

We Can & Must Do Better for “Crossover Youth”



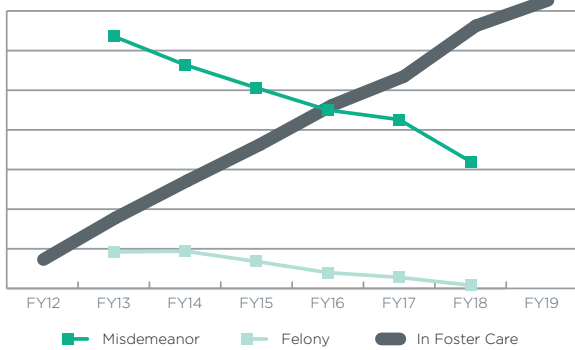
Why We Urgently Need a Proven Strategy for Children Involved in Both the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

THE PROBLEM

Senate Bill 367 has contributed to the 46% increase in children in foster care.

A near-record number of Kansas children are in foster care (7,610 youth as of April 30). That’s about 2,500 more children in 7 years. While Senate Bill 367 was intended to shift juveniles from detention to treatment and led directly to a 63% drop in youth confinement,ⁱ resources were never shifted to treatment or child welfare. The Kansas Community Corrections Association said “some low-risk juveniles are transferring to the child welfare system (Department for Children and Families) instead of the community care mandated by SB 367 due to the lack of treatment options.”ⁱⁱ There are available funds that should be reinvested in prevention and treatment,ⁱⁱⁱ and child welfare stakeholders should be included in the planning process.

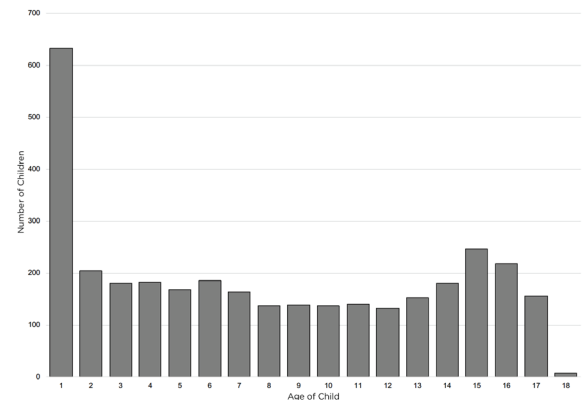
As Juvenile Detention Decreases, Foster Care Increases



Hundreds of children are “crossover youth.”

Over 500 children who entered foster care in the last two years came into custody due to the child’s behavior challenges, juvenile offenses, parent’s refusal to take the child back into their home, etc. These children are not entering foster care due to abuse or neglect. This chart from the Center for Capacity-Building for the Courts shows an increase in adolescents in foster care. Outside researchers have said this is very unusual and other states are not showing this increase.

Kansas Children Exiting Foster Care During 2017 FFY
Age of Child at Removal, Fostering Court Improvement



Children are hurting because the current foster care system cannot meet their needs.

Foster care is designed for children who are victims of abuse, neglect or other family challenges. It cannot support juvenile offenders without a large infusion of resources for community-based mental health, emergency beds and psychiatric residential treatment facility beds (PRTFs), specialized foster parent recruitment and training, and more. Due to lack of available placements and community services, there is a group of Kansas youth who must move placements nearly every single day. They would be better served in their own families with in-home treatment.

This situation has increased risk to children, families and child welfare staff.

There have been several serious safety incidents due to the transfer of youth from the juvenile justice system to the child welfare system. These include children and adults being assaulted, significant property damage, and additional arrests and charges for crossover youth. This contributes to child welfare staff turnover and diminished outcomes.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Looking at other states, we can find successful models for serving youth in the community.^{iv} The service elements include:

- **A multi-disciplinary team** (MDT) including members from DCF, JJA and CINC to meet with family, complete assessments, and interventions that support continued placement at home (including relative search, safety and respite planning and family skill-building);
- **A new multi-system assessment process** that takes into consideration more detailed information about a youth's strengths, treatment needs, and risks; a more scientific methodology for consideration of the available assessments and information by the MDT in formulating a recommendation to the court regarding the appropriate treatment and placement recommendations to the court;
- **A database** to track individual case characteristics and treatment needs;
- **A training curriculum** for court staff (i.e. judges, prosecuting attorney, public defender, CASA) that focuses on using data to inform families about the various systems in which the youth may become involved in, how to create safe plan of care between TOC- referral to Family Preservation/community program (vs. OOH) and the subsequent hearing,
- **A design** for both process and outcome evaluation.
- **A mandatory referral to family preservation or other community program** PRIOR to out of home placement along with dedicated crisis/respite beds at a local facility with trained staff;
- **Repurpose current detention beds** as treatment placement options;
- **DCF and KDOC partner together to fund specific programming** to support these crossover youth to remain safe at home.

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ⁱ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2019/04/24/kansas-sees-63-percent-decline-in-youth-confinement>

ⁱⁱ <https://kasb.org/1102-3/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://thecrimereport.org/2019/04/29/kansas-juvenile-justice-reforms-slash-number-of-youths-in-confinement-by-63/>

^{iv} <https://www.cjonline.com/opinion/20190319/tyler-williams-and-yusef-presley-we-must-invest-in-kansas-youth>