Promoting Well-Being in Communities through Prevention
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About Kentucky Youth Advocates

- Partner with legislators, the Governor, and other elected officials to change and enact policies that benefit youth and their families.
- Mobilize advocates to take action through rallies, advocacy training, partnerships, and action alerts.
- Present the "state of kids" to communities to help people know how children are fairing and how to address problems.
- Our case advocacy program guides families, when they don't know where to turn.
- Conduct research and education that informs and recommends solutions to help kids succeed.
- Engage youth by training the next generation of leaders to advocate for themselves and their communities.
Agency Overview
What would the child welfare system look like here…

…reimagined?
Historic Challenges

- Increasing numbers in care
- Unmanageable caseloads for workers
- Inadequate funding
- High use of residential placements
- Disproportionality and disparate outcomes
- Mandatory reporting/child welfare agency as one stop shop
- Stigma related to child welfare agency involvement
- Differentiating safety and risk
- Differentiating poverty and neglect
MAKING SURE OUR JOURNEY GETS US TO THE RIGHT DESTINATION: WHY DO FAMILIES COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY?
Child Protective Services (CPS) Intakes
SFY 2020 – SFY 2023
Statewide: Children in the Custody of or Committed to the Cabinet
July 2017 – July 2023
FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT:
OUR PREVENTION JOURNEY BEGINS
Moving Upstream

Credit: Tribal Epidemiology Centers

Credit: @creative.clinical.psychologist
Kentucky’s Blueprint for Prevention

- Trusted Advisors Council
- Highlights
  - High emphasis on incorporating the voice of lived experience to inform policy, programming and practice
  - Goal to replicate best practices of the Neighborhood Place and Communities of Hope models in regions across the state
  - Increasing access to resources and services for families, including use and functionality of KYNECT
  - Statewide expansion of Community Response
  - Racial equity audit recommendations
  - Reduce indirect/unintentional negative policy impacts on people living in poverty
Kentucky’s Prevention Framework

- Division of Prevention and Community Well-Being
- Thriving Families, Safer Children KY
- Statewide Prevention Collaborative
Thriving Families, Safer Children: Kentucky Priorities

- Development of a robust network of community-based prevention supports
- Creation of formalized structures to serve families “screened out” by the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services
- Clearly differentiating poverty and neglect
- Development of a statewide collaborative primary/secondary prevention plan
- Creation of a Parent Advisory Council
Moving towards Structural Well-Being

• Structural Racism in the U.S. is the normalization and legitimatization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional & interpersonal, that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color.

• It is this normalization that then binds together white controlled institutions – interlocking them into larger systems of power and control.

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Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Child Welfare

- Family income is the greatest predictor of entry into care.
- Families living below poverty line are over 40 times more likely to enter child welfare system than median income families.
- Nationally, more than 70% of children in poverty are children of color.
- 53% of Black children experience a CPS investigation by age 18.
- In Kentucky, 13.1% of reports involved children who are Black. This is disproportionate to 9% representation in the general child population.

Sources: (Rostad, 2017), (Sedlak, 2010), (Kids Count, 2020), (CHFS June 2023 Disproportionality Data)
Health Equity Audit & Impact Assessment

• Over the past two years, DCBS engaged in a process to evaluate the systems and processes that produce data and ask intentional questions about why we have that data & where we go from here

• What does implementation of FFPSA mean, what additional data is needed, & engagement of impacted populations in the discovery of & development of more equitable implementation of services
Shifting from Surveillance to Support

Kentucky began implementing a new safety model in 2020, clearly defining safety and risk based on research and federal definitions and implemented new safety and prevention plans.

- Structured decision making tools were implemented for assessment of safety and risk and planned implemented for risk re-assessment.
- Piloting community response for reports that do not meet criteria for abuse or neglect
- Alternative Response is being implemented beginning in September 2023. Family centered and strengths-based approach to reports that meet acceptance criteria.
Peer Support in Kentucky

• Peer support encompasses a range of activities and interactions between people who share similar experiences of being diagnosed with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, or both and has existed in Kentucky for behavioral health for years.

• A peer support worker is someone with the lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both. They provide support to others experiencing similar challenges.
  ❖ inspire hope that people can and do recover;
  ❖ walk with people on their recovery journeys;
  ❖ dispel myths about what it means to have a mental health condition or substance use disorder;
  ❖ provide self-help education and link people to tools and resources; and
  ❖ support people in identifying their goals, hopes, and dreams, and creating a roadmap for getting there.

• DCBS will be intentionally rolling out peer support with Alternative Response to provide additional resources for families.
Partnership and Community Engagement

• DCBS is the child welfare agency, not the child welfare system.
• Real change has to be family, youth, and community driven.
• Increased investments in primary and secondary prevention to help families avoid child welfare involvement.
Kentucky Statewide Birth Parent Advisory Council

• Voice for parents
• Advocate for equity and resources for families
• Empower parents to feel supported and informed
Community Action Plans for Prevention

- Specific to each of the nine DCBS service regions
- Visioning Sessions held in May-June of 2022
- Community-led and community driven strengthening
- 2023: Phase II Implementation

Photo credit: Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare
Primary Prevention & Protective Factors

• Safe, stable housing
• High-quality preschool
• Nurturing and safe childcare
• Safe, engaging after school programs and activities
• Medical care and mental health services
• Economic and financial help
• Work opportunities with family-friendly policies

(from Risk and Protective Factors|Child Abuse and Neglect|Violence Prevention|Injury Center|CDC)

Photo credit Center for Engagement and Neighborhood Building (alliance1.org)
Resources for Community-Work Planning

- Outreach and facilitation
- Action Plan template
- Execution tracker
- Primary Prevention glossary

Community-Action-Plan-Toolkit.pdf (kyyouth.org)
How Communities Can Get Involved

- Assess your area for available community protective factors
- Connect families to resources
- Be a support, meet a need
- Stay informed on statewide prevention efforts

TFSCKY – Kentucky Youth Advocates

Two-Rivers-Region_Action-Plan.pdf (kyyouth.org)
Lean on Me Kentucky, Let’s Start the Conversation of becoming a Community Supporter

- Frameworks and Communications Science
- 9 Focus Groups, DCBS Service Regions
- Toolkit
  - Videos
  - Action cards
  - Pledge
  - Resources/trainings
- Official launch March 27th!
My Reaction Story

• Voluntary help-seeking led to reporting
• Strengths and protective factors overlooked
• Saw an unmet advocacy need
“Every child deserves a safe, stable and permanent family and all families deserve the opportunities and supports to raise their children safely and successfully in their own homes, communities and cultures,” said William C. Bell, President and CEO of Casey Family Programs. “This important effort will demonstrate how all sectors of a community can work together to reallocate resources into equitable, hope-inspiring services and supports that reduce the need for foster care and improve the well-being of children and families across the nation.”

Prevention: Learn from Us!

To stay up-to-date on prevention efforts in Kentucky, visit kyyouth.org/tfscky

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Questions?