

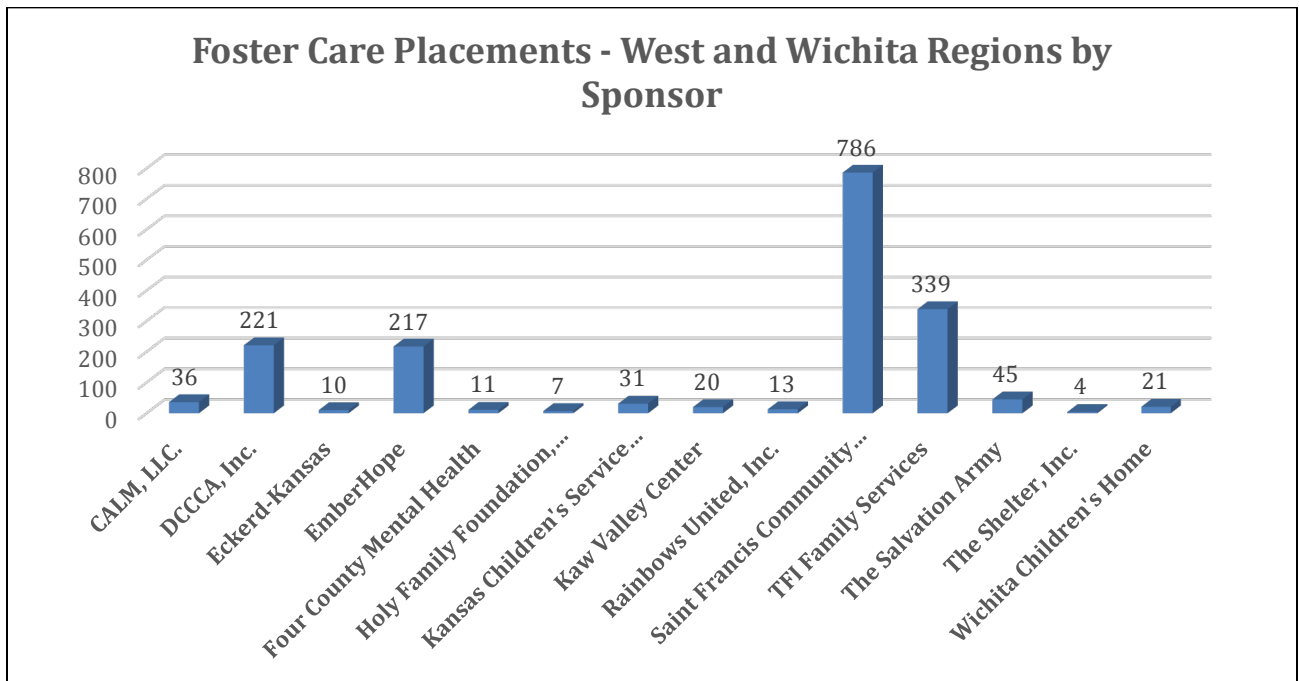
## Duties Qualifications and Selection of Foster Parents

Cory Rathbun – Senior Foster Care Leadership

Saint Francis Community Services is one of the two contracting agency to provide Foster Care, Reintegration and Adoption services to children placed in Custody of the State of Kansas and placed in out of home care.

SFCS currently has responsibility for **3320 children**. Of those children, **34 % are placed with Relatives, 58% are placed in Foster Homes and the remainder (8%) are in other placements such as residential**. SFCS considers placing children close to their families, friends, relatives, school and in their home community a high priority. Placement is made in the **least restrictive environment** appropriate to meeting the needs of the child and is not delayed or denied based on race, color or national origin.

**Foster Homes make up the single largest placement option for these children.** As the RFCA contractor in the West Region for the past 16 years and the Wichita Region for the past 3 years, SFCS has made the West Region and Wichita Region our primary foster home recruitment target and thereby directed the majority of our recruitment resources to these two regions. Although SFCS continues to have the largest number of foster homes in the Wichita and West Region, SFCS has children placed in Foster Homes sponsored by 13 other Child Placing Agencies (CPAs). The graph below shows the number of Children placed in Foster Homes in the West and Wichita Region and also shows the name of the agency sponsoring the foster homes.



### SFCS Targets Our Recruitment Efforts and Tailors them to the Population in Care

SFCS targets recruitment based on the best interests of the child(ren) needing placement and the communities in which they live. A monthly Needs Assessment Report provides recruiters and foster care workers with data regarding where the greatest needs exist on a

county-by-county basis. SFCS’s relationship-based approach focuses on directly communicating the needs of children in care in specific communities to potential foster/adoptive families and other community leaders and stakeholders.

Recruiting, training and licensing enough families to meet the needs of the children in foster care is tremendous and critical task and one that is shared by all the Child Placing Agencies in Kansas.

Becoming a foster parent is a significant commitment for families. The process to Foster Care Licensure is long and demanding with the process taking on average 6 to 8 months for families. The family has to complete 10 weeks of TIPS-MAPP training where they are carefully evaluated by the MAPP trainer. The trainer must recommend that the family is able to meet the demands of fostering and be a good role model for children who will **protect the safety of children placed in their homes**. The family must also complete a thorough assessment of their home by SFCS and must also pass the licensing visit of DCF before they are extended a License. This whole process is thorough and gives parents an opportunity to hear what fostering is all about. Between the careful vetting by DCF, SFCS and prospective Foster Families realizing they may not be able to provide all that foster care demands, SFCS generally licenses only about **15% or 20%** of the families who make an initial inquiry. **See the chart below:**

	Referrals or Inquiry into becoming Foster Parent	Families Starting PS-MAPP Training	Families Completing Training	Families Licensed and Sponsored by SFCS	Average days from Inquiry to Licensure	Number of Inquiries needed to achieve one Licensed Foster Home
Fiscal Year 2014	798	312	253	132	206	6
Fiscal Year 2015	800	403	333	162	173	5
Fiscal Year 2016	1055	518	406	166	196	6.4

SFCS also works diligently to **identify families who are considered kin to children**, or having significant relationships with the child, so that children might reside with a family they are familiar with. These Non-Related Kin families are carefully assessed and expected to meet all regulations in order to be issued a Foster Home License for that Specific Child.

	NRKIN Licensed and Sponsored by SFCS
Fiscal Year 2014	75
Fiscal Year 2015	90
Fiscal Year 2016	120

Additional Training

There are times when caring for someone else’s child that a foster parent will need a new perspective or more information to provide the best care for children placed in their home. To fulfill this and other needs, SFCS has built a **strong training component for placement families into our foster care program**. In addition to the constant support, information and

guidance of the SFCS Resource Worker, SFCS families are given a **monthly opportunity** to attend training on a variety of topics regarding the care of children who have been abused or neglected. Many times a child has experienced trauma but also struggles with a mental health diagnosis, a spectrum disorder or other complicating factor. SFCS provides ancillary training on these topics via the Resource Worker and/or local experts in the monthly Children's Alliance training. These monthly trainings serve to provide an opportunity to network and gain informal support from other foster parents in the region. A Foster Parent-led Support Group format held prior to these monthly trainings has begun in some areas and is continuing to take shape.

SFCS has a sophisticated and very user-friendly website (*SFCSFamilies.org*) for foster parents that **serves as an additional training vehicle** for many of our foster parents and simplifies many of the logistical tasks associated with foster parenting. The opinions and needs of foster families were sought in the development and testing of this technological advancement. In addition to attending a monthly training at an area SFCS office, our foster parents can utilize any of the trainings available on **SFCS Families**. Our families regardless of distance are able to access **cutting edge research and information**. The website serves as an **immediate communication tool** relaying information from SFCS to the family or from the family to a specific worker whom they wish to contact. Financial issues surrounding Placement Service Agreements, mileage or daycare can be easily routed or addressed as requested. Logging on the child's activity or the completing a Critical Incident become simplified solutions to tedious tasks when completed on-line. **Families are able to conveniently search for adoptive children or future foster placements.**

For **families who are less comfortable with a digital experience, SFCS has a sizable training library** with DVDs, videos, books and magazines that can be checked out by a Resource Worker and shared with the family. SFCS sponsored foster families also receive a subscription to *Fostering Families Today*, which provides pertinent articles and stories reflecting professional expertise and experienced perspective of dedicated foster families. SFCS strives to be proactive about training needs with families and has a discussion at the time of a family's license renewal about topics on which they feel they could benefit from more information. SFCS holds our families to a higher educational standard than what KS Regulations requires for re-licensure. SFCS strives to be responsive to training topics our families request and to find the consummate professional to train them.

Prior to licensure, each foster parent is required to complete a Universal Precautions and a Medication Administration course. The Medication Administration course was created and approved by SFCS's APRN. This course is available via the *SFCS Families* website for review beyond initial training for foster parents. **With the new federal emphasis on the effects of psychotropic medication, this training will include an expanded section on psychotropic medications.** Foster parents are required to retrain in Medication Administration every two years with an emphasis on the most recent information available on psychotropic medications and their impact on the youths we serve.

#### Foster Parents as Mentors

SFCS Foster Care Homes' **philosophy and practice expectations emphasize the importance of foster parents as mentors for birth parents**, with a goal of building a long-term positive and respectful mentor relationship. The expectation of mentorship is reinforced in the initial TIPS-MAPP training and through all interactions and contacts with resource families,

including foster/kin trauma-informed practice trainings, the Resource Parent Handbook, information shared via the *SFCS Families* website, and through regularly scheduled resource parent meetings. Foster families are taught to see themselves as part of a team with the family whose function is to work for the best interest of the child and family, as opposed to a “protector” keeping the child away from his/her family

**Resource families are taught to see themselves as part of a team with the family, whose function is to work for the best interest of the child and family and assist them in achieving permanency through reunification, legal guardianship or adoption with another family.**

Resource parents learn the importance of decreasing risks and increasing protective factors, including nurturing and attachment between birth parents or other intended permanent families and their child. SFCS Resource Workers assist in helping foster families develop skills to support positive interactions between resource parents and birth parents or other permanent families, and consistently provide coaching to ensure those skills remain honed. Current SFCS resource parents are exceptional at partnering and share their experiences with other foster families through informational meetings, pre-service training panels, resource parent support groups and by developing mentoring relationships with specific resource parents.

### **Summary**

The entire licensing process is very time consuming and takes a significant commitment by families. Kansas families continue to do an outstanding job in foster care and protect the safety and wellbeing of children in foster care. Kansas continues to be recognized as having a very safe foster care system and the **quality of our foster homes is one of the primary reasons.**