NATIONAL CENTER FOR ENHANCED
Post-Adoption Support

THE KENTUCKY IMPACT STORY

Kentucky DCBS strengthened their ability to support adoptive and SPC families through training, strategic planning, and data-driven service development focused on sustaining permanency.

AT-A-GLANCE

Kentucky developed a specialized pre-permanency curriculum called Taking Root: Forever Families. Over 360 caregivers have completed the training.

A plan was developed to implement the National Training Initiative (NTI) for all professionals serving adoptive and SPC families. As of August 2026, over 700 professionals had completed NTI.

A Permanency Navigator Program with nine navigators was designed and implemented to provide targeted outreach to post-permanency families across the state.

Advocacy efforts related to funding were strengthened through fiscal consultation.

Kentucky used data analysis to redesign and reallocate services and contracts so that they better aligned with the state's post-permanency vision and priorities.



The Impact

The Kentucky Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) is better positioned to meet the needs of adoptive and Subsidized Permanent Custody (SPC)[1] families after receiving on-site technical assistance from the Post-Adoption Center. Through enhanced training and professional development opportunities, DCBS staff and contracted child-placing agency personnel have gained a deeper understanding of the unique challenges these families face and are better equipped to provide informed, supportive guidance. This increased knowledge has strengthened DCBS' ability to address critical issues that impact family stability, child well-being, and permanency outcomes.

In addition, collaboration between DCBS and community partners providing post-permanency services has been strengthened, supporting ongoing continuous quality improvement efforts and fostering shared accountability. This collaborative approach ensures that diverse stakeholders are actively engaged in identifying challenges, developing solutions, and implementing strategies that improve outcomes for children and families.

Kentucky DCBS recognized that limited post-permanency outreach often left families feeling isolated and unaware of available resources and services that could help them maintain healthy, stable family relationships. To address this need, Kentucky DCBS with support from the Post-Adoption Center, designed and implemented the Permanency Navigator Program as a proactive strategy to strengthen post-permanency support.

The program promotes ongoing engagement with families, encourages help-seeking behaviors, and fosters enduring connections between families and service providers. By linking families to resources and supports before challenges escalate into crises, the Permanency Navigator Program helps prevent disruptions, strengthen permanency outcomes, and promote the long-term well-being of children and families throughout Kentucky.

> **"The National Post Adoption Center provided invaluable technical assistance throughout our work. Their team was knowledgeable, responsive, and accommodating, helping us meet timelines and successfully implement meaningful changes. Their guidance and support were instrumental in advancing our efforts, highlighting opportunities for improvement, and turning identified needs into positive change."**
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> ***Kelli Root – Assistant Director for the Division of Protection and Permanency and Veronica Sears – Adoption Service Branch Manager, DCBS***

As a Result of Technical Assistance

- Increased knowledge of funding streams that support post-permanency. The Post-Adoption Center provided fiscal consultation that increased awareness of funding streams and fostered program staff to actively participate in strategic planning to strengthen the long-term fiscal sustainability of post-permanency services.

1 Kentucky's Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) refers to guardianship families as Subsidized Permanent Custody (SPC) families.

- Created a Kentucky-specific curriculum to support families moving to permanency. With support from the Post-Adoption Center, DCBS developed an eight-hour training, Taking Root: Forever Families, for families transitioning to permanency. As of August 2026, over 360 caregivers had received the training, and 36 individuals had been trained to deliver it. The training helps ensure that families are prepared for this part of the journey and know where and how to access services.
- Increased adoption competency. The Post-Adoption Center helped DCBS develop a plan and strategy to ensure that all staff involved with adoptive families receive training to become adoption competent. As a result, contract language was developed that required staff of child-placing agencies to complete NTI training and DCBS implemented a phased plan requiring DCBS staff to do the same. As of August 2026, 719 professionals, including 277 DCBS staff members, had completed the training.
- Used data to drive decisions. With support from the Post-Adoption Center, an evaluation of program data demonstrated that an existing post-permanency program was ineffective in achieving its intended objectives. These findings informed the strategic reallocation of resources and the planned discontinuation of an under-utilized program, allowing investment in approaches better aligned with what families stated were needed in the state.
- Developed a deeper understanding of monitoring contracts. Monitoring of an existing post-permanency contract identified staff resources that were not aligned with the strategic direction of Kentucky DCBS. As a result, positions were redesigned to support a newly created program called the Permanency Navigator Program, which aligns with the organization's priorities.
- Created and implemented a program to conduct targeted outreach. With guidance from the Post-Adoption Center, DCBS developed a new program to better support families post-permanency. This program has nine Permanency Navigator positions responsible for delivering targeted statewide outreach and connecting families to needed supports and resources. Funding for this program came from reallocating funds from another program that data showed was not being fully utilized.
- Implemented a training for all newly hired DCBS staff. Recognizing that statewide implementation of NTI would take time, Kentucky DCBS proactively implemented the Understanding Adoptive Families, a training developed by the Post-Adoption Center, to build knowledge and awareness of the complex challenges often experienced by adoptive and guardianship families. Staff will attend this training to lay a foundation for effectively serving families post-permanency and then attend NTI to become adoption competent.

"This training helped me realize that needing support after adoption is normal and not a sign that we've failed."

"The information about trauma and regulation completely changed the way I think about behavior."

Quotes from caregivers who attended the training

Why This Work Mattered

Kentucky DCBS partnered with the Post-Adoption Center based on the belief that providing families with effective resources and support would strengthen family stability and reduce the need for out-of-home placements. At the time, existing post-adoption services were underutilized, and one program had shifted from its original purpose of promoting family stability to assisting families in pursuing out-of-home placements. Families were contacted annually to update subsidy information but otherwise received limited guidance in navigating community resources, often leaving them to identify and access supports on their own.

In response to these challenges, the partnership between Kentucky DCBS and the Post-Adoption Center played a critical role in strengthening the state's capacity to support adoptive and SPC families before and after permanency was achieved. Through targeted training, strategic planning, program development, stakeholder engagement, and data-informed decision-making, the collaboration enhanced service delivery, expanded supports for families, and established a stronger foundation for preserving permanency and preventing family crises.

The partnership also fostered a culture of continuous quality improvement by leveraging data to guide decision-making, align resources with strategic priorities, and develop services that more effectively address the needs of permanency families. Collectively, these efforts strengthened Kentucky's ability to improve long-term outcomes for children and families while reducing the risk of adoption and SPC disruption and dissolution.

Most importantly, this work helped shift the focus from achieving permanency to sustaining permanency.



By equipping families, professionals, and community partners with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed for long-term success, Kentucky DCBS has strengthened its capacity to ensure that children and families continue to thrive well beyond the finalization of adoption or SPC. This investment in post-permanency supports reflects a commitment not only to creating permanent families, but also to helping those families remain strong, stable, and connected over time.

Looking Ahead

Kentucky DCBS plans to sustain and expand the programs and training initiatives established through its partnership with the Post-Adoption Center. The agency will continue statewide implementation of the pre-permanency training, Taking Root: Forever Families, increasing opportunities for adoptive and SPC families to strengthen their foundational knowledge, build connections with others who share similar experiences, normalize help-seeking behaviors, and access resources that promote family well-being and long-term stability.

Kentucky DCBS will also continue to prioritize adoption competency by supporting the completion of NTI training among agency and provider staff. The agency will continue to maintain strong partnerships with community stakeholders to share resources, strengthen collaboration, and identify ongoing opportunities for learning and professional development.

As the Permanency Navigator Program moves beyond its initial implementation phase, it will provide valuable data and insights to inform service delivery and guide future program development. The lived experience of Permanency Navigators will further enhance the agency's ability to identify emerging needs, develop responsive supports, and design services that reflect the realities and strengths of adoptive and SPC families.

Kentucky DCBS is committed to the ongoing development and enhancement of its permanency continuum of care. The agency values its partnership with the Post-Adoption Center and looks forward to continuing this collaborative relationship to strengthen supports, improve outcomes, and promote lasting permanency for children and families.

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