



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Kentucky Releases Progress Report on Child Welfare
Transformation**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 2, 2019) - The Kentucky Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), part of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, has released its one-year report for its Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) efforts, and it shows progress in outcomes for children and a planned path toward greater preventive and community-based care for families.

DCBS Commissioner Eric Clark said the effort began in 2018 in conjunction with several recent legislative gains for the department that provided additional state budget appropriations and improved options and resources for families and children. These gains include improvements such as the “fictive kin” placement option, the codified Foster Youth Bill of Rights, and the improved relative services array.

Other positive factors were new opportunities for more flexible federal funding, particularly through the federal Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018, and the strong commitment of Gov. Matt Bevin and First Lady Glenna Bevin to making Kentucky the best child welfare system in the nation.

“There is no denying that Kentucky is experiencing an unprecedented opportunity to transform its child welfare system,” Clark said. “This report was created upon DCBS’ own initiative to document the tremendous work and accomplishments that have been made during the last year and share our vision going forward.”

Clark credited the effort’s workgroups, which include staff, national experts, advocates, providers, and project manager/DCBS Executive Advisor Jennifer Warren with developing the project’s scope of work, strategies and tasks. Some of the projects positive outcomes include the following:

- An increase of 671 foster homes across the state from April 2018 to April 2019
- The number of youth exiting from foster care to reunification has risen from 2,193 in 2014 to 2,339 in 2018
- The number of youth exiting from foster care to adoption has risen from 846 of all exits in 2014 to 1,045 in 2018
- The number of youth exiting out of home care without achieving permanency has decreased from 650 in 2014 to 641 in 2018

Clark said while DCBS has seen improvements in figures like these, more work is needed to improve timeliness for permanency to ensure better outcomes for youth.

DCBS has identified three goals for its child welfare transformation:

- Safely reduce the number of children entering out of home care
- Improve timeliness to appropriate permanency
- Reduce staff caseloads

Clark said this is only the beginning of DCBS’ collective partnership with all stakeholders, and the success of the child welfare system belongs to everyone.

“We are committed to being a data-informed, outcome-driven agency that will be more responsive to the serving the needs within our communities and families,” Clark said. “I cannot thank all of the incredible DCBS employees, foster youth, advocates, community

partners, and the many others enough for their time and inputs into helping us seize this special moment and initiate an ongoing radical transformation effort.”

Working with the central CWT Steering Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Council are the effort’s nine workgroups, each consisting of a multidisciplinary panel of stakeholders and meeting multiple times over the past 14 months to concentrate on the core strategies of Culture of Safety, Aligned Service Array, Shared Focus on Outcomes and Collaborative Practice Approach.

The nine workgroups are:

- Workforce Supports
- Prevention Supports
- Foster Care and Adoption
- Transition Aged Youth
- Prevention Supports
- Permanency
- Fiscal Modernization
- DCBS Service Region/Field Implementation
- Relative Supports

Other positive preliminary outputs from the workgroups’ efforts include:

- Development of a new relative/fictive kin caregiver service array, including a child specific foster home type
- Rollout of the Culture of Safety model for all staff
- Deployment of mobility solutions for front-line staff through new tablets
- Strong partnerships with faith-based organizations through the Uniting Kentucky initiative
- Development of the KY FACES web portal for foster/adoptive parents

- Development of the Kentucky RISE portal for transitioned aged youth
- Preparations for early implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

Commissioner Clark said that as the Child Welfare Transformation moves forward, each workgroup will have a renewed focus on data analysis and performance measurement.

Media availability with Commissioner Eric Clark, Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth Caywood, or other staff members will be Friday July 5, 2019 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Read the report on the DCBS website:

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/Documents/childwelfaretransformationannualreport.pdf>

Learn more about Child Welfare Transformation at:

<https://chfs.ky.gov/Pages/tcwsummit.aspx>

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.