

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**CORNERSTONES OF CARE TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE
TO YOUTH INCARCERATION IN 29 NORTHEAST KANSAS COUNTIES**

Joe isn't a bad kid, but it's not the first time he's been in Juvenile Court. The judge thinks challenges within the family may prompt Joe to act out, and he'd seen too many teenagers removed from their homes or sent to correction facilities return with additional trauma. Considering the whole family's health—especially Joe and his younger brother—the judge orders Functional Family Therapy. How youth and their families respond to 30 hours of family-based therapy is promising; youth tend to improve behaviors and do better in school because their family life is healthier. The judge is glad he has an effective alternative to incarceration that demonstrates positive results at a fraction of the cost.*

Beginning February 1, Cornerstones of Care expanded its Functional Family Therapy (FFT) program into 29 northeast Kansas counties as an alternative to out-of-home placement that includes juvenile confinement. Courts in Atchison, Brown, Chase, Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Doniphan, Geary, Harvey, Jackson, Jefferson, Jewell, Leavenworth, Lincoln, Lyon, Marion, Marshall, McPherson, Mitchell, Morris, Nemaha, Ottawa, Pottawatomie, Republic, Riley, Saline, Wabaunsee, Washington, and Wyandotte Counties can require short-term therapy for delinquent eleven to 18 year-olds at risk for institutionalization and their families.

The Kansas Department of Corrections-Juvenile Services has contracted with Cornerstones of Care to advance the state's goals to keep juveniles in their homes by using alternatives to sentencing in ten judicial circuits. Through trauma-informed FFT services, the organization will replicate results achieved across the nation that reduces reliance on out-of-home placement and its negative effects on the youth and family, as well as the financial cost to the public.

"Cornerstones of Care is pleased to be working with the State of Kansas to provide Functional Family Therapy to as many as **175 families** a year," said Cornerstones of Care Chief Program Officer Stephen O'Neill. "With more than 40 years of experience and research behind it, we know Functional Family Therapy can positively influence the lives of youth in the context of strengthening their families."

Joe is wary about family therapy, but doesn't want to be locked up or removed from his home. He'd give it a try but would his parents participate? Would everything be focused on him and he'd be blamed for all the family's problems? Would it make a difference?

FFT works on achieving positive outcomes for improving family relations and communications while building on youth and family strengths as motivations for change. The therapy helps youth overcome adolescent behavior challenges; conduct disorder, substance abuse and delinquency. FFT intervention services can be coupled with support such as remedial education, job training and placement and school placement.

(more)

Joe is surprised to learn he would never meet with the therapist alone, but that the whole family has to be at home for their sessions. He feels awkward at first, but is relieved he's not being blamed. Instead he sees things that he can work on to get along better with his parents and at school. His parents and brother are coached on what they can do, too. Mom acknowledges that yelling and arguing were not getting her results. She sees how she and Joe were worried about the same things and now she uses new and practiced skills to guide Joe in solving his own problems. This also helps Joe when he is at school or on his own to think through situations before responding.

“Functional Family Therapy is consistent with the organization’s commitment to the Sanctuary Model™ of trauma-informed care,” said Director of Outpatient Services Connie Baker. “Recovery from extreme stress and adversity, such as interface with the justice system, requires an environment that promotes healing among all of its members. With FFT, we will work with the whole family to develop skills and knowledge that empowers them to live safe, productive and non-violent lives.”

The Functional Family Therapy model has demonstrated outcomes over the last 45 years that reduces juvenile recidivism by 25 to 60 percent while positively impacting the health and well-being of the parents and the siblings of referred youth. It is already showing promising results in the state’s first year of experience in southeast Kansas. Further, it is found to be cost effective. In juvenile parole/aftercare, in the state of Washington FFT avoids costs of \$19 for every dollar spent by achieving reductions in placements, arrests and convictions.

Joe’s parents are surprised and pleased by the change in the family. Joe is doing better in school when it used to be hard just to get him to attend classes. He has stayed out of trouble and is thinking about what he can do after high school. When there’s a problem, they can talk and try to figure things out. They may not always agree, but it seems like Joe and his brother are listening to them.

Cornerstones of Care is meeting with court services and probation officers in the ten judicial districts and hosting webinars and presentations on FFT in order to increase knowledge and utilization of the program. This groundwork will help meet high goals for keeping referred youth in their homes, in school and out of trouble with the law. At the first Stakeholders Meeting in early January, Functional Family Therapy LLC National Trainer and Consultant Helen Midoulas told participants, “Detention usually makes the problems worse. The greatest indicator of youth who will be in prison is youth in juvenile facilities.”

*Joe and his family were created to illustrate the experience a youth and family members are likely to experience when referred by Kansas District Court, Court Services or the Community Supervision Agency assigned by the court to supervise the juvenile offender.

A kickoff event involving officials with the Kansas Department of Corrections and leaders of Cornerstones of Care is scheduled Wednesday, March 1, beginning at 2 p.m. at the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, 120 Ash Street, Salina Kansas. The media is invited to attend.

About Cornerstones of Care:

Cornerstones of Care has a long legacy of partnering with children, young adults and families to create safe and healthy communities. Through decades of trauma-informed expertise, Cornerstones of Care effect positive change in the communities it serves, raises awareness and gives a stronger voice to those in need, and deliver a fully-integrated approach to care. For more information, visit cornerstonesofcare.org or talk with us on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

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