

The foster care system in Kansas is in crisis. In 2018, the number of children in the foster care system hit record highs.

PROBLEMS:

- 1 Too many Kansas children are in the foster care system, and they are entering at racially disproportionate rates.
- 2 Kansas children are staying in foster care for too long, and they often experience dangerously high instability in their placements.
- 3 It is too difficult for Kansas children in foster care to find permanency.

Because of the complexity and depth of the problems, no single solution is likely to fix this crisis by itself. Instead, multiple issues need to be addressed on multiple fronts. The Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope (SFRH) coalition has identified three key areas of recommendations for improving the foster care system.

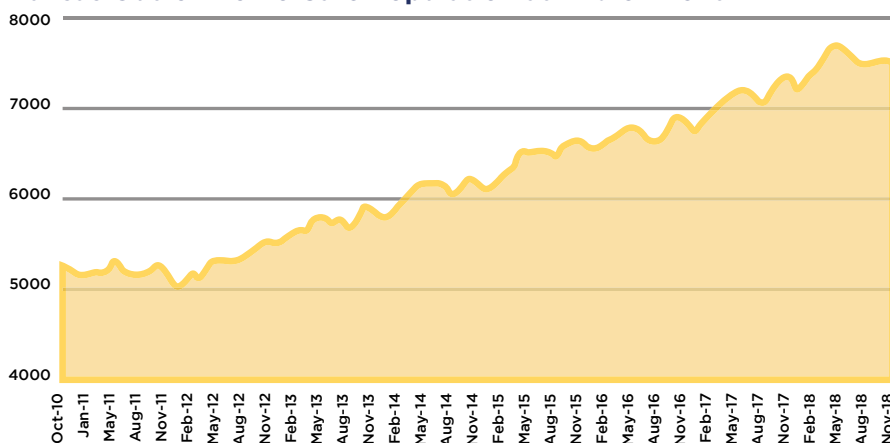
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Support Kansas families by ensuring they have the resources necessary to take care of their children and avoid contact with the foster care system.
- 2 Once children do become known to the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) through reports and investigations, Kansas needs to focus on more targeted prevention and early interventions.
- 3 Finally, Kansas needs to improve conditions for youth in foster care.

Find a detailed report of the problems and recommendations on the Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope Coalition website:

RebuildHopeKansas.org/Research.

Kansas Out-of-Home Care Population at End of Month



Source: DCF data (<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/FosterCareDemographicReports.aspx>) summarized by SFRH

About Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope

Strengthen Families Rebuild Hope (SFRH) is an independent coalition of organizations and individuals who are dedicated to helping reform Kansas's foster care system.

To find out more about our steering committee members, events, and research, please visit:

RebuildHopeKansas.org.

In order to protect the wellbeing of its families and children, Kansas must address the large gaps in the social safety net.

In the last decade, Kansas drastically cut support for children by creating barriers to programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Child Care Assistance. Legislation like the HOPE Act, passed by the Kansas legislature in 2015 and 2016, severely reduced the number of months a family is eligible to receive TANF support, increased bureaucratic hurdles for work requirements, and allowed for cross-program sanctions that can revoke an entire family’s eligibility for multiple programs based on one family member’s failure to follow difficult-to-understand regulations and requirements.

TANF			Child Care Assistance			SNAP/Food Assistance			Out-of-Home Care		
Month	Children Served	% Change	Month	Children Served	% Change	Month	Children Served	% Change	Month	Children Served	% Change
July 2014	18,677	-	July 2014	15,452	-	July 2014	142,824	-	July 2014	6,157	-
July 2018	7,410	-60.3%	July 2018	8,905	-42.4%	July 2018	100,578	-29.6%	July 2018	7,503	+21.9%

Source: DCF data (<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/ces/Pages/EEReports.aspx>) summarized by SFRH

Funding of social safety net programs has declined significantly since 2014.

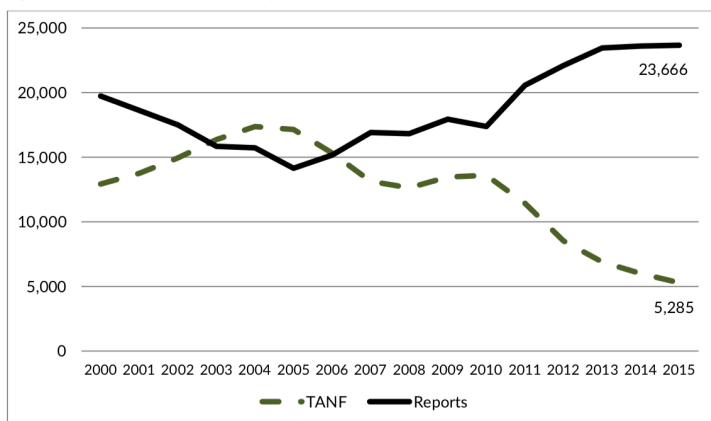
- **TANF:** Expenditures in Kansas fell 44.7% from \$23,770,890 in SFY 2014 to \$13,143,434 in SFY 2018.
- **Child Care Assistance:** Expenditures in Kansas fell 30.1% from \$54,858,701 in SFY 2014 to \$38,373,105 in SFY 2018.
- **SNAP:** Expenditures in Kansas fell 28.0% from \$415,767,025 in SFY 2014 to \$299,351,194 in SFY 2018.

These reductions in Kansas’ social safety net are likely contributing to the foster care system crisis.

Additionally, preliminary findings from a University of Kansas study provides evidence of a causal link between additional restrictions on welfare benefits and an increase in foster care cases in Kansas.

Since 2014, the increase in children entering care is almost entirely due to cases citing neglect as the primary removal reason. Instances of removal where the primary reason was abuse, substance use, or family relationships were mostly static.

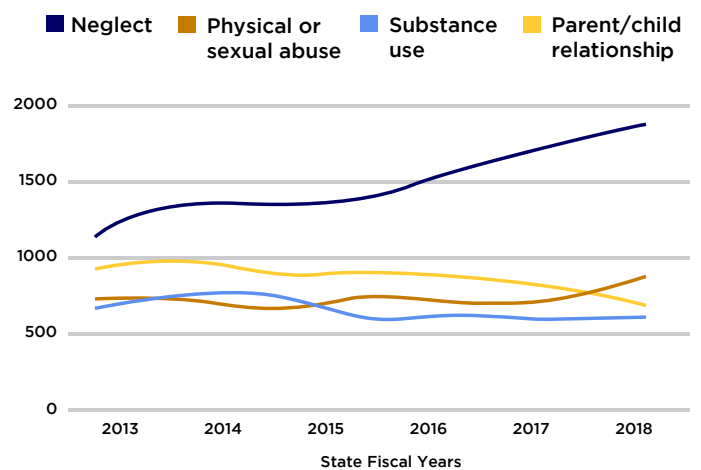
Figure 12. TANF Caseloads and Reports of Child Maltreatment in Kansas, 2000-2015



Source: "Do State TANF Policies Affect Child Abuse and Neglect?" presentation, Donna Ginther and Michelle Johnson-Motoyama, University of Kansas, 2017.

Source: Child Welfare System Working Groups. "Report to the Child Welfare System Task Force." Revised September 2018. Pg. 47.

Primary Removal Reason



Source: DCF data (<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/FosterCareDemographicReports.aspx>) summarized by SFRH. Note: The State Fiscal Year (SFY) in Kansas runs from July 1 - June 30. E.g. SFY 2018 is July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018.

To protect children and families, Kansas must strengthen its social safety net by removing barriers to TANF, SNAP and Child Care Assistance. Fully funding programs that support families is essential to addressing the foster care crisis in Kansas.