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Supreme Court appoints members to Permanency Planning Task Force

TOPEKA—The Kansas Supreme Court appointed four people to the Supreme Court Permanency Planning Task Force and reappointed two others.

Their four-year terms begin July 1 and end June 30, 2022.

The new members are:

- Deb Dickerhoof, coordinator, citizen review board, 5th Judicial District, composed of Lyon and Chase counties
- District Judge Mary Christopher, who serves in the 3rd Judicial District, composed of Shawnee County
- Kathy Ray, director of advocacy and education, Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
- Laura Jurgensen, assistant director of early childhood, special education, and title services, Kansas State Department of Education.

The court reappointed:

- District Magistrate Judge Mary Thrower, who serves in Ottawa County of the 28th Judicial District
- Vivien Olsen, tribal attorney, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

The Kansas Supreme Court established the working task force in 1984. It advises the court on ways to provide and improve the care of children who are under jurisdiction of the court. Its responsibilities

include:

- developing and implementing a strategic plan for child welfare oversight;
- collaborating with district courts, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and Native American tribes in Kansas;
- developing and implementing statewide legal training;
- reviewing federally funded child and family services.

Overall, the task force recommends improvements and suggests programs that help children placed in foster care find safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible.

The 18-member task force includes district court judges, district magistrate judges, lawyers, court-appointed guardians, prosecutors, and representatives from Indian tribal courts, state agencies, Court Appointed Special Advocates; citizen review boards, and mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse treatment providers.

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