



Every Kentucky Kid Needs a Safe and Loving Family

To keep kids safe, Kentucky needs a child welfare system that can thoroughly investigate suspected abuse. If a child has experienced abuse or neglect, family is truly the best medicine to help those children thrive. To keep children connected to a family, Kentucky can swiftly intervene in three ways:



Family Preservation

Sometimes what a child needs most is for their parents to get help. Family preservation services are short-term and help parents overcome challenges, such as substance abuse, while keeping kids safe and healthy within their homes.



Child grows up in a stronger, safer home

If the child is removed for their safety, they enter kinship or foster care



Kinship Care

When a child cannot safely remain with their parents, relatives or close family friends can provide a vital, loving safety net. Placing children with adults that already know and care for them can help lessen the trauma of being removed from their homes.



Child returns to their home once their parents are able to safely care for them

Child placed with their kinship family permanently, ideally through adoption



Foster Care

When kinship care is not available, well-trained foster parents can provide safe and nurturing family settings. Some foster families adopt, while others care for a child until they return to their parents or until other adoptive parents are found.



Child returns to their home once their parents are able to safely care for them

Foster family or other family adopts child to give them a permanent home



In some cases where children have intense needs, they may be placed in short-term high quality treatment facilities until they are ready to return to a family.

Glossary of Child Welfare System Terms

Aging Out: Describes youth who exit the foster care system without a permanent family between the ages of 18 and 21.

Child Protective Services (CPS), or Child Protection Branch: The branch within the Department for Community Based Services that investigates reports of child abuse or neglect. When adults are concerned for a child's safety, they can call CPS to make a report or submit a report online.

Department for Community Based Services (DCBS): DCBS, sometimes referred to as "the Cabinet," is within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and administers the state's foster care and adoption systems, along with other programs that keep children safe and healthy. These include family support, Medicaid, food benefits, child care, and more. DCBS works with many children that are not removed from their homes.

Family Preservation Programs: Programs which provide intensive in-home services to strengthen parenting skills and keep children safely with family. These programs serve families with a child at risk of being removed so that the child can remain in the home safely and work to reunify families where a child has been removed.

Fictive Kin: People who have a kin-like relationship with a child, such as close family friends or neighbors, but are not related by blood or marriage. With the passage of HB 180 in 2017, Kentucky now recognizes fictive kin as kinship caregivers.

Independent Living: Placement arrangement for older youth in foster care who live in supervised or semi-supervised housing programs.

Investigation: The process in which Child Protective Services collects information and evaluates risk factors in a home to determine if a child has been abused or neglected, or if their caregivers cannot care for them.

Kinship Care Program: Program that provides a small amount of financial assistance to kinship caregivers for children who would otherwise be placed in foster care. Governor Beshear placed a moratorium on the Program in 2013, preventing any new kinship caregivers from receiving assistance.

Kinship Care: Placement where the child is nurtured and cared for by relatives, often grandparents, or other adults who have a family-like relationship with the child. Most kinship placements in Kentucky are informal arrangements where family members stepped in before DCBS became involved.

Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC): General term to describe any placement outside of the biological family's home while a child is in the custody of the child welfare system. Most children are placed in foster homes, residential facilities, or with relatives.

Private Child Care Agency (PCC): Private agency contracted to provide DCBS services, including foster care, adoption, and family preservation.

Residential Treatment Facility: A group facility that provides 24-hour care for children. Residential treatment is the most restrictive and most expensive placement for children in the child welfare system and should be reserved for children who need intensive services.

Reunification: Returning children safely to the custody of their biological parent(s) after they have been in a foster care or kinship placement outside of their home.

Substantiation: When CPS investigates a report and determines that a child has experienced abuse or neglect.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR): Legal proceeding to end a parent's legal custody of a child. If parents' rights have been terminated, a child may be adopted.