



Cabinet Meeting

Friday, October 2, 2026



Welcome & Approval of Minutes

Dr. LeEtta Felter, Chair



2026 Update – ROI of Primary Prevention

Jessica Sprague-Jones, KU-CPPR



ECBG and the Prevention of Foster Care Removals

2015-2026

Kansas
EARLY CHILDHOOD
DataTrust

All In For
Kansas Kids



1/30/20 | 4

KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA TRUST

- Data trust agreement outlining governance and structures for efficiently sharing early childhood data among members
- Authorized projects must be applied for and approved by governance board
- Collaboration between:
 - Kansas Children's Cabinet
 - Kansas Department for Children and Families
 - Kansas Department of Health and Environment
 - Kansas State Department of Education
 - Kansas Department of Corrections

Background



KANSAS EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA TRUST

- Presenting an update on the results of the first authorized project under the Kansas Early Childhood Data Trust
 - Originally approved and conducted in 2021
 - Updated in 2024
- Additional authorized projects provided data for the Early Childhood Distinct Count Dashboard, investigated the impact of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library on literacy, and are working to match early childhood and K-12 datasets

Authorized projects



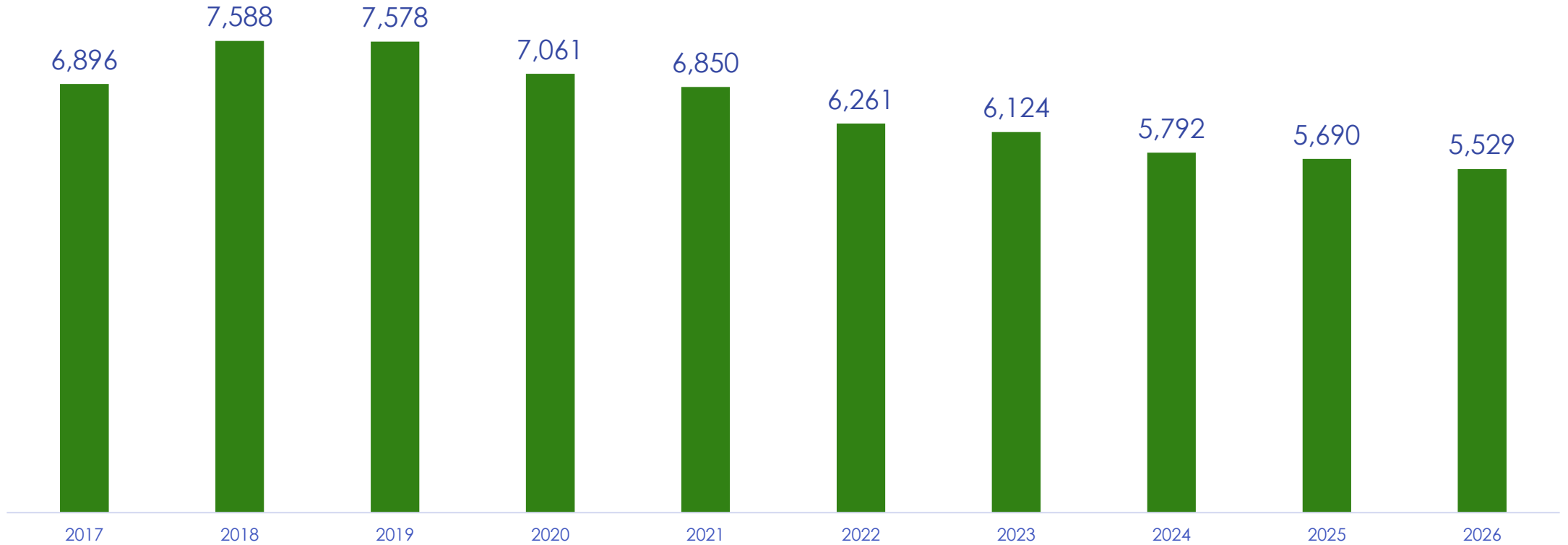
FOSTER CARE

- Kansas spent estimated \$325 million from all funding sources in FY2026 on the foster care program
 - \$250 million State General Fund
 - \$43 million Federal IV-E Foster Care Funds
 - Remaining funding from TANF, SSI/SSA Foster Care Maintenance Recovery
- Estimated monthly average number of children in foster care was 5,529 in FY2026
- Devastating to families
- Lifelong negative impacts for children

Costs



MONTHLY AVERAGE CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



Change over time



PRIMARY PREVENTION

- ECBG Portfolio responsive to the Blueprint for Early Childhood Building Blocks
 - Early Learning
 - Healthy Development
 - Strong Families
- Reflects a primary prevention approach which works to prevent child maltreatment before it occurs
 - Prevents children from experiencing harm
 - More effective and less costly than remedial interventions

**Early Childhood
Block Grant**



MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO PREVENTION

- Parenting education and home visiting programs help parents learn developmentally appropriate expectations and effective strategies for addressing challenging behaviors
- Early care and education programs teach children skills that help them be less challenging
- Programs where kids have a safe place to be while parents are at work prevent them from being somewhere unsafe
- Case management programs identify families' specific needs and get them connected to the right resources
- All programs put families in contact with knowledgeable professionals who know how to identify problems & act before they become emergencies

**Early Childhood
Block Grant**



ECBG AND THE PREVENTION OF FOSTER CARE REMOVALS

- Tests whether children's participation in Early Childhood Block Grant services prevents removal into foster care
- Links ECBG participation data with DCF foster care data
- Current update includes children receiving ECBG services 2015-2026
 - Includes data from previous analyses

Study overview



ECBG AND THE PREVENTION OF FOSTER CARE REMOVALS

- Linking ECBG participation data with DCF foster care data allows us to understand:
 1. how many ECBG families experienced a removal
 2. the timing of that removal relative to services
- Two groups: those who experienced a removal before receiving services, and those who experienced a removal after receiving services

Research design



ECBG AND THE PREVENTION OF FOSTER CARE REMOVALS

- Natural experiment with which we can test the impact of ECBG services
- Hypothesis: participating in ECBG reduces the likelihood of experiencing a removal
 - If this is the case, we should see fewer families experience a removal after being enrolled in services
 - If it has no effect, families have an equal chance of experiencing a removal before or after services, and the two groups should be about equal

Hypothesis



RESULTS

- 67,315 total children ages 0-5 participating in ECBG services
- 94% of children who received ECBG services did NOT experience a removal into foster care
- 2015-2026 a total of 4,248 children appeared in both ECBG and foster care data sets

2015-2026



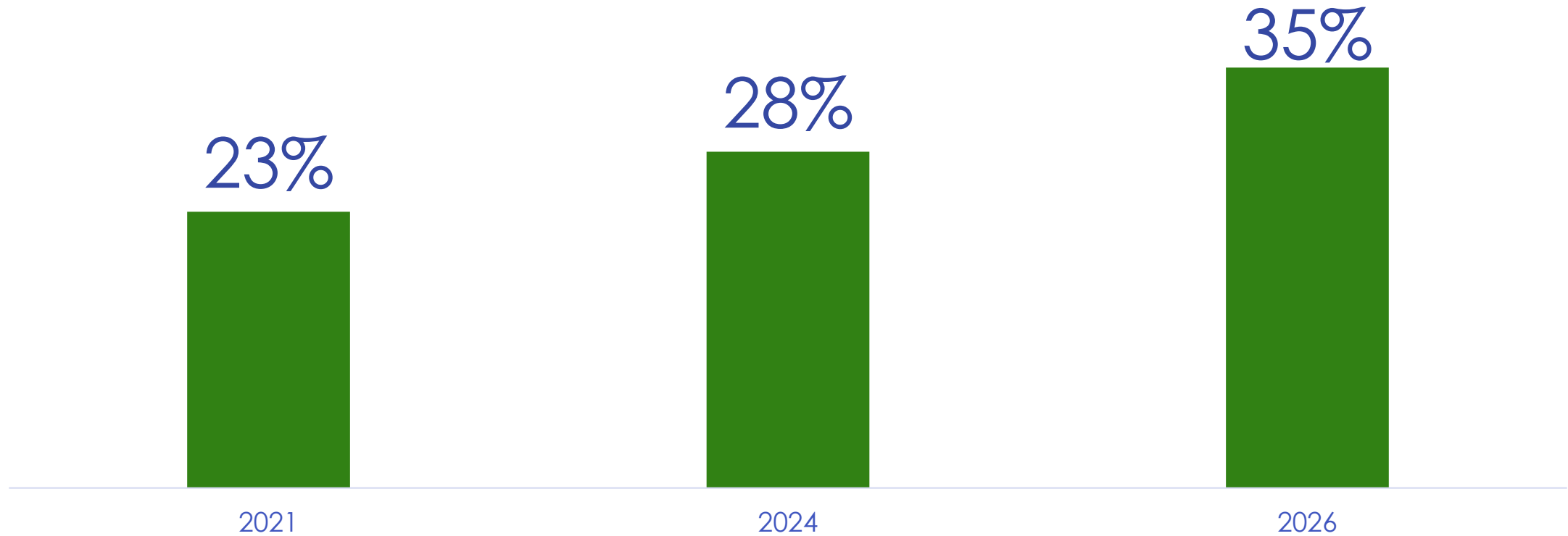
RESULTS

- Children had a **35% lower likelihood** of being removed into foster care after receiving ECBG services
 - 2,568 were removed before entering services
 - 1,680 were removed after entering services
- An estimated **888 children avoided foster care** because of their participation in ECBG

2015-2026



REDUCED LIKELIHOOD OF REMOVAL



Change over time



INVESTMENT IMPACT

- DCF reports that foster care costs \$5,017 per child per month and that the average length a child stays in foster care is 25 months
- Based on these figures, ECBG has saved the state \$111,377,400 on avoidance of foster care alone
 - This equates to 49% of ECBG's total funding 2015-2026

2015-2026



LONG-TERM COST AVOIDANCE

- Researchers have estimated that the “best case scenario” long-term per-child costs are \$119,069, after foster care
 - 2019 study based on data collected over the previous decade
 - likely an underestimate of current costs
- Additional \$106,212,792 long-term cost savings to the state
- Total medium- and long-term cost avoidance: \$217,590,192

**Foster Care
Avoidance**



EARLY CHILDHOOD IMPACT

- Consistent with decades of research on impact of early child programs
- Broad lifelong positive impacts:
 - Academic performance
 - Physical and mental health
 - Employment
 - Criminal justice involvement
 - Substance abuse

Research



THE OPPORTUNITY PROJECT (TOP)

- ECBG grantee TOP has conducted an ongoing longitudinal study since 2008 to understand impact in elementary and high school
- Results demonstrate
 - Academic benefits including better math and reading scores and higher GPAs
 - Stronger life skills
 - Impacts on discipline referrals and suspension rates
- 2016 cost analysis found avoidance of special education alone resulted in an 11% annual return on investment to the state
 - Based on results finding TOP graduates were 33% less likely to be in special education
 - Most recent (2024-5) evaluation found TOP graduates were 59% less likely to be in special education compared to a control group

Longitudinal study



Cabinet Bylaws Subcommittee Report

Dr. LeEtta Felter, Chair



Children's Cabinet

- Motion
- Second
- Vote

- David Younger
- Rep. Laura Williams
- Rep. Kristey Williams
- Rep. Suzanne Wikle
- Dr. Tara Wallace
- Sen. Dinah Sykes
- Tabatha Rosproy
- Sen. Tory Marie Blew
- Lori Blake
- Dr. LeEtta Felter, Chair



Cabinet Bylaws

Agency Updates



Ex-Officios

- **Matthew Billinger**

- Kansas Department of Corrections,
Juvenile Justice Authority

- **Natalie McClane**

- Kansas State Department
of Education

- **Justice Melissa Standridge**

- Kansas Supreme Court, Office of
Judicial Administration

- **Jennifer Bretsnyder**

- Kansas Department for Children
and Families

- **Christi Smith**

- Kansas Office of Early Childhood



Director's Update

Melissa Rooker, Deputy Director



Upcoming Meetings

Cabinet meetings are held the first Friday of every other month from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

Next Meeting: December 4
(Virtual)

2027 Proposed Meeting Schedule

- February 5
- April 2
- June 4 (in-person)
- August 6
- October 1
- December 3



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