INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2026 Interim

September 16, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children was held on September 16, 2026, at 1:00 PM/12:00 PM CT 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, Stephen Meredith, Robby Mills, and Gex Williams; and Representatives Emily Callaway, Stephanie Dietz, Steven Doan, Robert Duvall, Daniel Elliott, Kim Holloway, Kimberly Poore Moser, Felicia Rabourn, Steve Riley, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Paula Garner, President, CEO, Maryhurst; Bart Baldwin, Founder, CEO, Baldwin Consulting; Tatum Abel, Foster and Kinship Lived Experience Advocate, Peer Engagement Coordinator, True Up Organization; Jill Seyfred, Consultant, Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky (PCAK); and Amanda Royer, Director of Brand Marketing and Outreach, PCAK.

LRC Staff: Ben Payne, Chris Joffrion, Logan Bush, and Becky Lancaster.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Senator Williams and seconded by Senator Mills to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2026, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Foster Care Tool Kit Legislation

Chair Heavrin gave the committee a call to action to participate in the creation of a Foster Care Tool Kit for students as a resource for best practices to eliminate educational barriers.

Maryhurst: Empowering and Strengthening Kentucky's Children and Families from Community Based Supports to Specialized High Acuity Care

Paula Garner, President, CEO, Maryhurst, discussed the Maryhurst continuum of care programs before, during, and after residential care for vulnerable youth; personal examples of staff helping youth to navigate normal childhood experiences; planning for the person's transition beyond Maryhurst; creating therapeutic home visits; the renewal counseling services and community partnerships; and 4 policy recommendations.

Discussion of Respite Care Programs

Tatum Abel, Foster and Kinship Lived Experience Advocate, Peer Engagement Coordinator, True Up Organization, discussed the benefits of kinship care for youth; the types and prevalence of kinship care; the need for respite care for caregivers; the different access opportunities for respite care for various caregivers; her lived experience in kinship care and how respite for her caregivers could have postively changed her situation; and her recommendations to support respite services for non-foster kinship caregivers.

In response to Representative Roarx, Ms. Abel discussed subsidized permanent custody designation verses fictive kin or foster placement.

In response to Senator Deneen, Ms. Abel stated people can be certified or approved to be a respite caregiver for families by CHFS.

Discussion of the Kentucky Upstream Academy Report and the Social Welfare Foundation Report

Jill Seyfred, Consultant, PCAK, discussed the Upstream Academy goals for training; the 2 phases of funding; and the openings for trainers within the network.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Ms. Seyfred stated if someone wanted to be an Upstream Academy trainer, they could email her directly.

In response to Representative Roarx, Ms. Seyfred stated that more respite workers are always needed.

In response to Representative Callaway, Ms. Seyfred stated PCAK has tried to reach out to all local public health departments contacts they are aware of and Phase II should help to reach some contacts previously missed.

In response to Representative Stalker, Ms. Seyfred stated the initial request was for at least 1 trainer in each county and that funding could allow for more trainers in the more populated counties.

Amanda Royer, Director of Brand Marketing and Outreach, PCAK, discussed the group of people gathered to advise PCAK on information to collect for the Kentucky Social Welfare Foundation Report; and 3 recommendations to the legislature found in the report.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.