

Understanding poverty is not neglect

From the Commissioner



In our line of work, we meet and assist diverse families and individuals from across the state – people with incredibly varied life experiences, goals and challenges. We encounter a lot of Kentuckians who experience poverty. As we become part of these families essential support networks, it's vital for us to approach our work and incoming cases without bias, understanding that poverty doesn't inherently lead to child neglect.

Families facing economic challenges may still provide a loving and caring environment for their children. Evaluating each situation objectively and providing appropriate support can make a positive difference in their lives.

I will be honest: I didn't always have a clear perspective around poverty and neglect. Seeing that there can be a tendency toward bias against the poor for is the first step in the learning process around poverty as neglect.

A large part of the problem is the way many caring professionals – and the general public – may see poor and vulnerable families as separate from the rest of us.

[Read more here](#)

We have several incredible **DCBS Staff Shout-Outs** this month for valued employees delivering amazing customer service across the state! They are **Jennifer Sluss, Two Rivers Service Region; April Hill, Division of Service Regions; Amy Williams, Northern Bluegrass Service Region.**

Recently a customer took the time to leave a message on our hot line to compliment **Jennifer Sluss**, a Family Support Specialist III in the Two Rivers Service Region, for her service. The caller identified herself and said: "I just got off the phone with a case manager. Her name is Jennifer Sluss. And I believe in firmly that God has made me call and let you guys know what a great person she is and how much she's helped me. I never heard of LIHEAP. And she really walked me through it and gave me some phone numbers to get them help. And I think she deserves a pat on the back for doing a great job."

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program to help eligible low-income households meet their home heating and/or cooling needs. The Kentucky

DCBS Staff Shout Outs
spotlight good work from and good words shared about our DCBS colleagues! Send your Shout Out ideas to DCBSCommissioner@ky.gov.

LIHEAP program, administered by DCBS and Community Action Kentucky, helps approximately 150,000 Kentucky families pay their heating bills each winter and cooling bills during the hot summer months. Jennifer connected this client with LIHEAP eligibility and helped ease her worries. Thank you, Jennifer!

[Read more here](#)



Margaret Perkins and Jennifer Thornhill of the Division of Prevention and Community Well-Being at the 2022 Kentucky State Fair.

**Kentucky
STATE FAIR**

Visit DCBS, CHFS staff at Ky State Fair

Remember to stop by the CHFS exhibit at the Kentucky State Fair on Aug. 17-27 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville. Staff from seven DCBS programs, including foster care/adoption recruitment, staff recruitment and child care, will be educating guests. Visit them in South Wing B, Health Horizons area. Learn more about the fair at kystatefair.org.

Staff thanked for service in flood aftermath

Secretary Eric Friedlander thanked DCBS staff who have supported the Eastern Kentucky families and communities affected by severe flooding one year ago.

"Thank you DCBS for what we were able to bring - to assist families and make sure they were safe," he said. "Sometimes we get our resilience tested ... but the most important thing we can do is lift each other up. That's what we do in CHFS."

Watch the video here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBjY-QE25ek



TEAM KENTUCKY.
CABINET FOR HEALTH
AND FAMILY SERVICES

Leadership meets with foster youth advocates

DCBS and CHFS leadership met recently with members of the Kentucky Voices of the Commonwealth for a working lunch to discuss recent policy successes and new ideas to improve experiences and opportunities for current and former foster youth.

Thank you to these young leaders for their valued contributions and advocacy of children in foster care. Learn more about VOC and other resources for foster youth at <https://prd.webapps.chfs.ky.gov/kyrise>.



Alternative Response uses strengths-based approach with families

Central Intake has been gearing up this summer for the implementation and roll out of Alternative Response Pathway in Kentucky!

Alternative Response is a family-centered and strengths-based approach to child protection allowing the cabinet to better match responses to reported concerns in the community. In an Alternative Response system, an investigation is utilized for higher risk reports to gather evidence and determine if abuse or neglect occurred as well as the responsible party. Services and support may follow that initial assessment. An alternative response is utilized for lower to moderate risk reports, which are often closely tied to poverty. In an alternative response, caseworkers build rapport, assess the strengths and needs of the family, and quickly connect families to resources and supports in their community to mitigate risk of child maltreatment.

Alternative Response has been implemented in over 25 states and tribal jurisdictions in the United States and is listed as a requirement of the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (P.L. 111-320, Sect. 106). Over 50 evaluations (including multiple random control trials) have been conducted, with findings consistently showing child safety is preserved, families and caseworkers are more satisfied with this intervention, and a reduction in ongoing involvement with the child welfare system.

Central Intake has staff from all of our Central Intake Regional Teams involved in and partnering with our Regional Teams (NSR and TRSR), Kempe Partners, DPP, Parent Advocates and leadership to prepare for the initial implementation of Alternative Response Pathway. Beginning in July, all Central Intake Staff began "Intake a Day" - a process in which staff are becoming familiar with the



Alternative Response Criteria currently defined, by beginning to make decisions for whether they feel an intake warrants an alternative response or traditional investigation, staff are using current real time intakes (one intake each day), this process is helping to get our CI staff prepared for the roll out, as well as to identify any barriers in the Current Criteria that is set. Our Central Intake Branch, as well as, our Regional Partners, and other implementation team members, are excited for the arrival and roll out of Alternative Response and look forward to the benefits that this new assignment pathway will bring to the children and families that we serve in Kentucky.

Alternative Response Pathway will be implemented in the Northeastern Service Region first in September 2023, with Two Rivers Service Region following in October 2023. All DCBS regions are expected to have Alternative Response Pathway teams by the end of year 2025. As Central Intake is statewide and assigns for all regions, all of Central Intake will be assessing for AR for each region as the pathway becomes available for them.

Meet the CQI team F.A.S.T. members promote facility safety - join them!

The Field Quality Branch oversees the CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) processes for DCBS. CQI Specialists collect, research, provide customized reports, and analyze data related to all service areas to assist in monitoring goals and outcomes for families and children.

CQI Specialists promote performance and quality of services through the coordination of the CQI process. The CQI Specialists also attend key stakeholder groups which include youth and foster/adoptive parents.

Read more and see photos of team members [here](#)

Whether it's a worker experiencing shortness of breath, someone falling on the stairs or even a dog bite, workplace medical emergencies take many forms. The minutes between when an incident occurs and when emergency medical services arrive on scene can be critical. The Division of Service Regions has created in-house F.A.S.T. (first aid safety team) teams, made up of trained volunteers, to assist during that gap. These teams can provide first aid, help with crowd control to give the distressed person privacy, and collect vital signs and other valuable information to give to paramedics and other first responders.



Read more [here](#)

KY SEAT celebrates first year of lifting parent voices

KY SEAT is celebrating one year of uplifting parent voices! This group is a statewide council of birth parents that gives them a voice and a seat at the table for giving recommendations based on lived experience to policy makers.

Please take some time to read this terrific article about KY SEAT's purpose and accomplishments so far at <https://tinyurl.com/58u5ewes>.

If you are or know a biological parent who has been involved in the child welfare program and want to offer your thoughts on how to improve policy, please join this group! DCBS is proud to coordinate the KY SEAT program with Kentucky Youth Advocates and participating families.



DCC connects with experts at national conference



Staff from the Division of Child Care - Assistant Director Phillip Smith, Branch Manager Calvinia Radford and Director Andrea Day – and Theresa Harvey from the Office of the Inspector General Division of Regulated Child Care, recently attended the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Child Care (OCC), State and Territory Administrators Meeting (STAM) in Arlington, Va.

DCC staff participated in three panel discussions:

- Implementation Strategies and Process Solutions for Comprehensive Background Checks;
- CCDF Eligibility for Vulnerable Populations; and
- Apprenticeships: Recruitment and Skill-Building



Above left: Phillip Smith networking with peers from other states. **Above:** Calvinia Radford asking Khari Garvin, Office of Head Start Director, a question during the Day 2 Opening Plenary.

Salt River Trail hosts resource fairs

The Salt River Trail Service Region hosted two resource fairs last month to spotlight therapeutic foster care and placement support options available to staff. Almost 30 partners participated in one or both fairs in Shelby and Hardin counties.

SRT front line staff from SRT region are invited to attend to learn, partner and collaborate with therapeutic foster care agencies and placement supports to continue supporting, stabilizing and strengthening services provided to out of home care youth, families and foster families. The resource fairs were a great opportunity for all attendees to mingle and make connections.



DCBS seeking art for several county offices

Staff are invited to apply

DCBS is seeking artwork by emerging and established Kentucky artists – including DCBS staff! - for purchase to be displayed where participating DCBS agency offices are located.

This art project is a partnership of DCBS and the Kentucky Arts Council. DCBS leadership plan to update several local offices with culturally and locally relevant

art, making the lobbies more welcoming spaces. This call is for two-dimensional artwork of varying sizes. Selected artwork shall embody the essence and spirit of DCBS, which is to deliver quality services that enhance the health, safety, and well-being of all Kentuckians.

Local offices related to this call include the counties of Breathitt, Carroll, Henry, McCracken and Pike.

Applicants must live or work in Kentucky and can be current or former DCBS employees.

See the call to artists and submission form for more information [here](#).

The application deadline is Sept. 22.

Please send questions to Karen Boden Commissioner's Office at dcbscommissioner@ky.gov.

Louisville MSD donates to foster youth



Recently at our Jefferson Service Region L&N Building offices, a representative of Louisville MSD utility services dropped off a large donation of backpacks filled with school supplies, clothing and toys to give children in out of home care. She also brought a poster that all the MSD contributors all signed for the kiddos.

Jefferson staff who helped unload the items for distribution included Katie, Samantha, Katlyn, Diane, Tabatha and Brandon. Thank you, MSD for caring about children in out of home care and making a difference!



EMSR receives book donation from library for visitation rooms

Thank you to the Johnson County Public Library for donating several books to our visitation rooms in the Eastern Mountain Service Region. Books included the themes of foster care, diversity and coping with childhood grief. These will help children feel included, accepted and more comfortable during a difficult time.

Thanks also to the Division of Service Regions Racial Equity Core Team.



Poverty simulation gives staff insight into family struggles

Recently DCBS staff and partners joined Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky and the University of Louisville Center for Family and Community Well-Being at a half-day Poverty Simulation. The process helped participants understand the role of poverty in the well-being of Kentucky families and children through role play and education. Staff were assigned roles as part of families experiencing varying degrees of poverty and learning to navigate the network of available assistance. One takeaway staff agreed on: Poverty is not neglect!



Preventative screenings can earn rewards

Are you current on your preventive health screenings? Kentucky Employees Health Plan members are encouraged to prioritize their health through regular screenings that can alert us to health concerns.

Remember, you can earn up to \$100 in LivingWell Engagement rewards for preventive screenings.

Read the article "[Get the Screening Tests You Need](#)" and visit your doctor for a reminder of which tests you currently need.

To earn rewards, you'll need to have proof of screening. Need help uploading your proof of screening to the WebMD portal? Check out the instructions [here](#) for help.

LivingWell

Members and Spouses: As a reminder, you must complete your Health Assessment or biometric screening to begin earning Engagement rewards. Members can earn up to \$100 and spouses up to \$50 for completing recommended screenings and exams.