

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

September 24, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children was held on September 24, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Samara Heavrin, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Samara Heavrin, Co-Chair; Senators Matthew Deneen, Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Rick Girdler, Keturah J. Herron, Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Stephen Meredith, and Robin L. Webb; and Representatives Emily Callaway, Mike Clines, Stephanie Dietz, Steven Doan, Robert Duvall, Kim Holloway, Michael Sarge Pollock, Steve Riley, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Julie Dixon, Multi-State Director, Isaiah 117 House; Lori Gafford, Location Leader Logan, Simpson, and Butler Counties, Isaiah 117 House; Regan Throp Albarado, Tennessee State Director, Isaiah 117 House; Susan Evans, Retired Service Region Administrator Associate, Two Rivers Region, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Reuben Watson, Director, Unity in Action, Lexington Leadership Foundation; Ginny Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, Ramey-Estep/Re-group; Jenna Hill, Chief Compliance Officer, Ramey-Estep/Re-group; Kelli McCormick, Chief Treatment Officer, Ramey-Estep/Re-group; Bart Baldwin, Founder, Baldwin Consulting; Rick Wurth, Chief Executive Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health; Julie Raia, Chief Strategy Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health; Sal Santoro, Board of Trustees Member, CHNK Behavioral Health; Marc Wilson, Consultant, Top Shelf Lobby; and Crystal Leugers, Chief Programming Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health.

LRC Staff: Ben Payne, Logan Bush, Cameron Franey, and Becky Lancaster.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2025, meeting was made by Representative Clines, seconded by Representative Riley, and approved by voice vote.

Discussion of Isaiah 117 House

Julie Dixon, Multi-State Director, Isaiah 117 House, shared a video discussing the origin and goals of the Isaiah 117 House and discussed the mission to assist foster children and families.

Lori Gafford, Location Leader Logan, Simpson, and Butler Counties, Isaiah 117 House, discussed establishing the first Isaiah 117 House in Kentucky, provisions available at the house, layout of the house, and hopes for expansion.

Reuben Watson, Director, Unity in Action, Lexington Leadership Foundation, discussed working with DCBS and faith-based initiatives for child welfare, his personal experience as part of the foster care system, and his aspirations for more Isaiah 117 Houses.

In response to Representative Callaway, Ms. Dixon stated the hope is that all children in the area being removed from their home are brought to the Isaiah 117 House prior to placement. Typically, children stay from three to 72 hours.

In response to Chair Heavrin, Ms. Dixon stated Isaiah 117 Houses do not receive state or federal funds but are funded by the communities and are available for use by any county in the state.

In response to Representative Stalker, Ms. Dixon stated there is not a set time limit to remain at the house but after 72 hours extra time is given to the case, there is a visitation space in the house to utilize if a child needs to be there longer than 72 hours, there is always a case worker with the child at the house, and all volunteers have a background check completed as well as trauma-informed training.

In response to Senator Mays Bledsoe, Ms. Dixon discussed there is an application and process for a county or region to build an Isaiah 117 House, and the funding needed to begin is for the construction and first year's budget.

Discussion of Ramey-Estep/Re-group: Family-Centered Integrated Health Care

Ginny Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, Ramey-Estep/Re-group, discussed Ramey-Estep/Re-group's commitment to investing in Kentucky's children and families, progression from an orphanage to residential, prevention, and foster care, evolution of programs from 2014 to 2025, treatment sites, and workforce data.

Kelli McCormick, Chief Treatment Officer, Ramey-Estep/Re-group, discussed the Kentucky Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (KSTEP) program goals, process to support families and children, program graduation rates, and expansion of the program.

Jenna Hill, Chief Compliance Officer, Ramey-Estep/Re-group discussed the Re-group Specialized Treatment and Empowerment Program (RESTEP) for children in non-traditional placements, partnership with DCBS, and the three pillars of the program.

Ms. Anderson discussed the results of the community health needs assessment and crisis care plans for children and parents.

Discussion of CHNK Behavioral Health

Sal Santoro, Board of Trustees Member, CHNK Behavioral Health, discussed CHNK's intent to serve children and adults with behavioral and mental health issues.

Rick Wurth, Chief Executive Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health, discussed the reasoning for a name change to OneQuest Health. Julie Raia, Chief Strategy Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health, discussed the number of clients served, treatment services provided, and organizational and societal challenges. Mr. Wurth discussed the transformation of CHNK Behavioral Health into OneQuest Health, and their focus on workforce challenges and integrated programs. He spoke about the goals and commitment to provide care at a lower cost and offering diversified programs for broader support to patients.

In response to Representative Dietz, Crystal Leugers, Chief Programming Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health, stated the integrated care model looks for the root cause of an issue to create the best plan of care.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Mr. Wurth discussed the commitment to match the state appropriation investment with community buy-in and support.

In response to Representative Stalker, Ms. Leugers stated adverse childhood experiences (ACE) assessments are an evidence-based approach to trauma informed care that are critical to the organization's intake process that started approximately five years ago.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 PM.