

# A Multi-Level, Collaborative Approach to Strengthening a Child Welfare System



Kansas Strong for Children & Families  
22<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Conference of Child Abuse and Neglect, July 27-29, 2021

## Background

As part of a national demonstration to strengthen child welfare systems', Kansas Strong for Children & Families addresses multiple factors that influence child/family outcomes and systemic barriers. Following a planning year of comprehensive analysis, project leaders developed and implemented strategies at direct service and system levels. This poster shares five examples of these multidimensional strategies implemented by the grantee.

## Engaging System Leaders & Community Members

We engage system leaders and community members in statewide and regional advisory boards to **promote prevention and identify policy/system solutions** to systemic barriers.



## Our Process



## Amplifying Youth Voices



We partner with the *Kansas Youth Advisory Council* on an arts-based digital storytelling initiative that involves collecting poems, audio, and other creative products to disseminate youth perspectives on foster care to a wide range of stakeholders. Key themes of the poems are:

- **Relationship building** is central to supporting youth in foster care
- Views on the **purpose** of the child welfare system are **complex, fragmented and in-flux**
- Experiences with the child welfare system elicit **emotional and affective responses** among the professionals and youth
- **Actions** to support youth are identified frequently, vary greatly, and are often prescriptive



QR Code links to example poems:

## Engaging Parent Partners

We engage parent partners as members of our Steering Committee, which oversees key decisions of the project. Additionally, parent partners participated in listening sessions designed to center their feedback on the statewide coaching program's shared principles.

Context & Culture	Connections to Kin	Engagement
Needed is understanding of the cultural context, family circumstances, and parents' emotional responses	Efforts must be made to involve and honor relatives and kin as defined by the family	Engagement emphasizes clear communication, nonjudgmental attitudes, and inclusive decision-making

## Supporting the Workforce

**KanCoach:** We provide a statewide, skills-based, strengths-oriented coaching program for all child welfare supervisors. The program includes training sessions, coaching collaboratives, individual coaching.

**Resilience Alliance:** We provide a 12-week, group-based strategy to address secondary traumatic stress and build resilience skills among administrators, supervisors, and direct service workers.

## Pursuing Racial Equity and Justice



We collaborate with practitioners, implementation teams, agency leaders, and with communities that have been marginalized by our systems to strengthen, strategize and action plan, with explicit accountability.

<b>Covenant &amp; Advisory Group</b>	Work is guided by Black community leaders who provide community and historical context and local perceptions of child welfare. To ensure accountability for action and change we developed a covenant as compass for our intentions.
<b>Institutional Analysis</b>	With the Center for the Study of Social Policy, we conducted an institutional analysis to assess and address racial disproportionality and disparities experienced by Black families.
<b>Racial Equity Collaborative</b>	We partner with Kansas Department for Children and Families and CarePortal to develop a forthcoming virtual lectures and in-person symposium to build understanding of the history of racial inequities, define the problem with shared language, and establish spaces for all stakeholders to advocate for racial equity.

## Launching New Levers of Support for Families

We collaborate with court, agency, and community partners to introduce new tools and services (e.g. Adoption Tracking Tool, Parent/Youth Facilitation) to:

- Support children and youth to remain safely in their homes whenever possible.
- Ensure timely permanency when out of home placement is necessary.

