

thriving

Stories about creating happy childhoods, strong families & healthy communities.

Children's Mental Health as the Pandemic Continues

How You Can Help

*Kindness
Changes Lives*

THE SCIENCE OF CARING

*New 988 Suicide
Prevention Hotline*

for Mental Health
Emergencies

Introducing
KVC Missouri

Meet our Newest Team



At KVC, we envision a world where every child is safe and connected to a strong family and a healthy community.

If that vision moves you, take action today!



Give online

Your gift builds connections that help families thrive. Visit www.kvc.org/donate.



Donate school supplies for children in foster care

You can help children in foster care get the best possible start to their school year by donating new backpacks and supplies! Visit www.kvc.org/schooldrive.



Sponsor an event

Are you in Kansas or Nebraska? Sponsor and play in the KVC Kids Classic tournaments coming up Aug. 30 in Kansas City or Sept. 10 in Omaha. We also have events you can sponsor in Kentucky and West Virginia. Visit www.kvc.org/golf.



Become an Everyday Hero

Commit to a recurring monthly donation and know you're making a difference to children and teens in need all year long. Learn more at www.kvc.org/everydayhero.



Include KVC in your estate planning

Leave a legacy of love by adding KVC to your will. Adding one simple sentence to your will has the power to change a child's life forever. Contact our Director of Development, Kathleen Brady, at (785) 218-6532 or kbrady@kvc.org.



Become an advocate for children & families

Learn more about the children and families we serve and share with others by following KVC on social media. Find us under **KVC Health Systems** on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#), and [@kvckids](#) on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

Last spring, in an instant, our lives full of in-person gatherings, travel, and carefree handshakes and hugs were replaced with vigilant social distancing in order to protect people's health and save lives. Have you, like many others, experienced more stress, loneliness or worry?

It's been 100 years since the world saw a pandemic this severe with human deaths in the millions. The internet and grocery delivery eased the physical burden for those with access. But we can't overlook the immense burden we've borne psychologically and emotionally.

We all need connection — that's for sure. Human connection strengthens us to endure a once-in-a-lifetime crisis like this. For those who have lost jobs, income, school connections, social supports, peace of mind, sleep, or most tragically, loved ones, ***care from others isn't just helpful; it's how healing happens.***

To meet the unique challenges of this past year, our KVC team continued doing what they do best: helping people navigate through crisis to a brighter tomorrow. We've continued strengthening families, preventing child abuse and neglect, and helping people achieve mental health wellness. Since our work is essential, our children's psychiatric hospitals and treatment centers remained open, and we adapted our mental health therapy to take place virtually. Thanks to your support, we never stopped working to create a world in which every person is safe and connected to a strong family. That driving vision has never mattered more than it does right now.

In this issue of *Thriving*, you'll read these inspiring stories and more:

- In **Children's Mental Health as the Pandemic Continues** (pg. 6), you'll read how you can be a caring adult who helps children process their feelings and questions.
- In **New 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline** (pg. 14), you'll learn about how people can soon access help in a mental health emergency, like calling 911 for other emergencies.
- And in **Kindness Changes Lives** (pg. 16), you'll see how we're celebrating our team members who make a positive difference in people's lives every day.

Thank you for believing in and supporting KVC's mission. We call the COVID-19 vaccine a **#ShotofHope** because of its power to protect health. Likewise, your generous support is a **shot of hope** for our team and the children and families we serve.

Sincerely



Jason Hooper
President and CEO



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We're seeing some light at the end of the tunnel as vaccines are distributed and infections decrease. But every young person needs a caring adult who can help them process their feelings about news stories, school pressure, and changes in their daily routines. Here's what you can do to support children's mental health and help youth build resilience.

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KVC MISSION:

To enrich and enhance the lives of children and families by providing medical and behavioral healthcare, social services and education.

Children's Mental Health as the Pandemic Continues

How You Can Help

COVID-19 has been an immense source of stress and fear for children and teens, just as with adults. As vaccines are distributed and infections decrease, we're all seeing some light at the end of the tunnel.

For some people, the thought of transitioning back to more in-person settings can also create feelings of anxiety or stress after so much isolation and fear of infection. It can also be overwhelming to try and imagine how life will look post-pandemic and what will become the new normal. The truth is—we don't yet know what that will look like and it's going to look different for every individual, family and community.

Life won't go back to looking exactly like it did before the pandemic for most people. There will be changes throughout society to ensure everyone's ongoing health, safety, and comfort in a world of so many external factors out of our control. It will be important to help children and teens adjust to the changing environment around them to put them at ease and reduce negative impacts on their development and mental health. Children and young people also need support coping with sadness and other feelings about the many experiences they missed out on over the past year.

The key is to take it one day at a time and be fully present here and now, rather than worrying about the future. There are many unknowns regarding COVID-19 and its lasting impact on our day-to-day lives, but don't let that overwhelm you. Remind children in your care that we're all in this together. No one is alone, and together, through family and community connections, we'll get through this and build a new path forward. Some are even referring to the positive pandemic-related changes, like easier access to virtual therapy or more work-from-home flexibility, as "the new better."

There are many practical ways you can help youth as they move through these transitions and monitor their behavior for signs of toxic stress, emotional distress, or other developmental concerns.

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Watch for Signs of Information Overload and Mental Stress

News can be overwhelming. Constant distressing news coverage has added a lot of anxiety to our everyday lives and it’s normal for children and teens to have a harder time processing those feelings.

Check in with your child regularly about how they are coping with the ongoing pandemic-related information they hear and see. You may also want to monitor how much news exposure your child has, including access to smartphones, social media, TV and radio. **Remind kids that the information they hear from others can be biased, exaggerated, misinformed or untrue.**

Setting aside specific times for screen-free family meals and discussions can make a big difference in helping your child process the many messages they see and hear. During these discussions, be open-minded and offer comfort. Make sure they know they can come to you anytime they have questions or concerns. Children may be feeling more anxious because so much of what is happening around them is out of their control and directly impacting their daily routines and overall life experiences.

The goal in these conversations is to pinpoint their stressors or triggers. Once you understand what those are and how they’re affecting your child’s mental health, you can work toward solutions that best fit their needs.

Be Mindful of School Stress

Even without COVID-19, the pressures of school play a big part in children’s mental health. If your child is returning to in-person school, explore what kind of fears they might have. Talk through those fears with them and help them come up with coping techniques that can help when they feel overwhelmed. Visit www.kvchospitals.org/ERplan to learn how to help your child create an emotion regulation plan that they can use to identify and manage strong emotions when they feel overwhelmed.

Also, consider the effects isolation has had on youth. In some cases, kids can experience increased depression and loneliness from a lack of social interaction with peers, loved ones, and other important supporters in their lives. The lack of socialization may also make some children self-conscious as they begin re-engaging with their peers and people outside their home. Encourage them to be brave and find activities that help build their confidence. For other children, they may be so excited

to see friends and teachers again that they struggle to manage their behavior and act out. Using an emotion regulation plan is a great way to give them tools to self-regulate.



While some youth are better able to cope, others may feel anxiety and stress grow to become intense and unmanageable. This type of stress can adversely affect their brain development and mental wellbeing if it isn’t addressed. Since the brain continues to develop throughout childhood and adolescence, building resilience is very important. This is essential for academic performance, critical thinking, healthy and appropriate relationships, being able to overcome future life challenges and more.

Visit www.kvchospitals.org/braindevelopment to learn what healthy brain development looks like and how it’s disrupted by toxic stress.

Help Kids Adapt to Their New Normal

In some scenarios, life might not ever look exactly like it used to, and that’s okay. The hope is that these changes will be for the safety and wellness of our communities.

For youth, the pandemic has significantly changed many of their typical activities. Dances, class events, athletics, family trips, celebrations, and simple things like going to the movies are great for children’s mental health. However, COVID-19 has forced even the most regular activities to be temporarily altered for safety, if not permanently changed. With vaccines, people are beginning to spend more time out of their home environments and back in social environments. While this is positive progress forward, returning to in-person activities can also induce anxiety and fear in some people.

It’s important to remember that the new normal is going to look different for everyone. Each individual and family needs to find the routines and pace that best fit their lifestyle and help them comfortably transition back to community settings. Continuing to follow safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and/or local and state health officials is a great starting point for families looking for guidance.



Help kids find an outlet they enjoy to release stress. Activities like yoga, playing outside and other forms of exercise are vital de-stressing tools. Playing games, creating art, listening to music, and other fun activities that allow for self-expression are also ideas that help boost creativity and escape stressors.

Mental health challenges related to stress can become serious. It’s important to know which warning signs to watch for to know if your child’s behavior may be in emotional distress.



Warning Signs of Children’s Mental Health Distress

Children and teens may have trouble verbally expressing how they’re feeling. Recognizing signs that your child may be struggling, asking them how they’re feeling, and having judgment-free conversations are all critical steps for supporting your child before problems escalate.

When children or teens deviate from regular behavioral patterns, this can indicate stress, fatigue or underlying trauma. There are many emotional and/or behavioral changes to watch for and there are various types of mental illness that a child could be struggling with.

Visit www.kvchospitals.org/conditions to learn about the mental health diagnoses our children’s psychiatric hospitals most commonly treat in youth, the signs and symptoms associated with each, and ways you can help a child who is struggling.

Some of the topics covered on our website are:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Self-Harm
- Aggression
- And many more

Each of these topics is covered in detail and we’ve also included a free downloadable resource sheet on each topic that you can easily save, print, and share with family and friends.

If you notice behavioral changes or warning signs, address them as soon as possible. Let your child know it’s okay to feel sadness, fear, anger, and any other emotion. It’s important that these feelings aren’t ignored and that children feel comfortable opening up and talking about them. It’s also important to seek a professional assessment as soon as possible.

Download this **FREE** Quick Assessment today at www.kvc.org/assess.

Quick Assessment: Could Your Child or Teen Benefit from Mental Health Treatment?

KVC Health Systems
We all need connection.

Empowering West Virginia Youth to Achieve Their Dreams Through Education

Youth who age out of foster care without a permanent family or home often face overwhelming life challenges such as homelessness, incarceration, and/or chronic unemployment. In response to this unacceptable reality, KVC West Virginia is proud to announce the launch of **KVC West Virginia First Star Academy**. This four-year, comprehensive program helps high-school-aged youth before and during their transition out of foster care and into adulthood. This program is offered at no cost to students who qualify.

“Our First Star Academy will offer youth in foster care a lifeline they otherwise would not have,” said Brent Lemon, President of KVC West Virginia. “Nationwide, only half of youth in foster care graduate high school and less than three percent graduate college. Our leading-edge program will allow students to work directly with highly-trained, caring adults during their high school careers so that they graduate with a personal sense of empowerment and a strong connection to their communities that will follow them into higher education and adulthood.”

KVC West Virginia First Star Academy aims to uplift and empower youth in foster care to achieve their dreams of academic success and higher education. This new program will be an immersive academic,

college prep, opioid/drug education and mentorship program that provides youth ages 14–18 with a road to higher education and a chance to contribute to their community in meaningful ways.

Using virtual seminars and workshops, life skills classes, evidence-based academic practices, care and case management, therapy, and individualized supports, students gain access to invaluable resources that will improve their high school experiences and outcomes while they learn about post-secondary or technical/trade education opportunities.

This program is being developed in partnership with First Star, a national nonprofit working to ensure youth in foster care have the academic, life skills and adult supports needed to successfully transition to higher education and adulthood. In June 2020, 100 percent of First Star students graduated high school and 87 percent enrolled in higher education via two- or four-year colleges or vocational schools.



Learn more about this new program at www.kvcwv.org/first-star!

How You Can Be an *Essential Lifeline* for a Teen in Foster Care



Growing pains can be hard to handle sometimes, but teens never outgrow the need for a loving family. There are thousands of older children who need to be fostered or adopted by loving families nationwide. Foster parents have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact on these older teens as they transition into adulthood. Let's look at why.

When youth enter foster care, it's often because they have experienced abuse, neglect or other family challenges. Foster care provides a safe place for youth and their birth families to resolve conflicts, learn effective parenting skills, overcome substance

Every year, more than 15,000 youth nationally age out of foster care without a permanent support system or family. Teens who age out of foster care are at increased risk of homelessness, young parenthood, chronic unemployment, or other life challenges. Studies show that only half of youth who were once in foster care finish high school and less than three percent graduate college. These devastating outcomes are often a result of childhood trauma and mental health challenges.

When these teens age out of foster care, they don't have anyone to call about a flat tire, ask for job interview advice, or share their excitement about first dates. However, foster or adoptive parents can be an essential lifeline—the people these teens go to for advice and answers to their questions. Foster parents have a huge opportunity to steer these teens in the right direction and impact their lives in big, meaningful ways. **And at the same time, foster parents themselves become enriched by the experience — as they find purpose in life and grow into better people in unexpected ways.**

Every year,
more than 15,000 youth
nationally age out of foster care without a permanent support system or family.

misuse or find healthy ways to cope with trauma in order for youth to safely return home. But sometimes, reunification isn't possible. Foster parents fill a void for these children, providing the care, support, love and connection kids need to heal and grow.

Learn more about becoming a foster parent today! Visit www.kvc.org/foster.

KVC Launches Unique Program to Strengthen Kentucky Families

Families often face tremendous challenges that are difficult to overcome unless they have support from others. Too often, they don't know where to turn.

Thriving Families Program

KVC Kentucky has launched an innovative new program, Thriving Families, that provides a path toward hope and healing. The program helps families who are caring for a child with mental, emotional or behavioral health needs.

How Can I Help?

If you are an adult who wants to support other families in your community, Thriving Families allows you to give compassion and additional support to help other families create safe, loving homes.

By becoming a Thriving Families resource caregiver, you will provide temporary care for a family's child who will live in your home, typically for a month. During this time, a KVC professional visits your home to help the child build skills and resilience. Meanwhile, the child's family also receives therapeutic services from KVC.

As a resource caregiver, you can help alleviate a family's stress by giving them invaluable time and space to overcome hardships.

Interested in becoming a Thriving Families caregiver? KVC Kentucky will provide:

- Free education and skills training before you get started
- At least two visits at your home each week by a KVC professional
- Free ongoing training and support 24/7, 365 days/year
- 24-hour phone support
- Financial reimbursement to meet the child's needs

Learn more and sign up at www.kvcky.org/thrivingfamilies.

“KVC is passionate about strengthening families. We designed Thriving Families to help families grow and heal with the assistance of therapeutic services and supports while avoiding alternative placements like crisis stabilization or system involvement. This program will empower individuals and families daily to create positive changes in their lives.”

Gina Klyachkin, MSW, LCSW, LICSW — KVC Kentucky President

Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

We're honored to play a role in matching children with loving adoptive families in Kansas, Nebraska, Kentucky and West Virginia. Due to our role as a lead foster care agency in Kansas, we're able to share photos and videos of Kansas children like those below at <http://adoption.kvc.org>. To inquire, please call (888) 655-5500 or email adoptionsspecialist@kvc.org. To see children near you who need adoptive families, visit www.AdoptUSKids.org.



LEXI (14)

Watch my video online!

Lexi has been waiting years to be adopted by a loving forever family. She is energetic, full of joy and is always cheering people up. In her free time, she likes reading and painting. When she grows up, she wants to be a foster parent or a nurse.



JESUS (15)

Jesus loves to play basketball, values academic pursuits and strives to be a police officer when he grows up.

A'JAUN (12)

Watch my video online!

A'Jaun is caring, helpful, does well in school and enjoys music and spending time outside. He deserves a loving family that will commit to him and give him lots of support and guidance.



TANIYA (14)

Watch my video online!

Taniya is a bright, charismatic young girl who's great at singing, dancing and reading. She has a magnetic personality, and others love to be around her. She deserves a family who will give her plenty of structure, guidance and love.



New 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline



By July 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will officially change from **1-800-273-8255** to the three-digit dialing code 988. Like calling 911 for first responder aid, those who dial 988 will be directed to a local suicide prevention hotline to receive immediate assistance with mental distress.

What is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline?



SUICIDE PREVENTION

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of crisis call centers providing 24/7, free and confidential support to people who are having suicidal thoughts or in emotional distress. According to the Associated Press, the Lifeline answered over two million calls throughout the U.S. in 2018 alone.

Why is the Lifeline number changing?

This change was introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives in the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act (H.R. 2345) of 2017. This charged the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with figuring out how this could be done.

In 2019, the FCC recommended the switch to 988, resulting in the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act becoming law in May 2020. Shortly after, the FCC voted that the change will happen in July 2022.

In an interview with the Today Show, chairman of the FCC, Ajit Pai, said one of the main goals of changing to the shorter 988 number is to reduce stigma.

“No one is embarrassed to call 911 for a fire or an emergency. No one should be embarrassed to call 988 for a mental health emergency,” said Dwight Holton, CEO of Lines for Life.

Making a nationally recognized number similar to 911 increases the ease and accessibility of the Lifeline so that people can receive help more efficiently. This will also help ensure more mental health crisis calls go to the Lifeline, rather than 911, as the Lifeline call centers have advanced training in helping someone who is experiencing a mental health emergency.

Why is the change to 988 taking two years?

The FCC wants to ensure that when 988 goes live, it will be a smooth transition for service providers and callers. There is an expected uptick in call volume, so the FCC needs to make sure the network of crisis centers is ready for the increase. Chairman Pai stated that counselors and project members believe a minimum of two years is needed to deliver a successful transition.



Why does America need a suicide prevention hotline?

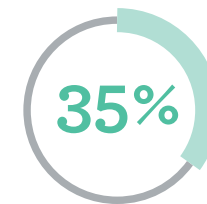
As the FCC report states, “the importance of rapid access to crisis intervention and suicide prevention services has never been more critical.”

Here are a few statistics:



47,511
Americans died
by suicide in 2019.
That's one person
every 11 minutes.

Suicide
increased
by 35% between
1999 & 2018.



Suicide is the
second
leading cause of
death for people
ages 10 to 34.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also greatly increased depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts across people of all age groups. From April to October 2020, mental health-related visits to emergency departments for children ages 5 to 11 increased 24% and for ages 12 to 17, they increased 31%.

The creation of a three-digit suicide prevention hotline will be one of many important tools in America's fight to prevent suicide and support people through the aftermath and lasting impacts of the pandemic.

As reported by the FCC, callers to the Lifeline were “significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful by the end of calls.” What's very promising is that **76.2% of those who called the Lifeline felt that their call contributed “a lot” to their decision to not end their life.**

Additional resources

If you or a loved one is struggling with thoughts of suicide, depression, anxiety, the impacts of trauma or other mental health needs, below are additional resources you can reach out to for support.

- Text **HOME** to **741741** for 24/7 support from the Crisis Text Line.
- Call the National Alliance on Mental Illness helpline at **800-950-6264**, which is staffed by volunteers who have mental health conditions.
- Reach out to **Warm Lines**, which also provide peer support on a local level.
- Call the Disaster Distress helpline at **1-800-985-5990** or text **TalkWithUs** at **66746**.
- Visit www.kvc.org/locations to find a KVC office near you and call our team for support and guidance.





Coming in 2022:

988

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Kindness Changes Lives

How Our Team Members
Make a Positive Difference



Kindness is trending these days. You can easily find the word “kindness” on everything from colorful t-shirts to Instagram posts.

Yes, being caring and considerate toward other people is important. But it’s more than just a nice thing to do. Science has now shown that expressing kindness brings about wellbeing, health and happiness. Kindness reduces stress and pain. Kindness decreases anxiety and depression. And, of course, kindness is critical to raising healthy, resilient children.

In short: *kindness changes lives.*

In 2018, KVC Health Systems began a fresh agency-wide focus on how children, individuals and families experience our organization. Some people are clients of our mental health, child welfare and family services. Others get involved as supporters such as foster or adoptive parents, caregivers to people with

developmental disabilities, donors or volunteers. Still others are involved as organizational partners.

To help provide the best possible experience to each person, we began embedding digital surveys into every program, service and support opportunity. Whether the survey is sent out by text message or email or handed in person to someone on an iPad, we want to know how we’re doing.

The data from these surveys is shared instantly with leaders and then on a regular basis with all team members. Our goal is to deliver an experience that exceeds our clients’ or supporters’ expectations. Our mission depends on delivering this exceptional experience so others will join us in creating a world in which every person is safe and connected to a strong family and a healthy community.



The Heart of our Customer Service Program

Of course, our work is only possible due to our wonderful KVC team members. These professionals are highly compassionate, talented individuals who want to make the world a better place. Over the last few years, we’ve partnered with Gallup to strengthen our employee support and engagement. Looking at internal surveys, we know that these efforts are paying off: the percentage of highly engaged team members has increased by 15% in less than two years. This is a strong foundation from which to build.

While we make sure our team members have everything they need to succeed, we also encourage them to focus intently on creating a positive, meaningful experience for each person with whom they interact. In our Kindness Changes Lives customer service training, we discuss our KVC values and explore what these values translate to in terms of attitudes and behaviors:

1. The heart of our work is helping people.
2. Our character is built on authenticity and compassion.
3. Family connection drives our culture.
4. Collaboration fuels our improvement.
5. Urgency and innovation mark our approach.
6. Diverse perspectives are key to our progress.

To learn how well we’re living our values, we ask a similar customer experience question across all programs and states. The question is simply: How likely are you to recommend KVC to a friend or colleague? Both the quantitative scores and qualitative feedback we receive are shared internally, and each local team strategizes on actions they can take.



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Recognizing KVC’s Hope Givers
and World Changers

As of early 2021, we have trained more than half of our nationwide team using our Kindness Changes Lives customer service approach.

We have also recognized and rewarded dozens of team members who put our values into action every day. Each person who is recognized gets a Kindness Changes Lives t-shirt and a shout-out on our social media channels. It’s been a delight to watch as coworkers, clients, supporters, and even family and friends pile on the praise of a Facebook or Instagram post! These posts are a reminder of each person’s unique value and the potential we each have to change people’s lives for the better through our attitudes, words and behaviors.

If you want to recognize a team member for above-and-beyond performance, let us know at info@kvc.org. We’ll be sure to pass on the praise in a bold, public way, because kindness changes lives!

To read more about the science of kindness and its many health benefits, visit www.kvc.org/kindness.



How a Diverse, Inclusive KVC Team Leads to
Better Child and Family Services

KVC Health Systems’ local teams provide child welfare and behavioral health services. We provide everything from family strengthening programs, to foster care and adoption, to children’s psychiatric treatment to tens of thousands of diverse people each year.

As any health and human services organization must, we recognize this carries a responsibility to think critically and make decisions with care, inclusion and deliberation. Our team’s choices have the potential to prevent childhood adversity, promote human resilience, reduce bias, eliminate injustice, and create health equity. One of our values is, “Diverse perspectives are key to our progress.”

For these reasons, KVC is committed to diversity and inclusion in everything from our hiring practices to the way we deliver care. KVC’s commitment is grounded in the diverse representation of the children, adults and families we serve.

KVC embraces innovation and has been at the forefront of identifying and embracing a holistic approach to family health. We must have the innovative thinking that exists when diverse groups of employees are tasked with developing the best ways to provide quality services.



“By embracing an empathetic, pro-people, anti-racist, inclusive approach, we put our whole hearts into achieving our vision: a world in which every person is safe and connected to a strong family and a healthy community.”



Our Commitment to
Diversity & Inclusion

If you’ve been to one of our locations, you may have noticed a new diversity badge on the door. We display this statement in each lobby to share what it means to us:

“As a child and family serving organization, KVC commits to treating every person with compassion and respect. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or military status.

“We recognize the profound impact racism and other biases have on the health and wellbeing of children, families and communities. We commit to creating a positive, supportive culture where all are welcome and to providing the highest quality services to all children, adults and families.

Join the KVC Team

We’re looking for highly caring professionals from a diverse range of backgrounds. We have open positions in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Kentucky and West Virginia to help provide in-home family support, behavioral healthcare, foster care, adoption and children’s psychiatric treatment. KVC is an equal opportunity employer focused on creating an exceptional place to work. Learn more at www.kvc.org/careers.

Our local Diversity & Inclusion teams are working on many initiatives such as seeking diverse foster and adoptive families. People from all types of backgrounds are eligible to foster and adopt. Learn more at www.kvc.org/foster.

People on the Move

PROMOTION



Lindsey Stephenson, LSCSW
President
KVC Missouri, Kansas City, MO
15 years with KVC

KVC Health Systems President and CEO Jason Hooper has appointed Lindsey Stephenson to become President of KVC Missouri effective June 1 (see pg. 22 for full story). Lindsey Stephenson has been with KVC for 15 years, most recently as Vice President of Operations for KVC Kansas. In this role, she helped increase the agency's foster and adoptive families by 78%, from 500 to 892 homes. She also led the transformation of KVC's youth residential center in Kansas City, KS into a Qualified Residential Treatment Center (QRTP)

in line with the federal Family First Act. In addition to overseeing KVC Kansas' Child Placing Agency and QRTP, she oversees its Admissions, Quality and Data Management, and Community Outreach teams. As President of KVC Missouri, Stephenson will build on the legacy of KVC Niles by expanding community-based services for children and families.

NEW HIRE



Cheryl Costabile, MA, LCPC, LPC
Director of Administration
KVC Niles, Kansas City, MO

Cheryl oversees all clinical practices, operations, and personnel at Niles' residential treatment program which provides a safe, healing space for youth receiving intensive clinical services for behavioral and mental health challenges.

PROMOTION



Daphne Everett, BSN, RN
Associate Director of Nursing
KVC Hospitals Wichita
2 years with KVC

Daphne oversees all nursing duties, manages medication administration, and ensures consistency across all services to maintain the hospital's compliance with the requirements of the Joint Commission and the Kansas Board of Nursing.

PROMOTION



Brynn Fowler, LMSW
Director of Administration
KVC Hospitals Kansas City
4 years with KVC

Brynn oversees business operations, provides leadership of strategic planning and interdepartmental projects, and manages projects with the compliance, quality assurance and scheduling teams.

PROMOTION



Angela Hedrick, LPC
Vice President of Operations
KVC Kansas, Olathe, KS
13 years with KVC

In this new role, Angela oversees KVC's Child Placing Agency supporting nearly 900 foster families, as well as KVC's Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) for youth and the teams for Admissions, Policy, Training, Data Management and Community Outreach.

PROMOTION



Abbey Herrera
Transportation Director
KVC Kansas, Pittsburg, KS

Abbey and her team provide safe, reliable transportation for over 1,700 children in foster care.

PROMOTION



Venessa Kondo
Director of Utilization Review
KVC Hospitals
2 years with KVC

Venessa oversees the utilization review and discharge planning for KVC's children's psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment centers to ensure the highest quality care and fiscal responsibility.

PROMOTION



Alex Mendez
Associate Director of Operations
KVC Niles, Kansas City, MO
20 years with KVC

Alex oversees business operations, provides leadership of strategic planning, and manages projects with the compliance and executive teams.

PROMOTION



Henry "Joe" Toney
Associate Director of Programs
KVC Hospitals Kansas City
3 years with KVC

Joe ensures our children's psychiatric treatment programs reflect KVC's standards of care, maintains program compliance, and oversees trauma-informed practices.

PROMOTION



David Snyder, LPCC, JSOCC
Director of AODE and KSTEP
KVC Kentucky, Lexington, KY
8 years with KVC

David oversees these programs that strengthen families and help adults and adolescents with substance use difficulties.

How Fostering Teens Gave Us Purpose and Changed Our Lives



This story was written by KVC foster parents Jennifer & Brad Stallbaumer. They submitted this story during KVC's Annual Story Contest to share about the importance of opening your home and heart to children in need.

How We Started Fostering

We started fostering by accident in 2013. One of our daughter's classmates was going to move away and miss her senior

year of high school because she needed to switch foster homes. To prevent this, we decided to open our home and become her kinship caregivers as she finished her senior year. As we got closer to becoming "empty nesters," we decided to become heavily involved in something we knew nothing about: the world of a child in foster care. The more seminars we attended, the more amazed we became at how many children were in the system who needed loving homes.

After caring for our daughter's friend, we didn't realize we were licensed foster parents, and our phone started ringing off the hook. From a sense of uncertainty, we continually declined several placements until we were sure we were ready.

A few days later, in the middle of the night, an area police department called us. They had an emergency removal for a 13-year-old girl. Our hearts just broke for her so we told the officer he could bring her over. I'll never forget opening the door that night. She was very sad and scared. We fostered her through KVC for three years.

It was a rollercoaster ride of trauma, the first we had ever experienced hands-on. She had issues with substance use, mental health needs and a few run-ins with the law as a result of the trauma she had been through in her life. But, now that she's grown, she still calls or texts us to check-in. She still calls us Mom and Dad.

Our foster daughter taught us so much. One thing was to take care of ourselves. We got so caught up in pouring our hearts and souls out for this child that we postponed our own medical appointments, forgot to talk about us, and forgot to remind ourselves of our marriage goals and dreams.

Fostering Helps Uplift Jennifer and Brad During a Health Crisis

We realized we were in a dangerous spot when Jennifer was diagnosed with Stage 3 Ovarian Cancer. Since then, we have survived cancer twice. All along the way, the KVC team in Topeka, Kansas was with us. We have continued to help teen girls while they are staying in our home. We haven't necessarily always been at capacity, but KVC never expected us to do more than our health would allow. The children we were fostering while we were surviving cancer saved our lives. They gave us a reason to get out of bed every morning.

It's funny how seven years have come and gone, and the children we thought we were saving turned out to give us a purpose we never knew we needed. We have built wonderful relationships with dozens of KVC staff members. They are committed to our home, and we are committed to the agency.

Fostering During COVID-19

During COVID-19, our Family Support Worker, Shayne, calls us twice a week to check on us and has brought us supplies. They listen to our stories of who did what lately and we all have a good laugh.

It takes a village to raise a child, and KVC has clearly raised foster parents' expectations where we live. Other agencies should follow their model of caring, compassion and support.

Read this full story at www.kvckansas.org/stallbaumers.

Thousands of children and teens need loving homes. If you'd like to change a child's life as well as your own, learn more at www.kvc.org/foster or www.kvc.org/adopt.

KVC Health Systems Launches KVC Missouri and Names New President



When KVC Health Systems welcomed Kansas City, MO-based nonprofit Niles Home for Children into its family four years ago, it promised to work with community partners to enhance Niles' quality and sustainability. KVC continues fulfilling that promise, now expanding Niles into a broad continuum of care for children and families called KVC Missouri and appointing a new leader to nurture collaborations that will advance child and family wellbeing.



KVC President and CEO Jason Hooper has named Lindsey Stephenson, LSCSW, to become President of KVC Missouri effective June 1. The newly named nonprofit will include KVC Niles, which has a strong 138-year legacy of providing children's behavioral health programs in the heart of Kansas City, MO, as well as a range of new community-based services for children and families such as pre-service training for adults to become foster and adoptive parents, training on trauma-informed caregiving to support youth with higher needs, mental health treatment, and education.

Lindsey Stephenson has been with KVC for 15 years, currently as Vice President of Operations for KVC Kansas. In this role, she led a team that dramatically grew community support for children who are in foster care due to abuse or neglect, increasing the organization's foster and adoptive families by 78%, from 500 to 892 homes. This makes it more likely that children can be matched with a family in their home community rather than experiencing educational disruption. She also expanded community partnerships, such as collaborating with Global Orphan Project's CarePortal to create Protective Homes in Kansas and working with community mental health centers and churches to strengthen families and safely prevent children from entering foster care.

Stephenson and KVC have been on the forefront of child welfare best practices including creating trauma-informed care, reducing residential care of children, and helping children and teens grow up in families through evidence-based family strengthening and mental health services. KVC's historic first-ever creation of trauma-informed foster care was examined in a five-year study with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Child Trends and Dr. Glenn Saxe of New York University. In addition, KVC implemented the philosophies of the Family First Prevention Services Act decades before it was federal law. For example, KVC helped right-sized congregate



care of Kansas children in foster care from 30% in 1996 to just 4% in 2013. Knowing that "children grow best in families," KVC has sought residential treatment only for children with higher mental or behavioral health needs.

Stephenson led the transformation of KVC's youth residential center in Kansas City, KS into a Qualified Residential Treatment Center (QRTP), in line with the Family First Act. This treatment center is licensed to care for up to 16 adolescent youth with mental and behavioral health needs at a time by offering comprehensive services and helping them successfully transition back to family-like settings with relative caregivers, foster family homes, or their birth family homes.

In addition to overseeing KVC Kansas' Child Placing Agency (CPA) and QRTP, she oversees its Admissions, Quality and Data Management, and Community Outreach teams. Stephenson received her graduate and undergraduate degrees in social work from the University of Kansas.

"We want to build diverse community support to rally around children and families," said Jason Hooper. "The youth we serve at Niles eventually complete their treatment, and they need community-based programs that can meet their needs. For example, if there aren't enough families who can care for children with higher needs, children stay in institutional settings longer than they should. That's why I'm excited for Lindsey to lead KVC Missouri and expand these types of programs. She has an incredible track record of building new community support."



Get Involved

We need your help! You can make a positive difference for children and families:

-  Sign up for the free training class to learn about becoming a foster or adoptive parent.
-  Volunteer your time to help children and families directly.
-  Donate financially or give items such as kids' games and art supplies or holiday gifts.
-  Advocate for children and families by following KVC Missouri on Facebook and joining our email list.
-  Contact us to discuss new partnerships, creative collaborations, or any problem you'd like to solve related to child and family wellbeing.

Visit [KVCMissouri.org](https://www.kvcmissouri.org) today!

 **KVC Missouri**
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