KVC Health Systems

We all need connection.

thriving

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



Ren's Story:

How Mental Health Treatment from KVC Helped One Family Heal

10 | How to Support Your Whole Family on Your Foster Care Journey

12 | Get Tips on Prioritizing Real Human Connection for Your Family in the Age of AI

14 | Coming Soon: New Children's Mental Health Hospital & Outpatient Treatment Center in St. Louis

Fall/Winter 2026–27

Make Their Wish Come True



Every child deserves to feel remembered during the holidays.

Through KVC's Holiday Heroes campaign, you can fulfill the holiday wishes of a child or teen we serve — from the new shoes they picked out to the headphones, art supplies or favorite toy at the top of their list.

Choose a wish.

Give a gift.

Create a moment they'll remember.

BECOME A

Holiday* HERO

Donate gifts or make a financial gift today and help bring holiday joy to a child or teen.

Visit **kvc.org/holidayhero** or scan the QR code.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

At KVC, there's one simple question that guides so much of what we do:

What would you want for your child?

If your child were struggling with their mental health, you would want compassionate experts who never gave up. If they needed a safe place to heal, you would want them to be with people who treated them with dignity, understanding and hope. If your family faced hardship, you would want people who walked alongside you with empathy, not judgment. And if your child couldn't safely remain at home, you would want them surrounded by extended family or other caring adults who believed in them.

That question challenges us every day to create the kind of care we would want for our own families. It inspires our team members, foster parents, donors and community partners to provide exceptional support for every child and family we serve.

In this issue of *Thriving,* you'll meet families whose lives have been transformed because someone answered that question with action.

- Our **Cover Story (pg. 6)** shares Ren's journey and the incredible perseverance of his parents as they turned to Camber Mental Health to help their son get the care he needs. Their story is a powerful reminder that no family should have to navigate mental health challenges alone.

- When we ask, "What would you want for your child?" we must also ask what families need to make that care possible. In **How Foster Care Impacts the Whole Family (pg. 10),** we explore how caring for the whole family is an essential part of creating a safe, supportive home for every child.

- Finally, you'll also read **Kim's Story: From Shelter Resident to Staff Member (pg. 20),** an inspiring journey and a testament to what's possible when people are given the opportunity to heal and give back.

Every story in these pages reflects our commitment to asking, what would you want for your child? Because every child deserves to feel safe. Every family deserves compassionate support. And every person deserves the opportunity to heal, grow and thrive.

Thank you for being part of the KVC community. Your generosity and partnership make these stories possible and help ensure that more children and families receive the care, connection and hope they deserve.

Sincerely

Jason Hooper
President and CEO



Ren's Story: How Mental Health Treatment from KVC Helped One Family Heal

At just 6 years old Ren was experiencing daylong meltdowns, unpredictable behaviors and multiple crisis stays at hospitals. Ren's family felt isolated and unsure where to turn. Read how one family found healing, hope and support.

See details on pg. 6

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"KVC has changed my life in more ways than one. Being able to go from staying at the shelter to working at it has been amazing."





KVC Health Systems

We all need connection.

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

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Foster care affects everyone in the home. Learn how fostering a child can impact partners, children and foster parents — and how to support your whole family along the way.



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We love to recognize employees who embody our values and serve others with excellence. Let's celebrate some KVC team members making a difference!



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Thriving is published at KVC Health Systems, Inc., 21350 W. 153rd St., Olathe, KS 66061; 913-322-4900. Please send comments, change of address and duplicate copy notices to the attention of the Communications Department.

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KVC is a member of Social Current, a member of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, and a recipient of United Way funds.

Camber Saved Our Family

How Camber Mental Health helped Ren and his family find hope and healing

Darci and Daniel began fostering Ren when he was just two days old, already carrying the effects of trauma from before he was born. They soon adopted him, loving him deeply through those early impacts and serious mental health needs.

As Ren grew, his needs became increasingly complex. Daylong meltdowns made life unpredictable. Multiple mental health crisis stays at hospitals followed. Their whole family was living in a state of high alert. By age six, Ren's world had grown smaller. So had theirs.

"There was a lot of this stuff that we were seeing early on that nobody else was really seeing," Daniel shared.

Some people told them Ren would grow out of his behaviors. Others didn't fully understand what they were facing. Darci and Daniel felt isolated, unheard and unsure where to turn next.

"I'll be honest with you, it felt hopeless to me," Darci remembers.

Still, they kept showing up. They kept searching. And they never stopped believing in their son.

When Darci and Daniel first searched for help for their son Ren, they were exhausted, overwhelmed and running out of answers.

Darci and Daniel needed more support, so they began searching for care that could give Ren and their family the time, treatment and tools they needed to heal.

Families Shouldn't Have to Face Mental Health Challenges Alone

Ren's family is far from alone. Millions of children and teens across the United States experience mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, the effects of trauma and behaviors that can feel difficult to understand.

About 46% of Americans will meet the criteria for a mental health condition at some point in their lives, according to Mental Health America. Half of all mental health conditions begin by age 14. Yet many families still struggle to find the care their children need.

For parents and caregivers, that search can feel deeply lonely. There may even be pressure to handle everything privately or fear others will judge them when they ask for help.

But a child's mental health challenges don't mean their parents have failed. And even the deepest love cannot always give a child everything they need to heal.

> "One thing we learned through this whole thing is that you **cannot love the trauma out of a kid."** — *Daniel*

That realization marked a turning point for Ren's family. Darci and Daniel love their son fiercely. They also understood Ren needed care from a team who knew how to help him and give him support designed especially for him.

Ren & His Family Find Hope at Camber

Ren and his parents found help through Camber Mental Health, KVC Health Systems' mental health hospital and residential treatment center network. Camber provides compassionate mental health care for children and teens during some of their hardest moments.



Through children's residential mental health treatment at Camber Kansas City, Ren, Darci and Daniel felt truly seen and supported for the first time.

"They changed the trajectory of our family," Darci shared.

At Camber, Ren met Kara, a therapist who first focused on earning his trust. She also worked to repair and strengthen the relationships between Ren and his family.

Camber's approach emphasizes trauma-informed treatment, individualized support and strong family involvement so children and caregivers can heal together.

Kara saw more than Ren's anger or his hardest moments. She saw a child with strengths, hope and a family that wanted desperately to stay together.

"Ren, while he was super positive, was very angry," recalled Kara. "As a therapist, specifically for Ren facing this big chance of going into foster care and going into the system, I was very goal-oriented. I thought, 'I'm getting this kiddo home.'"

Kara worked closely with Ren, Darci and Daniel. Together, they learned more about what Ren was experiencing, what signs showed he was getting overwhelmed and what could help him through those moments.

"Kara did a really good job of allowing us space to heal, allowing us space to process and take a breather," shared Daniel.

Kara also learned that certain actions, sounds and physical sensations helped Ren feel calmer and more connected to his emotions. She introduced sensory

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

regulation tools such as a weighted vest, kinetic sand and chewing gum.

These tools may have seemed simple, but for Ren, they made a world of difference.

During one family therapy session, Kara noticed Ren becoming overwhelmed. She offered him kinetic sand and gum. Almost immediately, she saw his body begin to relax.

"This is when I knew that we were making a lot of progress," Kara recalled. "You could just see his body relax and him go back down to baseline."

Children who have experienced trauma often have a nervous system that is stuck in a heightened fight-or-flight state. These simple tools work by calming the body first, which then makes it possible for the child to reconnect with their emotions and communicate.

Healing Through Connection

By the end of his stay, Ren could spend time with his entire family in a small visiting room without becoming overwhelmed. Before treatment, that kind of time together would have felt nearly impossible.

The day Ren left Camber brought another powerful moment. Staff members gathered to celebrate how far he had come and say goodbye.

Darci and Daniel saw just how many people had cared for Ren, believed in him and gave everything they had to help him grow.

"It was so cool to see how many people poured into him," Darci shared.

"Camber saved our family." — *Darci*

The Camber Kansas City team did more than help Ren through a crisis. They helped his family understand one another, rebuild their bond and begin healing together.

"With the help that we've received and the tools that they have given us, Ren's and my relationship is so much better," shared Darci.

Then came a moment she had waited six years to experience.

"He told me he loved me for the first time in six years."

Today, Ren's family knows healing doesn't happen all at once. Ren still has difficult moments… but they're moments, not entire days. And now, Ren and his family have tools to help in those difficult moments. Most importantly, they know they don't have to face those hard times alone.

Ren Is More Than His Hardest Moments

Darci and Daniel are so proud of Ren. They see his strength, his heart and everything he can — and will — become.

His story reminds us that a child's hardest moments don't define their future. When children and teens receive treatment and care from people who listen, understand and truly believe in them, they can grow in ways that once felt impossible.

"Ren's a world changer. He's an incredibly amazing kid that is, I believe, is really going to change the world." — *Daniel*

Kara sees that same possibility in Ren and in every child she helps.

"We really want to make these kiddos feel like they have a purpose in the world — that they will have a bright future," said Kara. "Their kid years or adolescent years or teenage years do not define their potential."

Ren's story isn't only about a mental health crisis. It's about a child who found people willing to understand him. It's about parents who kept searching for answers. And it's about a family that found hope and healing through Camber Mental Health.

Help More Children Like Ren Find Hope and Healing

Help children and families access compassionate mental health care when they need it most.

Visit **cambermentalhealth.org/roots** to see how you can support Camber Mental Health KC as it prepares for a transformational renovation.

Building What Children Need Next



For 35 years, Camber Mental Health Kansas City's flagship campus has been a place of hope and healing, serving children and families through more than 36,000 admissions. **Now, growing need is calling us back to our roots — and pushing us to build for what comes next.**

About **60 Kansas youth are waiting for residential mental health treatment on any given day,** and those with complex needs face even greater barriers to care.

Through the ***Roots of Resilience Campaign,*** we're transforming our flagship campus to meet the needs of children and families today and into the future.

We will help children hope and heal by:

- Upgrading patient rooms, expressive therapy spaces, multipurpose areas and clinical offices
- Creating a specialty unit with single rooms for youth with complex needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Creating private admissions and visitation spaces for connection, trust and healing
- Renovating classrooms for learning through our accredited K–12 school
- Adding a gym and outdoor wellness trail for movement and healthy coping skills
- Updating technology, including ObservSMART and AI-assisted software, to strengthen safety, communication and coordinated care

At Camber Kansas City, longer-term residential treatment gives youth time and stability to build skills and make lasting progress through therapy, education, recreation, sensory support and 24/7 therapeutic care.

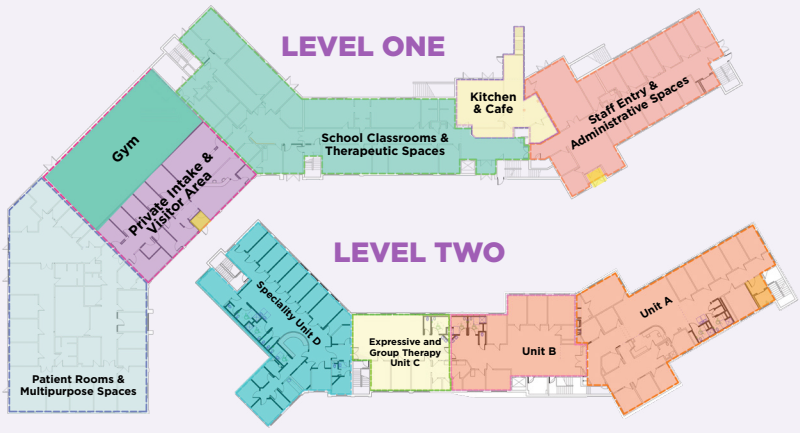
For Camber Therapist Kara Stuckey, that means helping children see what is possible for their future.

"At Camber, **we really want to make these children feel like they have a purpose in the world, that they will have a bright future** and that their childhood, adolescent years and teenage years do not define their potential," *said Stuckey.*



With philanthropic support, these renovations will help more children heal, learn, connect and grow.

Learn more or make your gift at **cambermentalhealth.org/roots.**



How Foster Care Impacts the Whole Family



One of the beautiful realities of foster care is that it's never just about one child or teen. It's about the entire family opening their hearts and home.

When one youth joins your household, everyone feels the impact. Schedules can shift. Emotions can run high. Routines can get flipped.

There are moments of incredible joy and connection. But there are also moments of stress, fatigue and uncertainty. These aren't signs you're doing it wrong. These are signs that fostering is meaningful work.

If you're currently fostering or considering becoming a foster parent, here's what to expect and how to intentionally care for the whole family along the way.

Embarking on Your Foster Care Journey

Becoming a foster family is an exciting and rewarding experience! Everyone involved gets the opportunity to learn and grow in so many ways, such as:

- Developing better communication skills
- Forming closer bonds
- Learning to be more resilient and flexible
- Understanding boundaries (others' and their own)
- Discovering different people and cultural identities
- Gaining a better understanding of yourself

Of course, all of these benefits come with challenges, just as any time a new individual is introduced into a family. Foster care impacts each person in the home in different ways, and understanding that impact helps you navigate it.

How Foster Care Can Affect Your Relationship

Fostering can be a powerful shared journey for couples. Navigating the ups and downs together often builds teamwork, deepens communication and creates a shared sense of purpose that strengthens your bond.

At the same time, it's honest to say that fostering adds real pressure. Schedule shifts and an increased emotional load can leave couples with less capacity to invest in each other, whether or not your partner is co-parenting day to day. That tension is normal and not a sign that something's wrong.

For couples fostering together, the strength of your relationship matters beyond the two of you. Children tend to do better when the adults around them have a stable, supportive partnership, and struggle more when there's ongoing conflict between parents. That's one more reason it's worth protecting your relationship along the way, and one more reason couples who lean on each other through the hard moments often come out closer for it.

How Foster Care Affects Children Already in the Home

It's common for foster parents to have other children as well, either biologically or adopted. For these children, the changes in routine and shift in attention toward another child often result in a mix of emotions. They may feel excited about having someone to play with, confused about the sudden change or jealous of the new child in the home. They may struggle with how the other child behaves or acts towards them, even if those behaviors aren't negative, just different from what they're used to.

You're Not Alone: Support for Foster Families

Foster care has both challenges and rewards. But no foster parent should ever feel like they're on an island, which is why KVC is here for you! We connect our foster caregivers with ongoing support, resources, referrals and community connections. You and your family deserve all the support you can get!

Get step-by-step advice to care for your partner, help your biological and adopted children feel included and supported in the fostering journey and implement regular self-care. Find practical tips at **kvc.org/fosterwithfamily**

Lance & Nikayla

What started as a road trip discussion led Lance and Nikayla to answer a calling to become foster parents. Through training, support and guidance from KVC, they discovered how foster care is not just about caring for children, but also about supporting families as they work toward healing and reunification.

As they prepared to welcome their first placement of a child into their home, Lance and Nikayla were driven by compassion, patience and a desire to be what they once needed themselves.





Why AI Chatbots Can't Replace Human Connection:

Protecting Youth Wellbeing in a Digital World

AI tools like ChatGPT can feel friendly, fast and endlessly supportive, which is exactly why they've become so deeply woven into how young people learn, communicate and cope. But when a tool starts to sound like a confidant, the line between technology and relationships can blur.



As artificial intelligence becomes more human-like in how it talks, responds and affirms, it raises important questions about AI and wellbeing. Especially for children and teens who are still forming their sense of self, reality and connection.

What happens when validation is always immediate? When advice comes without context, ethics or accountability? And when a chatbot feels safer than a real conversation?

AI is not inherently bad, and it isn't going anywhere. But like any powerful tool, its role in our lives matters. Understanding the intersection of AI and mental health is no longer optional for parents, caregivers and young people themselves. It's essential.



Human Connection is Irreplaceable

Janny Silvay, Director of Admissions at Camber Mental Health, describes AI as "the best friend that says yes to everything you say." While that might feel good in the moment, it's actually harmful for connection in the long term.

Initially, AI chatbots can feel like the ultimate friend or romantic partner because the models are trained to agree with you, with no moral or ethical compass to guide responses.

You may have heard the term "LLM" in reference to AI tools. LLM stands for Large Language Model, meaning the tool learns how to respond based on massive amounts of data to understand, generate and process human-like responses.

Because of this, **AI can quickly become an "echo chamber,"** with no disagreement or conflict to challenge their beliefs. And that's the challenge: That's not how real-world relationships work.

People are starved for connection, and AI is a quick and easy way to feed that craving. **While it can respond in a human-like way, these tools are not holistic, independent people.** Rather, AI chatbots are tools designed to reflect what

you say, making the relationship between AI and wellbeing a complicated one.

AI also cannot provide vital nonverbal connections through eye contact, presence, touch and the warmth of being with someone. Because AI gives you an imaginary companion who is always available, **it can inadvertently replace healthy coping skills for dealing with loneliness and a lack of connection.**

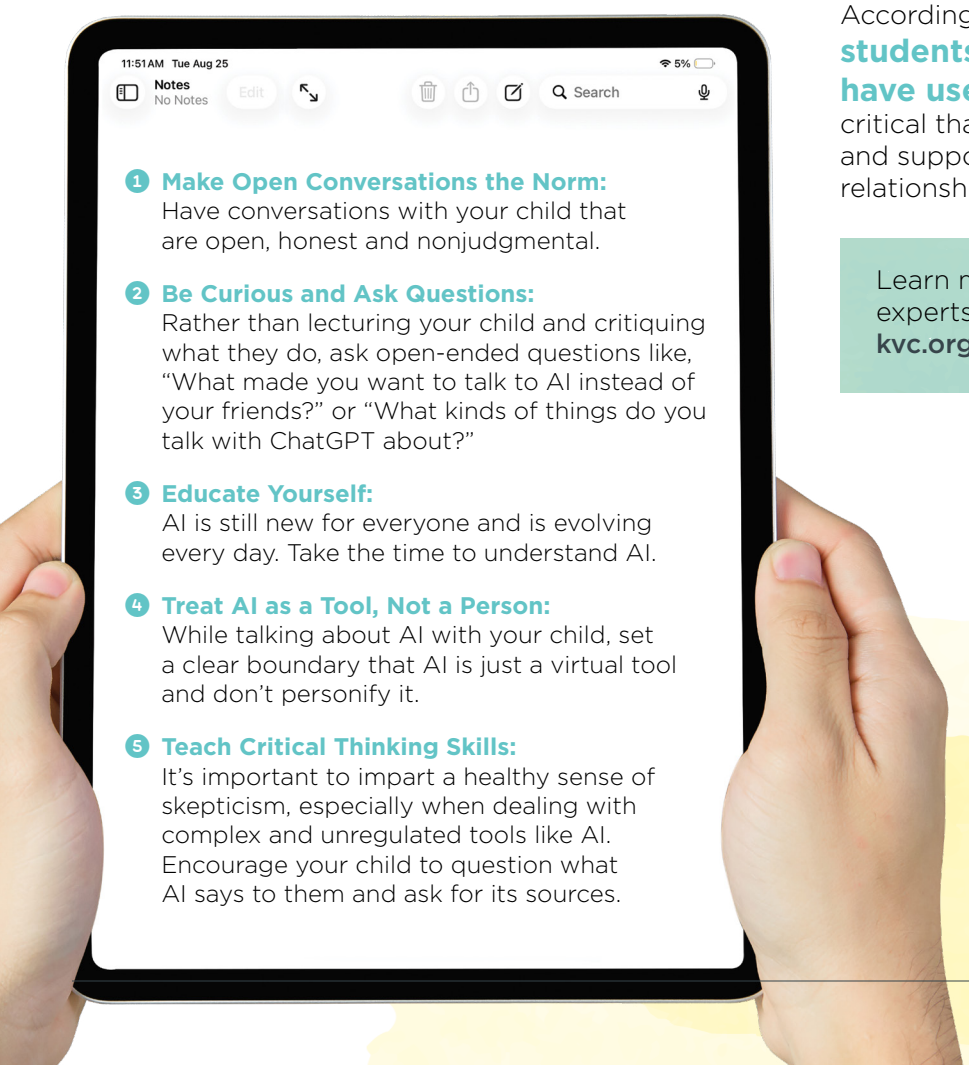


How Parents Can Talk About AI with Children & Teens



While AI has many inherent risks, it's likely going to stick around for a while. "We can't have an extinction mindset with technology," says Alexandra Beineman, Camber's Senior Director of Program Innovation and Staff Development. "Technology is going to be a part of children's lives whether we want it to or not."

Here are some practical ways to have a conversation with your child about AI:



1. **Make Open Conversations the Norm:** Have conversations with your child that are open, honest and nonjudgmental.
2. **Be Curious and Ask Questions:** Rather than lecturing your child and critiquing what they do, ask open-ended questions like, "What made you want to talk to AI instead of your friends?" or "What kinds of things do you talk with ChatGPT about?"
3. **Educate Yourself:** AI is still new for everyone and is evolving every day. Take the time to understand AI.
4. **Treat AI as a Tool, Not a Person:** While talking about AI with your child, set a clear boundary that AI is just a virtual tool and don't personify it.
5. **Teach Critical Thinking Skills:** It's important to impart a healthy sense of skepticism, especially when dealing with complex and unregulated tools like AI. Encourage your child to question what AI says to them and ask for its sources.

Nurturing Authentic Connections

It's understandable that with so many people feeling isolated today, they turn to AI for friendship. According to NPR research, **42% of high school students say they or someone they know have used AI for companionship.** But it's critical that families invest in human connections and support their children in prioritizing strong relationships.

Learn more about AI from our mental health experts and why it can't replace therapy at **kvc.org/ai.**



Bringing Hope Close to Home

St. Louis Children's and **KVC Health Systems** are preparing to open a **new, world-class 77-bed children's mental health hospital and fully renovated outpatient treatment center** *on the KVC Missouri Children's Mental Wellness Campus in Webster Groves. A grand opening event and community open houses will take place this November.*

Across the U.S., data shows that youth are facing increased levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and other mental health conditions.

In the St. Louis area, there are **fewer than half of the pediatric mental health beds needed,** and this shortage often results in kids spending far too long in emergency rooms without receiving appropriate care.

It is this children's mental health crisis that led St. Louis Children's and KVC Health Systems to partner and build a comprehensive continuum of care designed specifically for children and teens.

For families navigating a mental health crisis, this will be a place of healing, connection and support during one of life's hardest moments.

By bringing multiple levels of care together in one location, we're making it easier to access the right support at the right time.

"We're not just building a hospital; ***we're building a team, a culture and a lasting resource*** *for children and families across our region."*



Michelle Leone, MHA, BSN, RN,
Senior Vice President, St. Louis Children's
and KVC Health Systems
Youth Mental Health Care.
Camber is KVC's nonprofit subsidiary
that will operate the new hospital.

A Space for Healing

Families will have access to youth mental health care across two facilities: a one-story hospital built specifically for pediatric inpatient and residential treatment and a fully renovated building for outpatient treatment.

Across all levels of care, youth will receive compassionate care from pediatric mental health experts including those from KVC's inpatient treatment team, **Camber Mental Health, WashU Medicine** physicians from St. Louis Children's and **KVC Missouri.**

From private patient rooms to light-filled gathering spaces and calming outdoor courtyards, every detail is intentionally designed to help children and teens feel safe, supported and cared for during their mental health healing journey.

In addition to the new youth mental health care services, KVC's campus already includes the KVC Academy therapeutic school for K-12 students and community-based family support services provided by KVC Missouri. With inpatient, outpatient, residential, educational and community-based services in one setting, this is **one of the nation's first purpose-built, fully integrated children's mental health campuses** offering a seamless continuum of care.





We're grateful to the many individuals, organizations and supporters whose commitment is helping bring this vision to life. Together, we're creating a place that will expand access to pediatric mental health care and provide children and families with the support they need.

You can help build a place where children and families find care, hope and healing. Give today at **kvc.org/slcgive** or learn more about the coming services at **stlouischildrenskvc.org.**





How Much Does Adoption Cost?

Growing your family through adoption is one of the most amazing experiences you'll ever have. If you're interested in adopting, you've likely done some research online only to become overwhelmed by the amount of time, paperwork, and perhaps most of all, the exorbitant cost that can be associated with adoption. But did you know the different types of adoption can vary greatly in terms of the process and cost?

Private Domestic Adoptions:
$20,000–$45,000

Private adoption typically involves the adoption of infants whose parents have placed them up for adoption by their own volition. Independent adoptions involve the adoptive family finding a pregnant mother through networking. Then the services of an adoption agency are used to complete the process legally. In an agency adoption, the agency assists the adoptive parent(s) through the whole process, which includes finding adoption opportunities.

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, domestic adoption costs $20,000 and $45,00. A number of variables make up this cost, including fees from attorneys, administrators, physicians, the agency itself and medical expenses for the birth parent.

International Adoptions:
$20,000–$50,000

International adoptions involve the adoption of a child from another country. While the cost is comparable to domestic private adoptions, there are different factors that determine the final cost, including frequent travel expenses, medical costs, domestic and foreign legal fees, as well as costs that are unique to the country you're adopting from.

Recent data shows that international adoptions are becoming significantly less common. This is due to the growing evidence of ethical concerns when adopting internationally. Several other countries have passed laws prohibiting U.S. families from adopting as regulations on international adoptions have been found in many instances not to be in the best interest or safety of a child.

Adoption from Foster Care:
$0 or Minimal Cost





Nationwide, there are 400,000+ youth in foster care. Of these, more than 117,000 youth are waiting to be adopted. Children and teens are in foster care because they have experienced abuse or neglect and courts have determined that it's not safe to remain in their parents' home. While the main goal of foster care is to reunify children with their parents as safely and quickly as possible, in some cases this isn't an option and adoption becomes the new goal. When this occurs, the adoption cost is basically free.

You might be wondering, "Why is there such a difference in cost from the other options?" Typically, people who adopt from foster care do so in the state where they currently live, and the costs are funded by the state. This means that in most cases there are very few to no fees at all to adopt a child or teen from foster care.

KVC is a full-service adoption agency that will assist you every step of the way. Learn more and meet some of the youth waiting to be adopted at **kvc.org/adopt.**

Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

We're honored to play a role in matching children and teens with loving adoptive families in multiple states. Due to our role as a lead foster care agency in Kansas, we're able to share photos and videos of Kansas children who need a loving, life-long family who will help them thrive. To inquire, contact KVC Kansas' adoption team at 1-888-655-5500 or adoptionspecialist@kvc.org. To see children and teens near you who need adoptive families, visit **AdoptUSKids.org.**

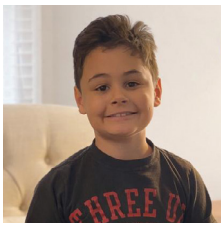
JACOB (15)



Playing sports — basketball, soccer and especially football — is Jacob's favorite activity! Jacob is an active young boy who loves to be outside. A few of his other favorite activities include riding bikes, swimming, listening to music, creating art, playing video games and learning about sports cars. He has a great sense of humor and said he's good at making people laugh. He would bring a great deal of laughter, love and energy to a "no matter what" family!

Watch my video online! **kvc.org/Jacob**

QUENTIN (8)



Quentin is an energetic young boy who is always ready for his next adventure! Full of enthusiasm, he thrives when he's on the move. Whether he's running at the park, splashing at the pool, or jumping into organized games with excitement, he is eager to participate in any fun physical activity that keeps him engaged. Quentin beams with pride when he reaches milestones or accomplishes goals. He'd love an adoptive family who can help him practice and cheer him on at all his games. Quentin would thrive with an experienced, active family who can help find healthy outlets for him to channel his energy into.

Learn more online! **kvc.org/Quentin**

GIOVANNI (14)



Meet Gio! This bright and energetic teen loves staying active, having fun and spending time with the people around him. One of Gio's favorite subjects is math, and he's proud of how hard he works in school. He enjoys learning, likes a good challenge, and takes pride in doing well academically. When he's not in the classroom, you'll often find him on the basketball court showing off the skills he's worked hard to develop. He would love a family that will encourage his interests, cheer him on, and spend time making memories together.

Watch my video online! **kvc.org/Giovanni**

GABRIEL (10)



Gabriel brings enthusiasm and movement wherever he goes! Full of life, he thrives when he's able to get his energy out and stay active. Gabriel's joyful spirit shines brightest when he's engaged in his favorite TV shows and enjoying his preferred snacks! Little moments like this help him relax and recharge. Music is another beautiful part of who Gabriel is! He has a special love for choir music, happily soaking in the harmonies. Gabriel's lively energy, tech-savvy skills, and joyful appreciation for entertainment and music make him a heartwarming child to be around.

Learn more online! **kvc.org/Gabriel**



Honoring **Sue Rapp:** A Lifetime of Presence and Purpose

Sue Rapp dedicated more than four decades to supporting children and families by volunteering with KVC, leaving behind a legacy of generosity and joy.



Sue's sons, Derek and Kent Rapp, remember a mother who always had a heart for kids.

"Our house was the house where the kids all piled in," Derek recalls.

Sue's optimism was contagious, and she had a special way of connecting with people. She welcomed others with enthusiasm, built relationships with intention and made everyone feel like they belonged.

For 42 years, Sue devoted her time, energy and heart to helping children thrive. She believed that showing up mattered and that no act of service was too small if it meant giving a child hope.

A Ripple Effect of Joy

"She was genuinely as happy as she came across," Derek says. And that joy impacted everyone around her, from her family and friends to the kids who needed it most.

Sue was the kind of mother who could take an ordinary night and make it special. Whether she was taking her sons to get ice cream or letting them stay up past bedtime to catch fireflies, Sue knew simple pleasures could be remembered forever. And she wanted to help kids served by KVC build those memories too.

Each year, Sue helped celebrate the end of the school year at KVC Academy in St. Louis by arranging for an ice cream truck to visit campus. Students were invited to choose whatever treat they wanted.



Today, Derek has chosen to continue that tradition, ensuring future students get to make the same memories.

Our Best Cheerleader

Sue's enthusiasm inspired friends, family and community members to get involved alongside her.

"She loved spirit and she loved building energy around things that she cared about," Kent shares. "She was always a cheerleader for us and for KVC."

For Derek and Kent, their mother's decades of service prove that one person can create lasting change through KVC.

"In an organization like KVC, any gifts of treasure, time and heart are going to make a difference," Kent says.

Sue Rapp lived a remarkable life of compassion, generosity and service. The ripple of care she created continues to help children and families today. Derek and Kent carry her legacy forward by supporting KVC.

Join them. Help a child look toward their future with hope. Give today at **kvc.org/donate.**

How to Talk to Kids About Feelings

(Even When They Don't Want To)

"I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE THEIR HEAD"

You want to support your child, but when they don't open up, it's hard to know where to start. If you've ever felt helpless trying to understand your child's emotions, you're not alone.

Bethany Nold, LCPC, and children's mental health expert, shares simple, supportive ways to ask better questions, model emotional language and create connection.

Before diving into strategies, it's helpful to start with moments that feel natural, not forced. That's where bedtime can become one of your best opportunities.

Why Bedtime Is a Secret Superpower for Connection

When a child is snuggled into bed, the pressure of the day has passed. That physical comfort can become emotional comfort, too. This is when children are more likely to open up, reflect and express feelings they may have suppressed throughout the day. It's not about solving every challenge, but about holding space and allowing them time to decompress and think.

"Bedtime is naturally low-stress. Kids are winding down, routines are kicking in and the environment is calm. That combo makes it the perfect time for emotional check-ins."

— Bethany Nold, LCPC



Instead of using bedtime to remind your child about what went wrong that day, try:

- *"What was the best part of your day?"*
- *"Anything still on your mind tonight?"*
- *"Is there something you'd like to dream about tonight?"*



Prompts That Actually Work

Open-ended questions help kids talk without pressure. Here are some go-to prompts that feel natural:

- *"Can you tell me more about that?"*
- *"Would it help to talk about it now or later?"*
- *"Want to make dinner with me and chat while we cook?"*
- Use the 1–10 scale: *"How are you feeling today? I'm at about a 6."*

Get more expert tips and download 12 creative, calming conversation prompts at **cambermentalhealth.org/feelings.**



Kim's Story:

From Shelter Resident to Staff Member

"KVC has changed my life in more ways than one. Being able to go from staying at the shelter to working at it has been ***amazing.***"

After the loss of her parents, Kim and her son found themselves facing homelessness and uncertainty. KVC was there for them with compassionate support.

As a part of our mission to stabilize and strengthen vulnerable families, KVC operates emergency shelters in several locations in Missouri, offering safety and support to women and children facing crisis. Here, Kim and her son found a safe space and even celebrated his 10th birthday surrounded by the KVC family. With guidance and hope from KVC, Kim regained her footing and found a new purpose.

Two years later, Kim was looking for a new job when she saw an opening at KVC. She was the perfect fit for the position and is now an Advocate. Today, she offers others the same support that changed her life.

"Never did I imagine that the help we received while we were down on our luck would turn into an amazing job," shares Kim. **"I will forever be grateful to KVC and now I'm grateful to be part of a company that helps so many families in need."**

Kim's journey reminds us of the power that resilience and connections can have. Through support from KVC, children and families not only have an opportunity to build their own bright futures but can also become a force for positive change in the lives of others.

Be a part of something bigger. At KVC, team members feel a profound sense of purpose. Learn more about our mission-driven team and unparalleled culture of wellbeing, growth, inclusion & recognition at **kvc.org/belong.**



A People-First Leader.

A Culture Worth Celebrating.

We're proud to celebrate KVC Health Systems President and CEO Jason Hooper, **named one of Glassdoor's Best CEOs of 2026 and ranked No. 38 in the nation!**

What makes this recognition especially meaningful is that it reflects feedback from KVC employees. With a 99% CEO approval rating on Glassdoor, Jason continues to lead by listening, building connection and keeping people at the heart of our work.

> *"I'm truly honored and moved, but this recognition goes far beyond me," Jason shared. "This is a reflection on how deeply we care and our commitment to always putting people first."*

Learn more at **kvc.org/bestceo**



"Around the World" KVC's 2026 Gala: Together, you helped raise a recording-breaking **$625,000+** to support children and families KVC serves through Camber Mental Health.









KVC team members joined over 600 family-serving professionals in Chicago at the **FFTA Annual Conference.**



The Ozark Scramble: *We hosted an annual 9-mile, 50+ obstacle course run that builds hope for children in crisis.*



Purses WITH A Purpose



Purses With a Purpose, *an elegant annual luncheon hosted by KVC Missouri Friends, brought supporters together to empower families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and promote mental wellness.*



The KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament *in Rolla, MO raised more than $100,000 to help children and teens find hope and healing.*

Kindness Changes Lives

Through **Kindness Changes Lives,** we celebrate team members who are positive to KVC's culture and exemplify our values like being authentic, showing compassion, fighting to preserve family connections, being a collaborator, working towards continuous improvement and showing urgency and innovation.



Coryana

Hospitals Case Manager, Camber Mental Health

"Coryana is always on the unit with the kids and engaging with them even though she is a case manager and could be in her office. She personally gets to know the kids and recognizes their positive growth, even in moments of deregulation."



Jennell

Director of Administration, Children's Mercy + Camber Mental Health

"Jennell has been part of Children's Mercy + Camber Mental Health's DNA since its groundbreaking — literally helping shape and organize the building from the blueprints up. She serves with a level of urgency and compassion that is rare to see. Thank you, Jennell, for always embodying the mission and for your tireless commitment to keeping our staff, families and patients safe."

Morgan

Foster Care Case Manager Supervisor, KVC Missouri



"Today, we had a youth who was moving in with a relative, but the relative didn't have a bed. Morgan hopped in and found a bed in less than 5 minutes! She has so much of her own work to do but took the time to help the new worker get much-needed things for the youth. Morgan is also assisting the new worker in making the placement. Just amazing! Morgan embodies KVC's values. We are fortunate to have her on the team."

Marie

Accounting Coordinator, KVC Health Systems



"Marie is an incredible partner to the KVC Foundation team. She even braves the hot weather every year by working a hole at the KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament in St. James. Marie plays an important role in helping us steward our donors. Her positive attitude, reliability and kindness make our jobs easier."



Chelsea

Family Support Worker, KVC Kansas

"During our case plans together, every child always greets Chelsea first, yelling, 'HI CHELSEA'. You can tell by her unwavering love and support for the kids she works with; she has built a bond with each and every one of them. Chelsea continuously shows support to the entire KVC family by sending daily emails first thing in the morning, reminding each of us why we are important. She has the devotion, dedication, love and moral support we all need to survive even the worst days."



Amber

Family Service Coordinator, KVC Kentucky

"Amber is instrumental in helping families succeed by encouraging them, especially when they feel discouraged or overwhelmed. She takes time to truly listen, reflects back their strengths, and reminds them of the progress they've already made. Families often come to Amber feeling defeated; they leave feeling supported, capable and more hopeful about their future."

Tate

Family Service Coordinator, KVC Kansas



"Tate is a fierce and compassionate advocate for the youth placed in his foster homes, as well as for the foster parents on his caseload. In tough moments, Tate brings a calm, steady presence and a solutions-focused mindset that helps families feel supported and not alone. The youth and foster homes he serves are incredibly fortunate to have him in their corner, and so is our entire team!"

Shady

Administrative Assistant, KVC Nebraska



'With each call, Shady is giving herself 100%. She is authentic to who she is (which is someone who is helpful, kind and has a great sense of humor)! Shady has to sometimes answer the phone for people who are upset, and she handles their fears and questions with great patience and care. She lives out our value "the heart of our work is helping people" and ensures that each person who calls is treated with respect and compassion."

If you'd like to nominate someone who embodies KVC values, go to **kvc.org/kcl.**

KVC® Health Systems

We all need connection.

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Want to help children, teens and families thrive? Support our work at **kvc.org/donate.**

At KVC, caring for others includes caring for you.



According to our employees' reviews, KVC ranks in the **top 1% of employers nationwide with a high 83 Work Wellbeing score** on Indeed and was named the **#15 best-led company nationwide** by Glassdoor.

Here, you're empowered to do your best work every day and appreciated for your unique contribution.

Join a world-class team that is filled with heart, skill and purpose:
kvc.org/careers

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