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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Special Committee on Foster Care Adequacy

My name is Chad Anderson. I am President of KVC Behavioral HealthCare, Inc. and a clinically licensed social worker. I am grateful to have the opportunity to submit written testimony about Foster Care in Kansas. KVC Behavioral HealthCare, headquartered in Olathe, is a private, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that enriches and enhances the lives of over 19,749 children and families each year by providing medical and behavioral healthcare, social services, and education. KVC's diverse continuum of services includes foster care, adoption, in-home family therapy, and behavioral healthcare. In its 45-year history, KVC has grown from a single Kansas home for boys to an organization serving tens of thousands of children. Currently, KVC is one of two Child Welfare organizations contracting with the Department for Children and Families to provide Foster Care, Adoption and Family Preservation services, with KVC responsible for a 30 county region in the Eastern half of the state. KVC has been a Kansas Foster Care Contractor since 1997.

KVC has been identified by a national organization as a best practice provider in foster care. This recognition came due to the outcomes KVC as achieved as well as a focus on following evidenced based best practice. Examples of outcomes achieved by KVC in FY 2015 include: Percentage of children safe from maltreatment in foster care – East Region 99.52% and Kansas City Region 99.81%; Percentage of youth in a family –like setting – East Region 95.0% and Kansas City Region 95.5%; Percentage of children in out of home placement placed with at least one sibling – East Region 80.8% and Kansas City Region 81.5%; Percentage of children with 2 or less placements – East Region 76.5% and Kansas City Region 77.0%; and Percentage of children in out of home placement living with a relative – East Region 33.9% and Kansas City Region 35.4%.

I would like to share some of KVC's innovative approaches that are instrumental in enhancing outcomes in child welfare. Kansas has historically led other states through its creative and successful approaches to child welfare and I am confident that this committee is committed to collaborating on solutions as we have so many times in the past.



iPads in KVC Foster Homes

KVC is currently deploying 550 iPads to KVC foster families in Kansas. KVC pursued and received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning and Telemedicine program to support this creative initiative. KVC's MyLink program is a robust, HIPAA-compliant video conferencing program that gives children in foster care increased access to therapeutic and crisis intervention services, and increases access to training and support for foster parents. These benefits are especially important in our rural areas.

All KVC therapists and KVC Case Managers have access to iPads, or laptops, equipped with video conferencing technology. When a foster parent is in a moment of crisis, or need, they have the option to access and have immediate face to face contact with a clinician trained in Trauma Systems Therapy. We have had positive feedback from youth and foster parents regarding the benefits of this new resource. We have loaded the iPads with training on topics such as trauma and will push out videos to enhance and improve parenting skills. Additionally, we will use the iPads to support foster parents participation in activities such as the KVC Foster Parent Advisory Board meetings. We recognize how demanding fostering is and realize the importance of tools such as this to improve recruitment and retention of our foster parents, ensuring continued placement stability for the children we serve.

MyLink is not only a way to connect youth to needed mental health services and foster parents to training and supports, but also an opportunity to conduct pre-placement visits for children leaving hospital and residential treatment settings when distance is a barrier. With an iPad a foster parent can easily link to a youth at the hospital, to meet the youth by video and discuss what it might be like in the home or at school. It also allows for questions to be asked, and answered, which enhances the match made by the child's team as the best possible fit and supports stability once in the home.

Some courts have expressed interest in youth attending court by video conferencing at times. As court is generally during school hours, the youth we serve often miss class to attend court. This technology allows youth to attend court while maximizing their educational time.

KVC MyLink is one of the most innovative projects of its kind in the child welfare sector today; leveraging technology to enhance linkages and coordination between foster children, caregivers, and child welfare staff thus enhancing outcomes.

Training Foster Parents on Trauma Systems Therapy

Another program I want to highlight is Trauma Systems Therapy (TST). We all know children who have been abused or neglected have special emotional needs. For more than 10 years, KVC therapists have used TST, and we have created an adaptation for foster families as well. TST is an evidence-based modality designed to help children and caregivers understand why a child acts out physically or emotionally, and how caregivers can support the child in learning to regulate

their reaction. Oftentimes, an emotional outburst can actually be a response to something that has triggered a memory of a past traumatic event. Knowing what may trigger this reaction within the child's environment empowers caregivers to understand how and why this occurs, but more importantly what they can do to help. Today approximately 70% of our KVC foster parents are trained in TST. KVC has developed online TST training for our foster parents. We must have the right tools in the right hands. We continually work to bring this important training to schools and law enforcement with the understanding of the benefits when all the professionals involved are aware of the impact and appropriate response to trauma.

KVC Resource Family Conference

For the last 19 years, KVC has underwritten a weekend conference bringing our foster families and children in care together for a weekend of education and fun. The event is a one-of-a-kind training opportunity for foster parents who are caring for children who have experienced abuse, neglect or other family challenges, and are in state custody. Our foster parents learn about topics such as managing behavior challenges, repairing the effects of stress and trauma, and transition planning into adulthood, while children enjoy fun activities like field trips, bouncy houses and talent shows. More than 2,000 people participate in the conference each year. With funding entirely from donations, we essentially take over a large hotel where our youth and KVC foster families spend the weekend as a family. Foster parents have an opportunity to ask a panel of judges' questions about the child welfare system and build networks with other foster parents while youth participate in other breakout sessions or activities; with each providing us feedback on how we can better serve them. Each year we provide a keynote speaker who has experienced foster care. This year, KVC's 2015 Resource Family Conference will take place December 11-12 at the Overland Park Marriott Hotel in Overland Park, Kansas and veteran newsman Dominic Carter will be the keynote speaker. I would like to personally invite you all to this year's conference where Santa always makes a special appearance.

In response to those areas in Child Welfare that require specific attention and improvement, KVC has created the KVC Institute. Our Institute provides a foundation for continued research and adaptation or development of additional best practice methods. Today, I wanted to highlight some of the ongoing KVC initiatives that are currently in place to improve child welfare by strengthening our resources and supports to our foster families. I appreciate the Committee's time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad Anderson" with "LSCSW" written in smaller letters to the right of the name.

Chad E. Anderson, LSCSW
KVC Behavioral HealthCare Inc. - President

