



## Together for a Better Future for Kern County's Children FY 2020-21 Annual Report

### Strengthening Families and Communities For 29 Years

Established by the Kern County Board of Supervisors in 1992, the Kern County Network for Children (KCNC) proudly continues its mission to protect and enrich the lives of children in Kern County.

### KCNC strives to continually promote innovative and collaborative practice by:

- ♦ Working with collaborative teams to plan and develop services for children and families.
- ♦ Participating as an integral partner to work with lead agencies in developing and operationalizing the county's Child Welfare Services Self-Improvement Plan.
- ♦ Helping foster youth successfully transition to adulthood, meet their basic needs, and combat risks surrounding homelessness by providing support through the Dream Center, a one-stop resource center for employment, education, housing and social services.
- ♦ Assisting in the growth of effective family support programs by providing support, high quality training, and evaluation services.
- ♦ Serving as Kern's Child Abuse Prevention Council and Coordinating Council for Child and Family Services.
- ♦ Continuing a legacy of leadership by offering future leaders the opportunity to learn from public service mentors.

### Child Abuse in Kern County: What Our Community Needs to Know

The prevention of child abuse and neglect is a community responsibility. It can be a matter of life and death. To report suspected abuse or neglect, call the 24 hour, 7 days per week hotline at (661) 631-6011, (760) 375-6049 or dial 911.

#### **Did You Know:**

- ♦ **13,425** Kern County children were suspected of being abused or neglected — an average of **37** children each day in 2020.
- ♦ **2,691** — an average of **7** Kern County children everyday, were found to be victims of abuse or neglect in 2020.
- ♦ In 2020, **5 child fatalities** were determined to be abuse/neglect by law enforcement or the Coroner— all of these children were aged 3 years and younger.
- ♦ Research suggests that child abuse is known to repeat itself from generation to generation. This cycle of abuse can occur when children were victims of abuse and/or neglect or witnessed violence between their parents or caregivers.





## 2020-2021 Achievements

By providing child abuse prevention education and awareness services; administering supportive services to families most at-risk of experiencing child abuse and neglect; and harnessing the power of community action toward meeting the critical needs of Kern County's children and families, the Kern County Network for Children is helping to improve child safety outcomes for children and families in these three areas:

### AWARENESS:

We raise awareness of child abuse and methods to prevent it so communities take action.

- An average of **80** service providers and community members attended **13** trainings aimed at providing knowledge and tools to successfully help strengthen families, increase child safety, and access ever changing resources.
- Agencies, community-based organizations, civic leaders, and schools were represented at **9** General Collaborative meetings designed to address issues affecting Kern families and promote networking amongst stakeholders. An average of **86** stakeholders attended each meeting.

### DIRECT SERVICES:

We work with community partners to offer effective prevention, intervention, and treatment programs for families who are at-risk of or who have experienced child abuse/neglect.

- **2,601** families and their **6,864** children at-risk of experiencing child abuse and/or neglect received services from Differential Response programs.
- **491** parents received court ordered parenting education services, a **58%** increase over FY 19-20. **51%** of participating parents graduated despite facing technology and internet access challenges since services had to be provided virtually.

### NETWORK DEVELOPMENT:

We strengthen the community's response to child maltreatment and foster youth through knowledge and leadership development.

- **19** Collaboratives and **13** Family Resource Centers throughout Kern County were actively working to help improve safety and well being of their community or target population (e.g. Veterans, special needs groups, etc.).
- All **13** accredited community collaboratives maintained their accreditation status despite challenges COVID-19 presented.
- **14** Dream Center partner agencies and organizations worked hand in hand to support current and former foster youth.

## BRIGHT SPOTS AMIDST A PANDEMIC

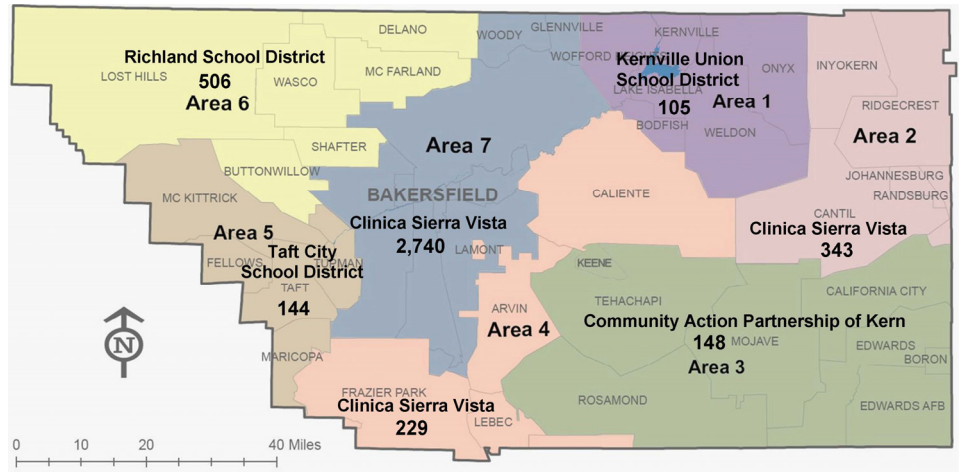
- Since children were not in school or interacting regularly with mandated reporters, to prevent marked drops in child abuse reporting, the Kern County Department of Human Services and KCNC worked together to provide a series of virtual trainings on Recognizing the Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect and increased awareness activities. **As a result, Kern's child abuse referral rate decreased only by 5%, from 59.6 (2019) to 56.7 (2020) referrals per 1,000 children. Statewide, California's child abuse referral rate decreased by 18%.**
- Thanks to a grant awarded by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, **41 foster parents and their 110 foster children, and 62 parenting foster youth and their 125 youth children, received the following concrete support items to help reduce family stress, increase child safety, and promote health:** diapers, emergency food, cleaning supplies and sanitizers, thermometers, masks, as well as books and small toys designed to facilitate positive parent-child interaction.
- General Collaborative meetings designed to promote networking were held virtually. To ensure that virtual meetings were being effective, participants were polled. **90% of respondents affirmed that the meetings provided access to new, changing, or expanding resources; 60% affirmed that the meetings informed and guided their work; 57% affirmed that they were helpful with expanding their professional network; and, 90% would like Collaborative meetings to continue to include a virtual option after in person meetings resume.**
- Thanks to a grant awarded by the Bakersfield Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative, homeless and struggling youth were provided with emergency food, hygiene items, masks, and sanitizer. **Even during months when the Dream Center had to be closed, KCNC staff, following CDC guidelines, ensured that 291 youth received needed items and support.**



# A Strategic Investment Kern County's Differential Response

Differential Response (DR) expands the ability of Child Protective Services (CPS) to respond differently to suspected reports of child abuse/neglect, by assisting families at the first signs of trouble. CPS Social Workers assess the referrals received and designate their safety risk level as either Path 1 (lowest), 2 or 3 (highest). Trained community-based organizations provide families with comprehensive supportive services. A Service Area approach is used to minimize administrative costs and ensure that DR services are available countywide.

## Number of Kern County Children Receiving DR Case Management During FY 20-21 (Total = 4,215)



*We are thankful for our Case Manager's support. Our family continues to work at being a loving, helpful unit.*

*- DR Case Managed Parent*

## DR Improves Child Welfare Service Outcomes

- 2,601 families and their 6,864 children received direct services from DR programs.
- 1,688 families and their 4,215 children received comprehensive DR case management services, of these:
  - 69 parents/caretakers receiving CalWORKs cash aid who were sanctioned cured their sanction, increased their income, and began fully participating in their Welfare To Work plan to become self sufficient. Research shows that poverty is the single best predictor of child abuse and neglect.
  - 63% of case managed families increased family functioning, as measured by an evidenced based assessment tool, and exited with completed case plans.
  - 99% of client families were satisfied with the DR case management services they received.

## County Partnership Benefits DR Prevention Services

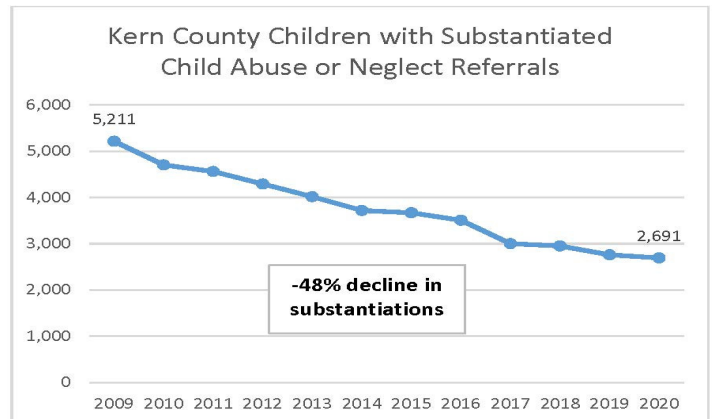
In the fall of 2012, the Kern County Board of Supervisors approved the first time use of County General Funds towards child abuse prevention. County funding allows DR to reach all families throughout Metro Bakersfield who are referred by CPS.

### Metro Bakersfield DR Path 1 Referrals

- 867 families and 2,066 children received DR services.
- 343 families and 902 children participated in DR case management services.
- 70% of case managed Path 1 families exited with completed case plans.

**The California Child Welfare Indicators Project's** Child Maltreatment Substantiation Rate data for 2009—2020 shows a steady decrease in the number of substantiated referrals in Kern County.

In calendar year 2020, of the 2,691 children with substantiations: 468 under age 1, 381 aged 1-2 years, 594 aged 3-5 years, 682 aged 6-10 years, 531 aged 11-15 years and 147 aged 16-17 years.



# Making a Difference For Current & Former Foster Youth

## Our Partners...



Established in 2008, the Dream Center, named by founding foster youth who helped design service delivery, is Kern's only one-stop resource center for foster youth up to the age of 25.

### Housing Assistance Service Outcomes for Homeless Youth

Housing screenings were completed for **122** youth who self-identified as homeless during FY 20-21. Of them:

- **69** were certified as meeting the Federal definition of homeless and eligible for housing assistance programs.
- Outreach services were provided to **51** homeless youth. From November, 2020 (when outreach services began) through June, 2021, **45%** of youth who exited outreach services were employed. The employment rate among the general homeless population who exited outreach services was 1%.
- **42** homeless youth were housed despite a COVID-19 related eviction moratorium, 1% rental vacancy rate, and reality that homeless youth lack credit and rental history. Of them, 4 were pregnant and 7 were parenting a combined number of 8 young children. Comprehensive case management services are provided by Dream Center staff to assist formerly homeless youth with maintaining their housing.
- **65%** of Dream Center youth who exited CVAF's Low Barrier Emergency Shelter services exited to permanent housing (PH). In comparison, 10% of youth who exited congregate shelter exited to PH. KCNC and CVAF have developed an innovative approach to serving homeless youth that is working.

### DREAM CENTER BY THE NUMBERS:

For the first time in Dream Center history, the number of youth served was less than the previous fiscal year. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19:

- **594** youth visited Dream Center (unduplicated count).
- **3,823** snack bags were distributed.
- **1,088** hygiene kits & **703** emergency food bags distributed.
- **555** computer uses.
- Clothing & shoes donated by the community were distributed **786** times.



**1801 & 1807 19th Street**  
Kern County Network for Children (KCNC)

**Tom Corson**, Executive Director  
Mailing - 1300 17th Street, Bakersfield, CA 93301  
Physical - 1801 19th Street, Bakersfield, CA 93301  
661.636.4488 / [www.kcnc.org](http://www.kcnc.org)