



The Kempe Center



IMPACT REPORT

2024 FISCAL YEAR

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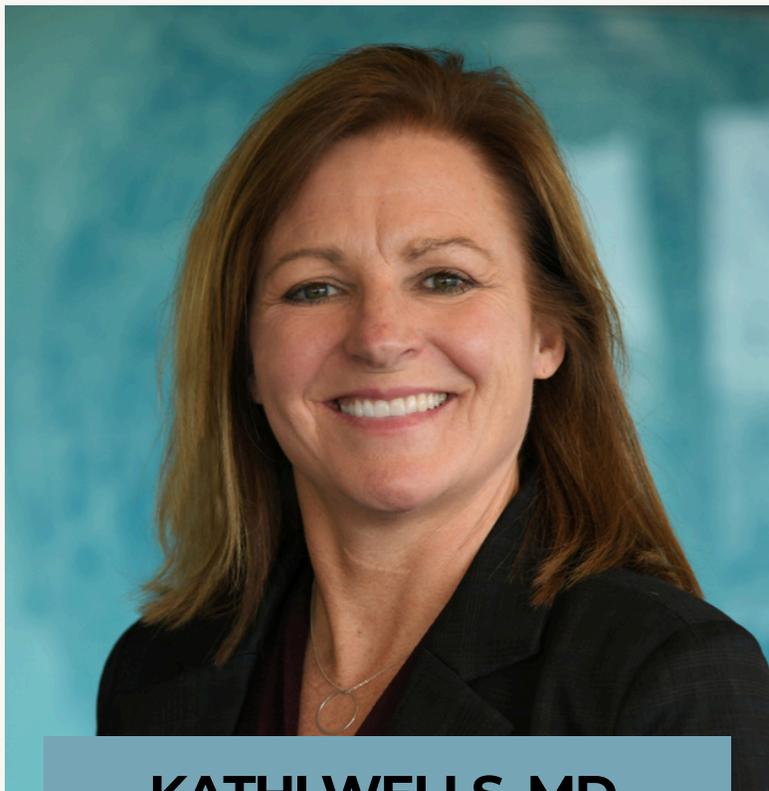
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LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KATHI WELLS, MD

Executive Director at The Kempe Center

For over half a century, **The Kempe Center** has been a beacon of hope for children and families experiencing maltreatment. Founded in 1972 by a pioneering pediatrician, C. Henry Kempe, MD, The Kempe Center was the first academic center in the world focused on preventing and treating child abuse and neglect. It has been at the forefront of research, education, and advocacy in this critical field. **Our dedicated team is committed to creating a world where every child is safe, healthy and supported.**

The Kempe Center has established itself as a global leader in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Over the past year, the Center has demonstrated its significant impact through:

- **Global Leadership:** The Center's faculty have held prominent positions in international organizations and conferences, shaping global policy and practice.

- **Clinical Services:** Provided essential clinical services to over 700 children and families.
- **Grant Acquisition:** Secured substantial funding to support its initiatives, including the **Child Welfare Training System** and **Fostering Healthy Futures**.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Fostered strong collaborations with domestic and international organizations to amplify our impact.
- **Research and Dissemination:** Conducted rigorous research and disseminated findings through publications, presentations, and educational materials.
- **JEDI Initiatives:** Prioritized justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through research, training and coaching programs.
- **Advocacy Efforts:** Actively advocated for policy changes at local, state, and national levels.
- **Education and Training:** Provided comprehensive training to over 16,000 individuals.
- **External Engagement:** Involved in numerous external committees and workgroups.
- **International Conference:** Hosted our fourth annual International Virtual Conference, bringing together 1,800+ participants from 20 countries.

In summary, The Kempe Center's efforts have had a profound impact in the field of child abuse and neglect, both domestically and internationally. **Our commitment to research, education, advocacy, and clinical services has positioned us as a vital resource for individuals, families, and communities.**



"Our children's future and the world's future are one."
-C. Henry Kempe, MD



WHO WE ARE

VISION

Our vision is a world without child maltreatment.

MISSION

Through an equity lens, we address child maltreatment by improving the well-being of children and families, strengthening their communities, and enhancing the systems serving them through evidence-informed services, transformative research, learner-centered education, and effective advocacy. Learn more about The Kempe Center at www.kempecenter.org.



WHAT DRIVES US?

At Kempe, our team isn't just a collection of individuals; we're a passionate group from diverse backgrounds and experiences. From steadfast medical professionals to emerging social workers, committed advocates, and innovative researchers to compassionate lived experience experts, we come together united by a shared goal: **to create a world where every child and family can thrive.**

Our team's diversity is our strength. It enriches our perspectives, challenges our assumptions, and ultimately, allows us to provide more comprehensive and culturally sensitive care. We understand that every child's journey is unique, and our varied backgrounds equip us to meet their needs with empathy, respect, and understanding.

With over 80 dedicated faculty and staff members, we're committed to honoring the Kempe vision: a world free from child maltreatment. We work relentlessly to improve the lives of children, families, and the systems that serve them. **Our efforts are driven by a deep sense of purpose and a belief in the power of collaboration to make a lasting impact.** Get to know our team members at www.kempecenter.org.



IMPACT AREAS

As a resource hub for future professionals, The Kempe Center fosters research and skill development in child abuse and neglect. Our seven Impact Areas— **Clinical Services, Evidence-Based and Research-Informed Approaches, Transformative Research, Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI), Pediatric Law, Policy & Ethics (“Advocacy”), Workforce Training & Innovation, and Connecting with Communities**—provide a strategic framework to guide our mission of safeguarding children and strengthening families. We’re committed to empowering healthier futures for children and families. Discover how our work is making a difference. Click [here](#) to learn more about our Clinical Consultations, Research, and Citations.



CLINICAL SERVICES

The Kempe Healthcare Core coordinates clinical services, including the integration of health care principles and activities, across the spectrum of all Kempe programs.



EVIDENCE-BASED AND RESEARCH-INFORMED APPROACHES

At Kempe, research-informed practices are actively being studied to determine their evidence-base.



TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH

The Research Core at The Kempe Center is dedicated to studying ways to improve the lives of children, youth and families.



ADVOCACY

Kempe’s Advocacy Core facilitates and supports the self-driven advocacy work of our Kempe Center faculty and staff.



JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Kempe Center endeavors to promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion across all levels of the organization.



WORKFORCE TRAINING & INNOVATION

The Kempe Center distinguishes itself through the multidisciplinary education of diverse learners.



CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

The Kempe Center partners with numerous communities in many ways including convenings, conferences, site visits, consultations.



Clinical Services

- 2,335 Clinical Consultations
- 772 Children served nationally



Research & Dissemination

- 55 Total Publications
- 36 Peer-Reviewed Articles
- 4 Books/Book Chapters



Boards & Presentations

- 7 Editorial Boards
- 36 Research Presentations
- Research Presentations in 9 countries



CLINICAL SERVICES

The Kempe Center's Healthcare team goes beyond treating symptoms. We act as the backbone, integrating health and well-being principles into every aspect of our care. Together with the University Department of Psychiatry, we craft a comprehensive approach to behavioral health, ensuring children and families receive the full spectrum of support they deserve. From planning to implementation, our team is dedicated to offering a variety of essential health and behavioral programs. Discover how we can help foster holistic healing at www.kempecenter.org.

Grant Spotlight: Nichole Wallace, MD, associate professor, Section of Child Abuse and Neglect (The Kempe Center), was initially awarded \$83K from Colorado Department of Human Services for a partial year and program development for her project titled "KIDS PLUS." The program will receive an additional \$200K this year and is anticipated to be renewed for 2026. Also, collaborating on the project are Laurel Niep, LCSW, (Department of Psychiatry) and Ron Mitchell, MSW, director of operations at The Kempe Center.

Overview: The program – **KIDS PLUS** (Permanency, Love, Unity, Stability) – will run through The Kempe Center in partnership with court appointed special advocates agencies and provide free service to Colorado counties. It will identify and develop appropriate Kin* supports for permanent placements and/or relationships and enhance connectedness to communities and cultures for youth whose cases are highly complex and who have remained in the child welfare system without achieving permanency.

The KIDS (Kempe Inter-Disciplinary Staffing) program provides independent, expert consultation services for highly complex cases involving concerns about child abuse and neglect or child health and well-being. Service navigation will be provided, the plan will be monitored weekly, and follow up KIDS consultations will be held when a case is not progressing as expected and the plans will be revised as needed. Reports generated from the KIDS Panel will be made available to assist the caseworker in permanency staffings and court appearances related to permanency efforts for the youth.

*The term "Kin" in program refers to anyone with a "family like" relationship which may or may not be biologically related.

EVIDENCE-BASED AND RESEARCH-INFORMED APPROACHES

The **Rocky Mountain MST Network (RMMN)** is a program at Kempe that helps communities improve child mental health by increasing access to effective interventions for families. We support communities in adopting new strategies, such as identifying needs, finding suitable programs, creating implementation plans, and exploring research opportunities.

In 2024, the Rocky Mountain MST Team concluded the Telehealth-enhanced Multisystemic Therapy (TE-MST) pilot study. Five existing Colorado MST teams across four agencies dedicated one therapist per team to utilize the telehealth approach with six families (30 youth and families total) over 15 months. The study aimed at assessing the feasibility and acceptability of this telehealth-enhanced delivery model of MST and exploring an alternative approach to providing treatment. Read more about the MST-TE pilot results [here](#).



Here are some positive responses from the MST administrators, supervisors, and therapists who participated in our pilot study:

“ I believe that using this model is producing similar outcomes to the face-to-face model which makes me hopeful that we can use it to increase accessibility! ”

-MST Therapist

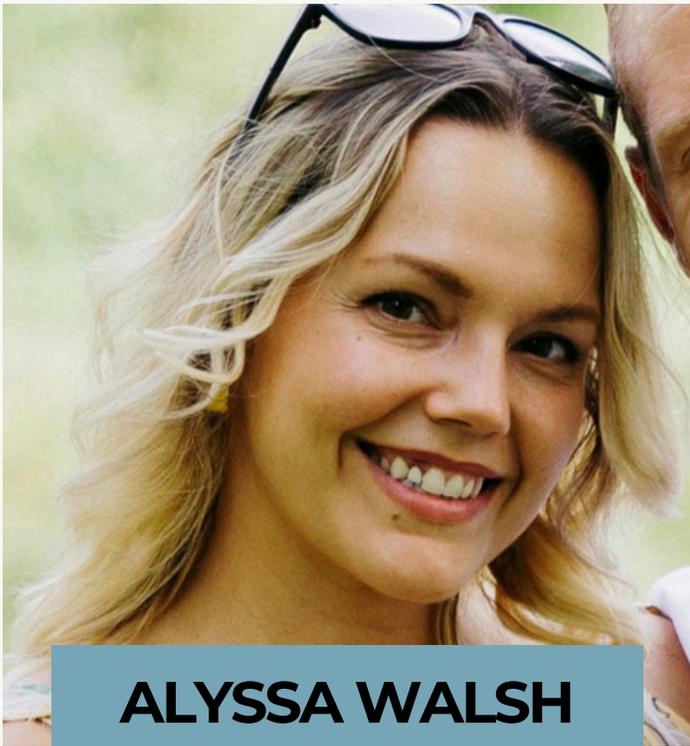
“ [MST-TE] does, however, impact the therapists in a favorable way as they are spending more time doing what they love--helping families. ”

-MST Administrator

“ When offered to families effectively screened in as appropriate for the enhancement, I think it provides more flexibility which in turn positively impacts clinical engagement and rapport and sustainable outcomes. ”

-MST Supervisor

EVIDENCE-BASED AND RESEARCH-INFORMED APPROACHES FOSTERING HEALTHY FUTURES



ALYSSA WALSH

Alyssa Walsh worked in the hospitality industry for 16 years before attending the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. While she was a student, she got a call from Robyn Wertheimer-Hodas at The Kempe Center. Robyn is Senior Director of Training for the Fostering Healthy Futures program. Alyssa says she didn't know much about Fostering Healthy Futures (FHF). But after speaking with Robyn, she chose to complete her internship as a mentor with FHF during the first year of her graduate program. She values the skills she learned during her time with FHF and related that she now feels "way more prepared for certain things" as a professional social worker. Of FHF, Alyssa says: "It's therapeutic, but it's not therapy. It really gave me a great foundation for understanding the clinical aspect [and] how to approach [my work] in a way that doesn't do harm."

During her internship Alyssa mentored two preteen children, one in kinship care and one who had been adopted through the child welfare system. Over the course of the 30-week program, Alyssa met 2-4 hours a week with each child individually, provided their transportation to a weekly skills group, and joined all the children and mentors for a post-group dinner each week. FHF is skills-focused. Alyssa shares that one skill the children learn is emotional regulation (for example, how to calm down when upset). Another skill is for a child to identify their own cultural background and how this can help keep them resilient. The program is also strengths-based, empowering children to explore their strengths and interests and have choice and voice in mentoring visits. Alyssa notes her appreciation that the FHF program allowed her to focus on two mentees for 30 weeks. She found this was a good number to be able to spend the quality time required to build rapport and trust.

Alyssa relates that the best thing professionally about participating in FHF was the supervision. During her time at FHF, she received one-on-one supervision from a professional social worker at The Kempe Center.

Alyssa describes this experience as "invaluable." It helped her understand how important good supervision is for a social work professional. She describes the significance of safety in the supervisory relationship and her gratitude for having that safe space to debrief when "hard things" arose.

Alyssa notes that it can be really isolating for a child to be served by child welfare and be in out-of-home care. Children in care may not attend school with other children in care or may not know that they do so. They may feel all alone in the experience. Through the FHF skills groups, mentees can be with other kids their age who have had similar experiences. It helps a child to say "Oh, I'm not the only one". Alyssa saw kids at the beginning of the program not really wanting to talk about their experiences. However, once kids heard other kids speak about visits with birth parents, it fostered a feeling of belonging. **Alyssa says, "I just see them opening up. And it's really cool." There's stigma involved with being in out-of-home care, so having shared experiences "can be so healing...It's pretty awesome."**

Alyssa had one mentee who told her "Everything's great". This child had experienced adoption through the child welfare system. As time went by, Alyssa came to see that this child had a real sense of longing for their birth family. She relates that it's a hard thing for a child to put into words how it feels to become part of another family, and how a child can actually feel sad and happy at the same time. FHF provided plenty of space for these complex feelings. In FHF, children are encouraged to recognize and feel all their feelings, and not simply to feel they must say "Oh, I'm happy. I was adopted". At FHF, it's okay to feel sad that you're not with your birth family. And FHF mentors can affirm that's it's okay to love your birth family and remember the good things. Mentoring creates this space.

On the last day of the program, Alyssa was saying goodbye to one of her mentees. They were a kid of not "so many" words. However, the child really liked music, and throughout the 30 weeks, they showed Alyssa their songs and playlists. At the FHF graduation, mentors and mentees share goodbyes based on what each child feels comfortable doing. Alyssa's mentee felt empowered to give Alyssa a goodbye message in their own way. They selected a song to play for her! Alyssa says that now, every time she hears the song, she thinks about what her mentee was telling her: "I know I'm strong. I know I'm resilient...this is how I feel. I feel unstoppable".

In February 2023 Alyssa, began working as a child therapist at the La Plata County child welfare agency in western Colorado. She offers play therapy and is becoming certified in Parent-Child Interaction Therapy. In January 2024, Michel Holien from The Kempe Center reached out to Alyssa about developing an implementation plan for FHF in the Durango area. Alyssa shares that she "jumped" at this opportunity because her experience working with FHF was entirely positive. She is also grateful for this new type of FHF work because she seeks continued involvement in community social work. During 2024, Alyssa developed an FHF implementation template for Durango including: funding sources, locations for group meetings, building a potential intern pool and understanding how kids could connect with an FHF program in Durango. **Alyssa's involvement in FHF has had an impact on her own skills and career. Now she is paying it forward for future youth to be able to experience the program.**

TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH



Anita describes the QIC-WD project in Louisiana. The project team assessed job tasks for a child welfare caseworker and found that the front-line work is actually two jobs. One job leans clinical, including family assessment and engagement and trying to locate and provide needed family supports. The second job is administrative work. What happened when agencies in Louisiana divided the traditional casework job into clinical and administrative roles and built their teams accordingly? “People felt better” reports Anita, and it reduced turnover. Now she is seeking to replicate the two-fold job model in another state to see if the same results occur. She expects to see additional future efforts to test QIC-WD models in different contexts.

In early 2020 John was leading a QIC-WD study in Washington State. His team hypothesized that telework opportunities would lead to increased caseworker job satisfaction and lower turnover. The study was scientifically controlled, with some caseworkers teleworking (the “treatment group”) and some caseworkers remaining in the office (the “control group”). However, in March 2020 COVID lockdowns came around and everyone started working from home. So, the study couldn’t move forward with its in-office control group. As John puts it: “To have it sort of fall apart like that was...an incredible disappointment as well as being an incredible irony!” Nevertheless, Washington’s agency leaned into implementation processes developed for the study as their entire workforce transitioned to hybrid. Anita observes that John’s study is the example she now uses with her PhD students to help them understand threats to scientific validity in research!

Knowledge generated from the QIC-WD is available through the study website and reports. These research results will be further tested and used in child welfare agencies across the country and will impact the field for years to come.

In addition to their reflections on the QIC-WD John and Anita also reflect on current trends in child welfare research. Anita mentions that our on-going national reckoning with racism has led to increased realization over the last five years that “...the child welfare system is part of America, and all systems in America have racism embedded...” **How well the field of child welfare engages with this reckoning depends on many factors. However, good research is needed to answer such questions as: How does systemic racism show up? Are changes needed at the interpersonal level, the organizational level or both?**

John mentions another key trend, that of the role of experts with lived experience of child welfare. He expects that we’ll see continued efforts to involve children and family members in research as increasingly full participants. Many barriers exist. But there is increasing recognition that the contributions of lived experience experts are important – perhaps necessary – to the research enterprise. **Although not yet fully successful, The Kempe Center is moving to embrace this change and John expects a lot more development in the future.**

Dr. John Fluke has been a Professor at The Kempe Center, CU Anschutz for over a decade. John’s colleague, Dr. Anita Barbee, is a Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Louisville, Kentucky. Together they have over 70 years’ experience doing child welfare research. But for both, research careers in the field of child maltreatment almost didn’t happen. Rather than choosing this work, they say that child welfare research “found them.” John started his first job in the field directly after completing his master’s degree. He shares: “I think it probably took me about five years to get to the point where I became passionate about this field.” Anita came to the work “accidentally” after applying for a job through a cross-campus posting. **Today, there is no doubt they are both passionate about improving child welfare systems through better research.**

Their primary work together over the last seven years was in the context of the federally-funded Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD). **The QIC-WD was dedicated to understanding how to improve child welfare workforce outcomes, which in turn could enhance child and family outcomes in child welfare systems.** John observes that child welfare agencies have over time proposed many potential solutions to problems such as workforce stress or poor retention.

But most ideas have not been tested rigorously. Thus, there are many ideas and initiatives out there, but we don’t know whether they work or are effective. Anita agrees. **She notes that child welfare efforts originated historically in Social Work which was based in field work rather than science. However, evidence-building progress spurred by the QIC-WD makes her more optimistic: “We did make some headway. We have some findings that show some promise.”**

ADVOCACY



We believe that everyone has the power to make a difference. Whether you're a doctor, a social worker, or someone who cares about kids, your talents and knowledge can help us create a healthier world for children and families. **"At Kempe, we're here to support families and communities in their advocacy journey. We're taking action with our partners, providing the resources and support necessary to drive positive results,"** said Warren Binford, advocacy director and W.H. Lea for Justice Endowed Chair for Pediatric Law, Policy & Ethics.

In September 2023, **The Center for Bioethics and Humanities** and The Kempe Center organized a series of events at CU Anschutz aimed at inspiring individuals to advocate for social justice. The Testimony ceremony, which showcased personal and professional talents dedicated to addressing societal injustices, was a highlight. Additionally, an all-day symposium, **"Advocating for Children in Migration,"** featured diverse approaches to advocacy, including arts, law, medicine, and music. The world premiere of the immersive vocal drama **"Soul Echoes"** an immersive vocal drama composed by **J.E. Hernandez**; and hands-on art workshops further engaged participants in advocacy efforts. Read more on the inspiring Testimony ceremony [here](#) and watch the compelling Soul Echoes performance [here](#).



The **Center's advocacy efforts** partner with researchers, global leaders, clinical providers and other advocates to deliver legislative testimony in Colorado, roundtables in DC, a White House visit, and numerous meetings on Capitol Hill. Kempe's faculty and staff also conduct podcast interviews on **Radio Kempe** and draft blog posts in their areas of expertise, both are disseminated on our [website](#).



JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

A world without child maltreatment means a world where children and youth from all identities and backgrounds do not have disparate experiences based on race, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic status, or other marginalized identities. We must leverage all our knowledge, tools, and skills together, and dismantle internal societal constructs that uphold and keep systemic inequities in place. Yet conversations about race tend to be the most challenging and intractable.

The Center is focused on both, internal and external transformation to advance this goal. An external program the Center is excited to introduce is its newest service for system leaders, the **RQ - Race Intelligence™ Coaching Program**. Designed by Michelle D. Davis, LPC, PCC, ORSC, CDTLF, the RQ - Race Intelligence™ Coaching Program offers tools and skills to productively disrupt the status quo within our spheres of influence. It equips individuals to access their Race Intelligence (RQ) to develop specific and deliberate skills that transcend equity conversations beyond blame and shame to healing and hope. This innovative approach led to invitations to present the program at four national and local conferences this year.

“We’ve created the Race Intelligence (RQ™) program, which seeks to facilitate discovery, healing, transformation, and action for individuals, teams, and organizations in creating more equitable systems of care and practice.” -Michelle Davis



RADIO KEMPE PODCAST



In honor of Juneteenth, we released a special episode on Radio Kempe featuring **Michelle Davis, Kempe’s director of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion**. Led by Michelle Davis and our JEDI team, the Race Intelligence™ (RQ) program is a new and bold way to learn, lead, live, and heal in a racialized world. Listen to this intriguing episode at www.radiokempe.buzzsprout.com.

For more information on the **Race Intelligence™ (RQ) program**, visit our website at www.kempecenter.org.



Below are some testimonials from our satisfied RQ Coaching clients:

“ I learned that I really struggled to acknowledge the positive. The small positive movement(s). Because I worry that it will somehow invalidate how far we have to go. And I learned from my teams that that’s incredibly important to do for them. And so, I feel like I’ll be a better leader in that way. ”

“ The facilitators (RQ Coaches) are just amazing. Michelle and Stacy were an incredible pair. You know, they just really were respectful and sensitive, but they also really encouraged us to grow and challenged each one of us. ”

“ I’ve been to a lot of different race equity trainings that are incredibly informative but can feel polarizing and coaching was such a different experience of kind of breaking through some of that. Still acknowledging it and still using it, but not having it be the structure that it is when you go to some trainings that can interfere with your ability to relate with each other. ”



KELLY FINNEGAN



RASHAAN FORD



ADRIAN LARA



COLLEEN GIBLEY-REED

COMMITMENT TO JEDI

A critical part of achieving our vision of a world without child maltreatment is addressing structural inequities and all forms of bias within the systems in which we operate. **At The Kempe Center, we believe in the power of collective action and mutual support to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). Our Affinity Groups (AGs) are designed to bring together like-minded individuals passionate about these values.** These groups provide a platform for members to discuss, prepare for, make recommendations, and take direct action to promote JEDI within our organization and beyond.

The Center's AGs are founded on the principles of non-hierarchy and autonomy. Every member has an equal voice in the decision-making process, ensuring that power and responsibility are distributed equally among all participants. This structure empowers members to take ownership of their actions and fosters a sense of shared purpose and community. This past fiscal year, all four of our current AGs were busy advancing JEDI in various ways. Click [here](#) to read more about our JEDI Affinity Groups.

During the 2024 All Kempe Retreat in April, AG 4 proudly recognized the first recipients of the JEDI Impact Awards: Kelly Finnegan, Rashaan Ford, Adrian Lara and Colleen Gibley-Reed. These awardees were honored for their outstanding contributions and the steps they take each day to advance JEDI within our organization.

The Center's JEDI Core collaborated with Affinity Groups to create the Center's **JEDI Growth Framework**. This framework includes indicators, rather than competencies, providing measurable metrics for growth. Members of the Affinity Groups was responsible for identifying the behaviors that demonstrate JEDI values, and indicators of growth that forward our intention. **Together, these efforts resulted in a cohesive and integrated approach to fostering JEDI growth.**

Advancements in Data and Solutions for Tackling Child Abuse



#riseuptoendchildabuse #ispcanedinburgh #makingdatacount #tacklingchildabuse



WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND INNOVATION

As we focus on **Workforce Education and Innovation**, we are more than just a university center. We are a community of learners, working together to make a difference. Our faculty and staff are here to learn, grow, and help everyone improve their skills. We partner with schools, agencies, and healthcare providers to offer educational programs that reach thousands of people across Colorado and beyond. In 2013, the Colorado Department of Human Services selected The Kempe Center to oversee the state's **Child Welfare Training System (CWTS)**. Since then, CWTS has effectively provided training and professional development to Colorado's caseworkers, supervisors, case aides, resource caregivers, and other child-and-family-serving professionals. Together, we're making a promising impact on our communities. Our goal is to share knowledge, collaborate, and drive positive change for children worldwide.

Global Engagement: The Edinburgh Congress in September 2023 was a groundbreaking event that brought together nearly 800 child protection experts from around the world. Over four days, attendees, including several Kempe colleagues who presented with other renowned speakers, engaged in thought-provoking discussions, and networked with individuals from 73 countries. Highlights included interactive workshops, cultural experiences, and a powerful march to the Parliament to raise awareness about child abuse. The Congress was a resounding success, solidifying its reputation as a global leader in child protection. We were honored to be part of the ISPCAN annual conference and look forward to participating in Sweden this year.

We are driven to learn, lead, take action, and hold ourselves accountable. We measure our success by how much we strengthen families, communities, and the systems that support them. **We believe that abuse and neglect are preventable, and people have incredible strength.**



Education & Training

- 1,231 Training Sessions
- 16,512 participants



External Engagement

- 104 local, state, regional, national & international committees & workshops



Global Reach

- 24 countries (See page 17)
- 23 States

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

JOIN US www.kempeconference.org

October 2-5, 2023

A CALL TO ACTION

to **CHANGE CHILD WELFARE**

October 2-5, 2023 • October 7-10, 2024 • October 6-9, 2025

Since 2019, the **Call to Action to Change Child Welfare Conference** has brought together over 2,000 participants worldwide to share best practices, strategies, and research findings that promote transformation within child welfare. 500+ presenters from countries including the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Ukraine, and Japan, sparked important discussions on a breadth of topics that centered on truth-telling, social and racial justice, family advocacy, child and family well-being, prevention and health, and many others.

Building off the incredible momentum from the previous year's energizing event, The Kempe Center was excited to host the 2023 International Virtual Conference: A Call to Action to Change Child Welfare to connect change-makers worldwide working for justice and fairness for children, youth, and families. **We welcomed 1,800+ participants from 20 countries.** Each month leading up to the conference, we also released one of the 2022 keynote presentations and paired it with a supplemental podcast from **Radio Kempe**.

The Call to Action Conference is part of a growing global movement to bring radical and lasting change to how child welfare systems work. It unites practitioners, policy and lawmakers, academics, children and young people, families, and communities in an agenda for real change.

The eco-friendly conference featured 9 unique learning formats and showcased over 60 hours of concurrent learning opportunities over 4 days and include:

- 8 Keynote Presentations from internationally renowned experts and thought leaders
- 470+ Presenters from around the world
- 150+ Interactive Workshops
- 40+ Conversation Circles to tackle emergent challenging questions and topics
- 12+ International Exchanges
- 10+ Media Circles
- 12+ 'What's on the Library Shelf?' discussions with authors
- Creative Spaces
- Construction Zones (New in 2023!)
- Open Space Facilitated Sessions (New in 2023!)

Following the conference, a feedback survey was administered, revealing overwhelmingly positive responses. A significant majority of participants rated the conference as either "moderately satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with the overall experience. Among those who had attended virtual conferences previously, a large percentage indicated that this conference was superior to their past experiences. **Furthermore, the survey results suggest a strong likelihood of future attendance, with nearly 90% of respondents expressing probable or definite interest in participating in the 2024 conference.**

Participants were asked what their most positive experiences were at the conference. Key themes included:



Youth's Stories in Foster Care: The moving and impactful stories shared by youth who experienced foster care.



Engaging Workshops and Conversations: The interactive and insightful workshops, fostering conversations and connections among participants.



Global Perspectives on Child Welfare Reform: Learning about child welfare reforms on a global scale and engaging with attendees from various countries.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

CALL TO ACTION CONFERENCE



Dr. Fiona Tito Wheatland is an attorney, scholar, child welfare advocate, mother and experienced foster carer. She lives in Australia, sixteen hours ahead of Denver, Colorado on the clock. To attend The Kempe Center's annual and virtual "Call to Action to Change Child Welfare" Conference, Fiona (and her husband) need to be awake into the early morning hours. They have stayed up late four years in a row (2020-2023) and they plan to do so again in October for the fifth annual conference. What is it that makes Kempe's conference worth staying up all night for? To answer that question, we need to know a little more about Fiona and her family.

Fiona and her husband became foster carers in 2004. (In the US we typically refer to those providing out-of-home care for children and youth as "foster parents" – in Australia the phrase is "foster carers.") She says: "I was very...new and very optimistic and very much committed to doing it. I got involved." However, the journey as foster carers turned out to be difficult. She and her husband grew apart from many friends in their circle of contacts because of the limits that come with parenting in general and foster-caring in particular. They soon began caring for a three-year-old who stayed with them until he was eleven. They intended to keep on caring for him. But, sadly, she says "he was removed [from our home] in really unjust circumstances that had nothing to do with our behaviors." She and her husband endured accusations by the child welfare system and ultimately were not able to continue as carers.

Instead of giving up on the child welfare system completely, Fiona turned to advocacy.

She began working with a birth family advocate on restorative practices because, as she says, the system was causing harm for everybody "...birth families, the foster families, the kids...I mean it just had no good news about it."

She says there is a "cosmic divide" between people who look at how to reform child welfare – as Kempe Conference participants do – and people who continue to think from a "rescue mentality" but may not really understand the situations of birth or foster families. Fiona comes down on the "reform" side of the cosmic divide. In particular, she is concerned with the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal families in the system and the disparate rates of child removal for Aboriginal families. **Advocacy is hard, she says, but no one should underestimate the importance of the work. Today, she sees a growing number of people in Australia who are indeed talking about system reform. She doesn't lose hope and the Kempe Conference is a sustainer of her hope.**

Fiona describes The Kempe Center's Conference as "amazing." She notes that the conference provides a place where she can hear from other people who have been through the situations and experiences that she has been through. She says: "It's a place you can actually tell your own truth without judgment." It's inspiring and healing. And, in terms of the intellectual side of advocacy work, the conference "...really feeds my need to actually understand this stuff better. And to... put it in words that bureaucrats and governments can understand." Furthermore, she has also connected with other attendees outside the virtual conference both in Australia and New Zealand. She and her husband have even developed a plan to change sleep patterns leading up to the conference to stay awake! What else happens during her conference week? She says: "...everything else falls off...it's great."

Fiona has maintained a continuous relationship with her now-adult foster child – the one who was removed from her care at age eleven. Two of his other foster carers (before and after Fiona) do so as well. She says: "So he's now 22, and...we are [all] his family." One former carer keeps tabs on the young man's housing needs; another pays attention to social income payments. Everyone is concerned when he's unemployed. The carers form a network around him and provide the support that families often give for their young adult children. In the meantime, Fiona continues to advocate for systems change. She looks at child welfare data and often sees the same patterns as in decades past. **She concludes: "What we have to do is look and say, 'How do we do this differently?'...That's what [Kempe] is doing, and that's why you're so important."**

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP



JOHN D. FLUKE



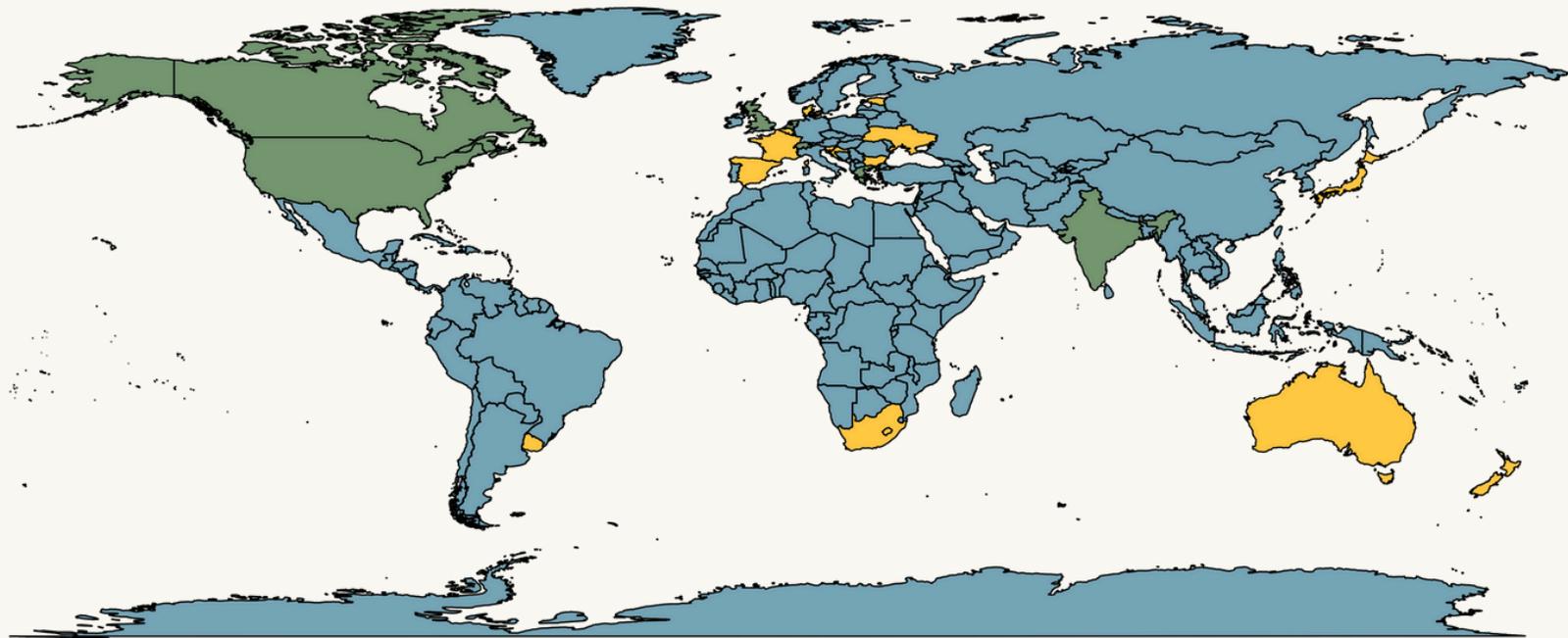
WARREN BINFORD



SUE KERNS

The Kempe Center has assumed prominent roles in our field, with several faculty (co-)chairing influential international conferences (**John Fluke, PhD** – International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect/ISPCAN Congress; **Warren Binford, JD, EdM**, Co-Chair, International Law Weekend 2024 and Co-Chair, A Global Scientific Conference in 21st Century Child Abuse) and organizations (**Suzanne Kerns, PhD** – elected president of the Society for Implementation Research Collaboration/SIRC; **Warren Binford, JD, EdM**, Co-Chair, International Law Association’s Children’s Rights Committee). The Center has cultivated a robust network of domestic and international collaborators, such as **UNICEF USA, UNICEF HQ, Child USA, We Protect Global Alliance, Childlight**, and **the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect/ISPCAN**.

■ Worked in
 ■ Worked and Presented in



Additionally, the Center has actively participated in many aspects of child abuse and neglect policy and practice work through involvement in 104 external (local, state, regional, national, and international) committees and workgroups. We worked in 24 countries, conducting presentations in 9 of them. **Notably, the Center’s work has reached 184 countries and 23 states this past year.**

Countries where we worked and delivered presentations:

- Australia
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- **Canada- Presented**
- Cayman Islands
- Croatia
- **Cyprus- Presented**
- Denmark
- **England- Presented**
- Estonia
- France
- **Greece- Presented**
- **India- Presented**
- Japan
- **Netherlands- Presented**
- New Zealand
- **Scotland- Presented**
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- **Switzerland- Presented**
- Ukraine
- Uruguay
- **Wales- Presented**

FUTURE OUTLOOK

WHAT'S NEXT FOR US?

For the next 50 years, The Kempe Center is committed to making a real difference in the lives of children and families. We'll keep providing the best possible medical care, conducting groundbreaking research, and training professionals who work with children. But that's not all. We're also passionate about fighting for a more equitable system and advocating for those who are vulnerable and need it most.

The efforts of the Kempe team and JEDI Affinity Groups highlight our unwavering commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through continued learning, accountable community engagement and advocacy, thoughtful recruitment practices, and recognition of dedicated individuals, we are working toward the realization of a world without child maltreatment.

We understand the road ahead won't be easy, but we're excited to work alongside those with firsthand experience and our incredible partner organizations. **Together, we can be a powerful force for positive change.**

Are you ready to be part of the journey in fulfilling our mission? Visit www.kempecenter.org to learn more about our programs, how we can offer support and how to get involved.

