Thank You!

• Casey Family Programs
• The Department for Community Based Services
• Administrative Office of the Courts
• Voices of the Commonwealth
• True Up Louisville
• Focus groups and survey participants
Kentucky Child Welfare System: Pre-Pandemic

• Implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act
• Child Welfare Transformation
• Focus on collaboration with community partners
The Voices

- Young people who have experienced kinship care or foster care
- Biological parents
- Kinship caregivers (including fictive kin)
- Foster parents
- Providers—including courts, CASAs, private child caring agencies, and MCOs
- 43 counties (both rural and urban)
The Process

• 7 Virtual Focus Groups with targeted stakeholders including:
  • Kinship and foster care alumni
  • Kinship caregivers
  • Foster parents
  • Biological parents
  • Child welfare service providers

• Two audience-specific surveys
Survey Questions

My average daily level of stress is higher than it was before the pandemic.

My average daily level of anxiety is higher than it was before the pandemic.

I need more financial support than I did before the pandemic.

I need more emotional support than I did before the pandemic.

I seek out help from a friend or family member more frequently than I did before the pandemic.

I seek out help from a caseworker more frequently than I did before the pandemic.

I worry about the stability of my own or my child's placement more than I did before the pandemic.
I need more **emotional support** than I did before the pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Agree or Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster or Kinship Alumni</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Parent</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinship Caregiver</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological Parent</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</table>
I need more **financial support** than I did before the pandemic.

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<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Parent</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinship Caregiver</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<td>Biological Parent</td>
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The Findings

- Four major themes from the focus group and survey data
  - Difficulty with Non-Traditional Instruction
  - Mental and Behavioral Health Challenges
  - Barriers to Basic Needs, Including Safety
  - Navigating Complex Systems
- Each section also included findings on “What Worked”
Difficulty with Non-Traditional Instruction

- Internet connectivity issues
- Lack of access to equipment for students
- Inadequate supports related to schoolwork deliverables
- Realization of the student’s performance level
- Increased stress related to dual roles
- Concerns related to absenteeism or truancy
Non-Traditional Instruction
Silver Linings & Solutions

Silver Linings
• One-on-one instruction improved reading
• Virtual class meetings helped with socialization

Identified Solutions
• Co-ops, “hubs” or “pods”
• Peer support
• Stipend for internet services
Mental and Behavioral Health Challenges

- Stress, frustration, anxiety, and depression
- Isolation and anxiety was particularly present with foster and kinship alumni
- Inadequate access for some to mental health services like tele-therapy
- Lack of respite
- Increase in behavior issues

“We feel trapped in a prison in our own home.”
--Foster Parent
Mental and Behavioral Health Silver Linings & Solutions

**Silver Linings**
- Telehealth: better than nothing
- Virtual social supports

**Identified Solutions**
- Increase access to peer support
- Increase communication related to available mental health services
- Communicate through various mediums, frequently in times of crisis
- Increase access to information through hotlines, websites, and social media for specific groups
Barriers to Basic Needs, Including Safety

- Placement instability
- Fear of falling ill
- Financial hardships
Barriers to Basic Needs Silver Linings & Solutions

**Silver Linings (safety nets that worked)**

- Food pantries
- Increase in Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)

**Identified Solutions**

- Increase accessibility to caseworkers or “navigators”
- Communicate through various mediums, frequently in times of crisis
- Reduce utilization of residential treatment to only those who cannot be served in the community
Navigating Complex Systems

- Inconsistent or problematic guidance related to visitation
- Limited court hearings created delays
- Lack of follow-through
- Caseworkers and providers fear for safety of children
Navigating Complex Systems
Silver Linings & Solutions

Silver Linings
• High quality and more consistent visitation
• More contact between caseworkers and children

Identified Solutions
• Keep some meetings virtual
• Communicate through various mediums, frequently
• Increase tools and guidance related to relationship-building with biological parents
• Recruit and retain DCBS workers