



DCF Legislative Testimony

February 7, 2024

TESTIMONY OF: Tanya Keys, Deputy Secretary, Department for Children and Families

TESTIMONY ON: House Bill 2554

DCF | HB 2554 | WRITTEN ONLY PROPONENT

Chair Concannon and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2554, directing the Secretary for the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) to identify relatives and persons with whom a child in custody of the Secretary has close emotional ties for placement and send notice of custody to the persons when identified.

HB 2554 directs the Secretary to identify relatives of children alleged or adjudicated to be a child in need of care. This bill would require the Secretary to file efforts to find relatives or persons with whom the child has close emotional ties and send notice to such persons of the custody of the child, amending K.S.A. 38-2264 and K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 38-2243 and repealing the existing sections.

DCF and our prevention and foster care case management agencies are required to engage families, youth, and their networks to best gather information about relatives and kin during assessments, team decision making and case planning. When the safest decision for a child is to be removed into the custody of the Secretary and foster care out of home placement, every effort is made so the initial placement is with relatives or kin with whom the child has a meaningful connection.

DCF regions and the foster care case management agencies have a performance goal that 50% or more of children be placed with relative or kin. Performance on this outcome in SFY24 is mentioned below and located at [Lives with Relative FY2024.xlsx \(ks.gov\)](#).

Statewide on Nov. 30, 2023, 46.8% of children in out of home placement were living with a relative or kin. Over one half of children in out of home placement in the Kansas City region are living with a relative or kin.

Foster Care Case Management Catchment Area	November 2024 children in out of home placement living with relative or kin
1 Saint Francis Ministries	45.5%
2 Saint Francis Ministries	39.4%
3 KVC	46.2%
4 TFI	48.7%
5 Cornerstones of Care	52.3%
6 KVC	55.3%
7 Saint Francis Ministries	45.6%
8 TFI	46.2%
State	46.8%

Outreach and contact is made to relatives by case managers and those positions within agencies, including DCF, who might be dedicated to family (finding) searches. DCF and community partners have a history of learning and development around “family finding” and “family seeing” approaches and tools that increase the number of known relatives and kin for a child or youth. Family contact names and information are included in the referral form that DCF provides a foster care case management agency (form PPS 5110A.)

There are tools listed within a policy appendix to help any staff as needed in a search. DCF uses CLEAR for several of these searches but not all criteria in the bill are included in a CLEAR search so additional tools may be necessary for some items. In new section 1 (d), DCF would be required to notify, by certified mail, all adult relatives, or persons with whom a child has close emotional ties to find placement for the child. DCF may not currently send notices to all relatives and kin by certified mail, thus this certified mail requirement may be a new mailing instruction task in some circumstances.

The fiscal impact related to certified mail costs is \$233,140 All funds (AF), \$206,212 State General Fund (SGF.)

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2554. DCF supports this legislation as written and would ask that the committee pass favorably.