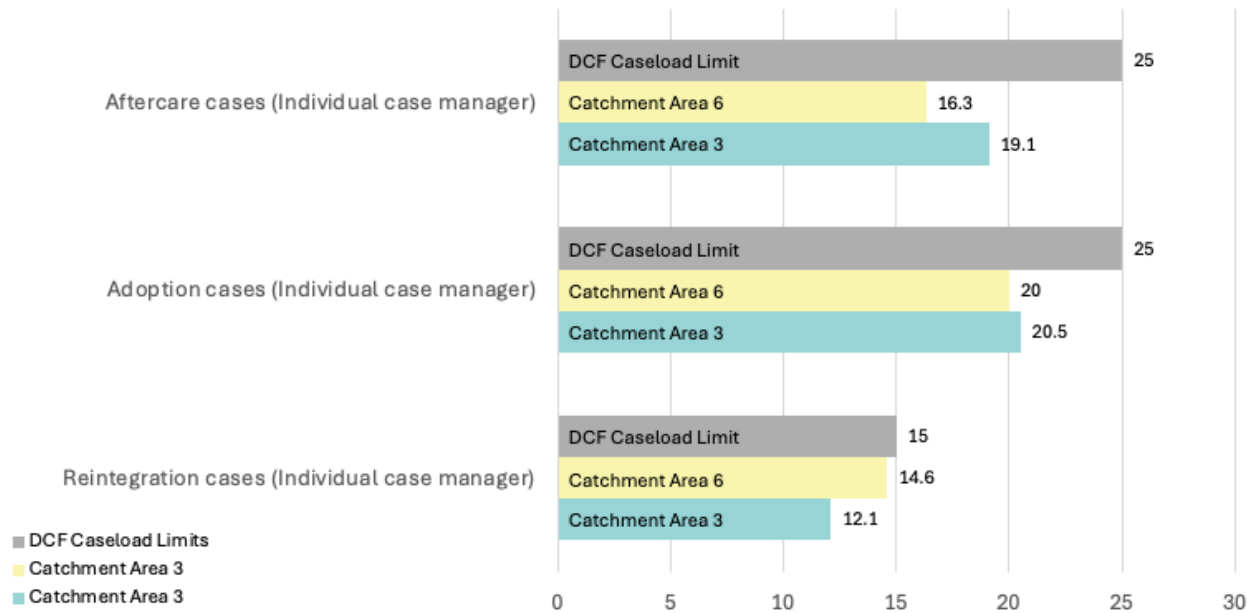
employee retention rate
in February 2025



Caseload Data (Lower caseload numbers are better for staff, youth and families)

KVC Kansas Caseload Data (Compared to DCF Caseload Limits)

as of March 2025

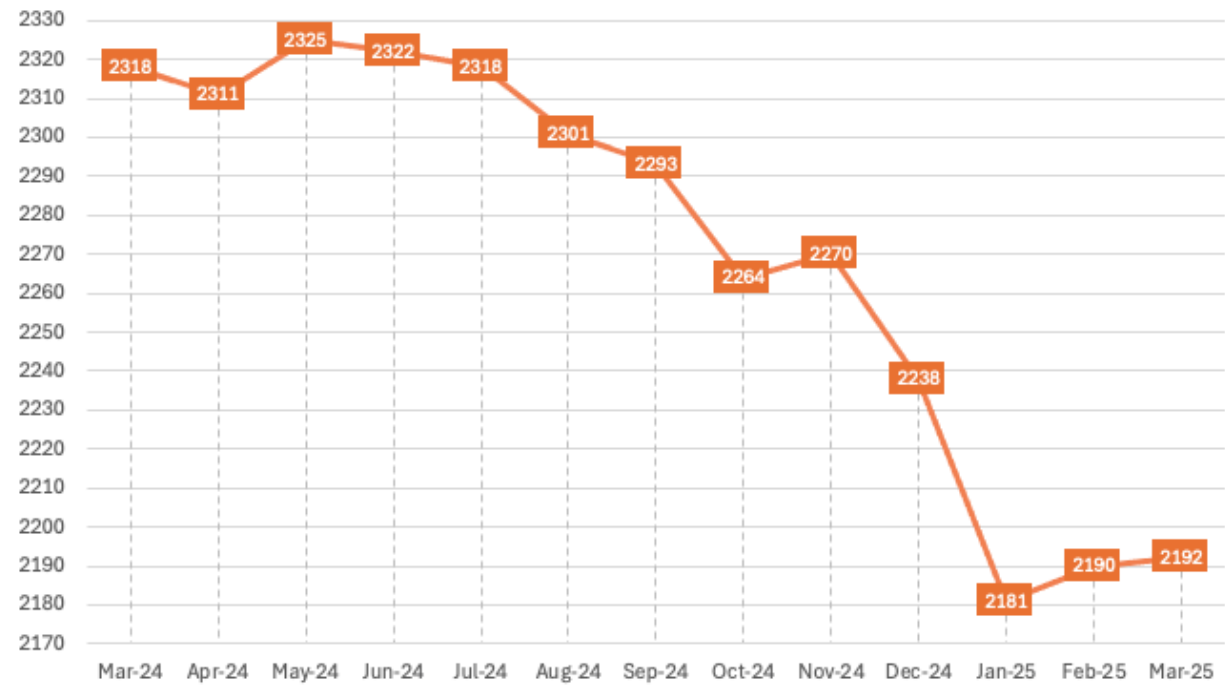


Child Placing Agency Information

Foster Home Data Overview

Number of Statewide Licensed Foster Homes

March 2024 - March 2025





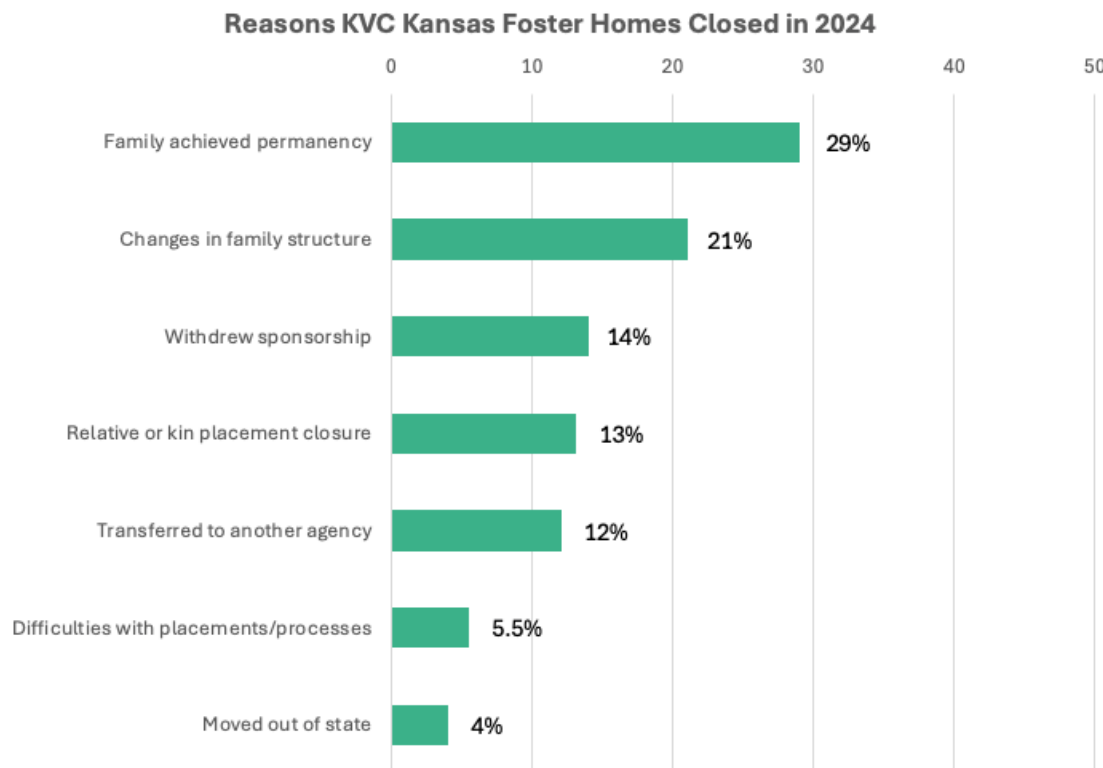
Statewide, Kansas has approximately 2,192 licensed foster homes, yet the need for stable, supportive foster parents remains high. As of March 2, 2025, KVC Kansas supports 459 licensed foster homes with 960 beds, with a 60% bed occupancy rate.

Foster Parent Retention

While we continue our efforts to recruit and retain foster families, many homes are already at capacity or unable to meet the unique needs of youth in care—especially teenagers and youth in rural areas.

Recruiting caring adults willing to foster teens and increasing the number of foster parents in rural communities is crucial to ensure youth experience fewer disruptions, maintain a sense of normalcy, and have a better chance at long-term success and timely permanency.

Despite these recruitment efforts, foster parent retention remains a significant challenge. The graph below highlights the reasons KVC-supported foster parents decided to close their homes in 2024.



Many foster parents report struggling with the complexity of the child welfare and mental health systems, as well as the emotional toll of fostering. Improving access to services, simplifying processes and providing ongoing support are essential to keeping foster parents engaged.

KVC would appreciate the Committee's input on how foster home data could be segmented to better inform policy decisions. **Additionally, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate on ways Kansas can further support foster parent recruitment and retention—whether through policy changes, funding or community engagement.**



Audit Updates

McIntyre Settlement Performance Snapshot (Calendar Year 2023, Audit Completed in 2024)

Settlement Outcome	Area 3	Area 6
(Item 2.9.3) Random sample of all Class Members in DCF custody during a 12-month period shall be in a placement setting that at the time of the review is stable. (Period goal: 90%, final goal: 90%)	88%	85%
(Item 2.9.2) All Class Members in DCF custody during a 12-month period shall have had their mental and behavioral health needs addressed. (Period goal: 90%, final goal: 90%)	41%	50%
(Item 2.5.3) Shall not delay authorization and provision of medically necessary mental health treatment services until placement stability is achieved. (Period goal: 0% of children experience a delay due to placement stability)	20%	33%
(Item 2.5.5a) Shall end the practice of Night-to-Night Placements of Class Members. (Performance standard: 100% of night-to-night placements meet needs of child)	44%	29%
(Item 2.5.5b) Shall end the practice of Short-Term Placements of Class Members. (Performance standard: 100% of short-term placements meet needs of child)	14%	20%
(Item 2.9.5a) Shall have received a timely Initial Mental Health and Trauma Screen within 30 days upon each entry into the foster care system. (Period goal: 90%, final goal: 90%)	58%	76%
(Item 2.9.5b) The Initial Mental Health and Trauma Screen shall be performed by a person who has been trained to reliably administer the Screen... (Period goal: 100%)	94%	94%
(Item 2.9.5c) and is either a Qualified Mental Health Professional or a professional who holds a bachelor's degree in the field of human services or a related field... (Period goal: 100%)	94%	94%

Period goal is the short-term performance standard expected to show substantial progress towards fulfilling the final goal. Final goal must be met for a minimum of 2 years, consecutively, to fulfill Settlement commitment.

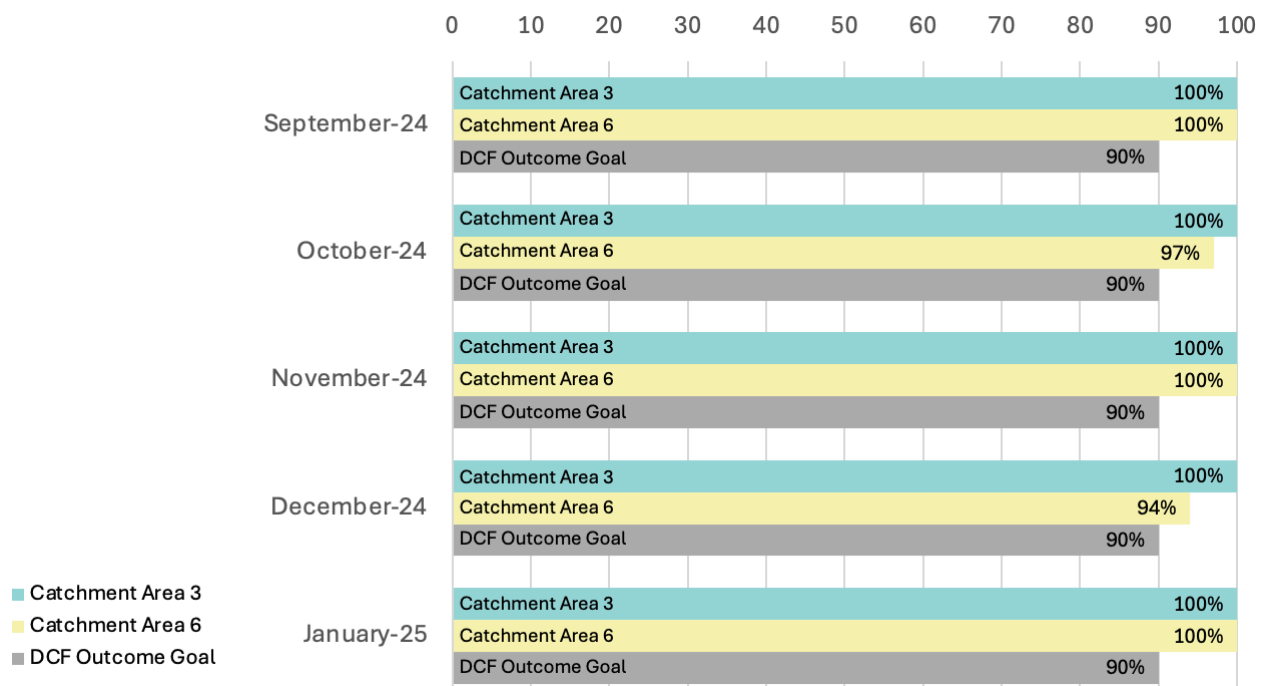
KEY

Met goal

5% or less away from goal

More than 10% away from goal

Mental Health Assessments Completed within 30 Days (September 2024 – February 2025)





Placement Stability

Placement instability continues to be a challenge statewide, with 26.3% of youth experiencing more than 8.6 moves as of December 31, 2024. KVC Kansas outcome performance is better than the statewide average (area 3 is at 7.8 and Area 6 is at 6.8 as of December 2024), however, still not within goal. Youth with significant behavioral health needs are particularly vulnerable.

Current case management services are stretched thin, making it difficult to provide effective behavioral interventions for youth with complex needs. The shortage of community-based behavioral interventionists further compounds this challenge, often leaving staff, foster parents and kinship caregivers without the necessary support.

At the same time, foster parents are increasingly being asked to care for youth with higher levels of need, which can lead to feelings of helplessness, burnout and safety concerns. To address these challenges, KVC is actively working to provide better support and encourage long-term placements. **One key initiative we recently implemented is a policy designed to help foster parents transition from short-term to long-term placements while offering enhanced support to ensure greater stability for youth in foster care.** This policy does not impact respite care.

Through thoughtful placement matches, effective support through KVC's day respite and mental health services, and stronger community-based resources, **our goal is to ensure foster parents feel supported and that youth experience the stability they need to heal and thrive.**

Success Story

Recently, a foster parent who had frequently provided short-term, emergency placements agreed to welcome a youth who had experienced multiple moves into their home for a longer-term placement. Before this, the young person refused to participate in online school, struggling with the instability of frequent placement disruptions. **But with the security of a more stable home, structured routines and support from KVC, they felt stable enough to enroll and go to school in-person.**

Now they have a familiar place to sleep every night, a more effective routine and the opportunity to learn alongside their peers. That sense of stability and routine is helping them rebuild trust and feel more secure.

Solutions

KVC is actively developing solutions to improve placement stability and long-term outcomes for youth, including:

- Reviewing complex cases as a team and hosting Team Decision Making meetings with relevant stakeholders



- Implementing a policy aimed at empowering foster parents to commit to long-term placements for youth who have experienced placement instability
- Strengthening mental health supports and effective discharge planning through our mental health coordinators
- Launching specialized case teams to provide in-home caregiver supports
- Using data-driven approaches to identify challenges and solutions through our Leading for Results Workgroups
- Expanding foster parent support in rural areas and recruiting more caring adults willing to foster teens, helping youth remain in their communities and connected to existing support systems.
- Recruiting therapeutic foster homes through KVC's implementation of Mockingbird Family™

By focusing on these targeted solutions and making critical investments in behavioral health services and smaller caseloads, we can improve placement stability, enhance foster parent and kinship caregiver retention, and ensure that more youth and families have the support they deserve.

KVC Kansas Featured Team Member

At KVC Kansas, we believe kindness has the power to change lives, not only for the children and families we serve but also within our team. Our *Kindness Changes Lives* program helps staff provide excellent client service while recognizing those who go above and beyond. We're proud to highlight Janet B., Case Manager, whose kindness and dedication change lives every day.

Janet is known for her ability to be both honest and empathetic. She listens, understands and supports children and families through their toughest moments. Whether it's helping a teen feel heard or guiding a struggling parent with patience and honesty, Janet brings both heart and strength to her work.



As Janet's coworker shared, "Janet wants to be there for the children, teens and parents she serves and truly cares about making an impact."

Case managers like Janet are the backbone of Kansas' child welfare system, and their work isn't easy. We appreciate the Committee's support in ensuring they have the resources, support and encouragement they need to keep making a difference.



Recommendations

Provider/CMP Testimony Template Recommendations

As the Committee works toward creating a more standardized template for legislative testimony, we believe our testimony could serve as a helpful example. It provides a clear overview of the key data points that we feel are essential to understanding the current state of the child welfare system.

Similar report card style templates for other community-based treatment providers offering testimony related to progress towards settlement outcomes may also prove beneficial. Lastly, statewide data from DCF and KDADS and individual CMP performance data will assist the committee in a statewide view of progress being made.

Policy and Funding Recommendations

Behind every statistic is a child, teen and family with hopes, challenges and potential. Placement stability, access to effective mental health care, and timely family reunification and permanency are powerful outcomes. **But achieving these positive results requires strategic discussion, thoughtful planning and policy action.**

Continued investment in foster care prevention and expanded access to mental health care will create a ripple effect – improving lives, strengthening communities and easing the strain on our child welfare workforce and system.

- Expand statewide foster care prevention services, including mental health treatment and family preservation programs.
- Increase community-based mental health treatment capacity, including inpatient and outpatient treatment, for specialized populations such as youth with IDD, dually involved youth (CINC and JO), and individuals with significant behavioral health needs and substance abuse disorders.
- Invest in workforce development and support with competitive compensation, enhanced training, tuition assistance, smaller caseloads and secondary trauma treatment.
- Strengthen foster parent and kinship caregiver retention through in-home behavioral support, advocacy and healthcare navigation.
- Expand services for youth on PRTF waitlists to ensure timely access to the right level of care.

KVC Kansas remains dedicated to partnering with this committee to strengthen families and build a child welfare system rooted in stability, opportunity and hope.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Kansas children, teens and families. I welcome your questions.