



PARTNERS
IN OPPORTUNITIES

Each OFC staff member has a responsibility and commitment to the agencies and individuals that OFC serves.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – February 7, 2014

Last month, eight additional counties implemented Differential Response, the innovative child protection system that offers caseworkers two possible pathways for responding to some reports of child abuse and neglect: a traditional response or an alternative response. With an alternative response, caseworkers assess the needs of the child or family in a non-threatening, non-adversarial manner, and then offer services to meet those needs. A total of 78 Ohio counties now offer this approach, which research shows has many benefits. It reduces the number of children placed in out-of-home care, strengthens parenting skills and, most importantly, does not compromise child safety.

I look forward to June, when Differential Response is available in all 88 Ohio counties. In the meantime, congratulations to Ashland, Crawford, Gallia, Highland, Lawrence, Shelby, Wayne and Wyandot counties. We're glad to have you on board!

Ohio has come a long way since 2005, when we first began considering Differential Response. Now, we're considered a national Differential Response leader, and OFC receives ongoing requests from other states and national child welfare organizations for peer-to-peer and program development consultation. How did we get from early explorer to national leader?

We know that being a "good idea" is not enough for new programming to take root and prosper. Most entities are built to resist change, which is good. That tendency brings stability and continuity. It also means that organizational change requires ongoing attention and sufficient time to succeed. But it can happen! Our Differential Response pilot study's final report, released in 2010, recommended statewide implementation. Since then, OFC staff have worked to make sure that our infrastructure sustains and supports innovation, both in counties where the system is deployed and in OFC, where our policies, processes and supports must complement the programming.

Kudos to the Differential Response early developers, who asked themselves if there was anything more we could be doing for children and families. We always should look at our practices with inquiring minds, though we shouldn't change what works for the sake of being new or sacrifice creativity for the sake of convenience. The task is to recognize and build upon what is good and to be flexible enough to move on from what isn't. Differential Response planning was successful because state and county staff and stakeholders asked themselves questions about current practices, were open to new ideas and used data to guide decision-making.

To help us continue that approach in our daily work, several OFC staff with experience in collaboration, program implementation and data analysis were grouped together to form the Bureau of Federal/State Initiatives. This issue of First Friday looks at some of the work they've engaged in over the past six months.

Also in this issue, you can read more about a recent opportunity I had to stretch my own horizons. I'm now a proud ambassador to the Ohio National Guard. Thank you to Brian Wear, director of the East Central Ohio Regional Training Center, for making it possible for me to spend the day with so many wonderful individuals who represent our country with such honor.

OFC's Bureau of Federal/State Initiatives

What has this new bureau been doing since we first introduced it in the August 2013 First Friday? Lots! Led by Bureau Chief Carla Carpenter, this small but focused group consists of Roger Ward, Susan Williams and Joan Van Hull. Together, they work closely with all the other OFC bureaus on multiple ongoing projects that cross every program area. The common threads in all their efforts are cross-system collaboration and data-guided decision-making. One of this bureau's most important roles is to provide data to OFC's state and local partners so they can better strategize, measure their progress and link practice with outcomes. This month's First Friday highlights a few of the bureau's state collaborations. Future editions will highlight selected federal initiatives.

Youth at Risk of Homelessness Federal Planning Grant

Congratulations to [Lighthouse Youth Services](#) in Cincinnati for receiving a two-year, \$360,000-a-year planning grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop strategies to prevent homelessness among youth aging out of foster care. OFC, the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services and the University of Cincinnati's Institute for Policy Research are partnering with Lighthouse in this project. In addition, Lighthouse has formed a steering committee that includes Cincinnati Public Schools, Hamilton County Juvenile Court, the Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, the Lighthouse Youth Advisory Board, the Partnership Center, the Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board and the nonprofit organization Strategies to End Homelessness.

Lighthouse launched the project last month with a community forum that featured a discussion with Ohio Rep. Teresa Fedor, who discussed the connection between homeless youth and human trafficking. The goal of the project is to improve outcomes for at-risk youth in four key areas: social and emotional well-being, stable housing, permanent connections, and education and job readiness.

Get Ready for the MEPA Cycle V: Reports Due March 1

The federal Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were enacted to reduce the time children wait for foster or adoptive placements, to prevent discrimination in children's placements, and to help identify and recruit foster and adoptive families.

The Bureau of Federal/State Initiatives works closely with OFC's Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance to ensure that Ohio meets all MEPA and Title VI requirements. This is achieved primarily through on-site activities that focus on core issues. For example, OFC staff review each agency's "Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) Biennial Comprehensive Self-Assessment Report" (JFS 01668), conduct case reviews and – in the case of public agencies – observe matching conferences.

The 24-month Cycle V MEPA on-site visits will begin on March 1. Agencies should complete and submit the JFS 01668 by this date. Public agencies should submit the form to their technical assistance specialists; private agencies should submit it to their licensing specialists. Public agencies also must send notice of matching conferences to MatchingConference@jfs.ohio.gov.

Please note: The JFS 01668 form was modified recently to address recurrent questions. To obtain it, go to <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms> and enter "01668" in the search field.

If you have questions about Cycle V or the MEPA monitoring process, please contact your assigned technical assistance or licensing specialist.

The M.O.M.S. Project

OFC is pleased to be part of the state team working to combat the problem of opiate abuse among pregnant women. The Maternal Opiate Medical Support (M.O.M.S.) project is a \$4.2 million program supported by a combination of Medicaid and Health Transformation Innovation Fund dollars. It's a big investment, but the price seems small when compared to the personal and financial cost of this issue. The goals are to promote integrated maternal care and prenatal treatments that improve outcomes for women and babies. By engaging expecting mothers in a combination of counseling, medication-assisted treatment and case management, the three-year project is expected to reduce infant hospital stays by 30 percent.

According to the Ohio Hospital Association, every day in 2011, approximately five infants were admitted to medical facilities to be treated for neonatal abstinence syndrome, at a cost of more than \$70 million and nearly 19,000 hospital days. Neonatal abstinence syndrome is a group of problems that occur in newborns who have been exposed to addictive illegal or prescription drugs while in their mothers' wombs. The most common conditions associated with the syndrome are withdrawal, respiratory complications, low birth weight, feeding difficulties and seizures.

Watch for an upcoming announcement by Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addition Services (OhioMHAS), and John McCarthy, director of the Ohio Department of Medicaid, regarding the selection of M.O.M.S. grantees. For additional information, email Susan.Williams@jfs.ohio.gov.

ENGAGE Implementation Grant Awarded

Thank you to the many individuals who participated in the "Engaging the New Generation to Achieve their Goals through Empowerment" (ENGAGE) planning process to better help youth at risk for not transitioning successfully to adulthood. Your time and effort were very well-spent. In July 2013, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded OhioMHAS a four-year implementation grant to put ENGAGE into action.

The goal of the project is to develop a better-coordinated, more effective and more cost-effective statewide system of care for 14- to 21-year-olds who face mental health challenges, multiple conditions and multisystem needs. Collaboration among governmental entities, public and private agencies, families and youth will be key. OhioMHAS is partnering with the Governor's Office of Health Transformation, Ohio Family and Children First and OFC to oversee the statewide implementation. OFC is pleased to be part of this team.

OhioMHAS recently announced two ENGAGE grant awards. One is going to the Center for Innovative Practices at Case Western Reserve University to develop training and technical assistance on the "Wraparound" practice model. The other is going to Vorys Health Care Advisors to establish a finance plan that supports the ongoing sustainability of a statewide system-of-care model. OhioMHAS also plans to award grants to approximately 22 system-of-care community sites, which will be selected based on recently submitted community readiness assessments. To date, 64 communities have completed assessments. Stay tuned for announcements regarding these implementation awards.

For more information, email Susan.Williams@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio National Guard Outreach Event

You may know Brian Wear as the director of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program's East Central Ohio Regional Training Center, but others know him as Chief Master Sergeant Brian K. Wear, serving in the Ohio National Guard's 178th Fighter Wing in Springfield. Brian's civilian and military identities crossed paths when he nominated OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice and Adrian McLemore of Ohio Foster Care Alumni to be ambassadors to the Ohio National Guard. As ambassadors, Jennifer and Adrian were invited to participate in the Ohio National Guard's annual ambassador orientation flight in January. Approximately 22 ambassadors participated in the invitation-only event, which showcased opportunities for women and ethnic minorities in the National Guard. It also gave attendees the opportunity to participate in a unique flight experience.

"The Ohio National Guard has literally hundreds of different types of jobs that match interests and aptitude," Brian said. "My position in the National Guard is to advise leaders on human resource challenges, and I can tell you right now, I think our biggest challenge is to attract ethnic minorities and females because they have never heard about what opportunities we have. Many people think we just have pilots and tank drivers. I can tell you right now, we have anything from computer technicians to dining facility staff to payroll staff. We are all professionals and wear the same uniforms. All jobs are equally important!"

Major General Deborah Ashenhurst, Ohio Adjutant General and top military leader of the Ohio National Guard, hosted the event with the assistance of the Ohio National Guard Community Outreach Program. As a part of their experience, Jennifer and Adrian were allowed to ride in a fueling plane during an in-air refueling training mission. After the flight, they had the opportunity to speak with Ohio Army National Guard members and learn more about their work.

“I have to admit to being somewhat apprehensive as the day drew closer. I am not a good flyer,” Jennifer said. “But the day was fantastic. I had great fun and was deeply impressed by the experience and by the men and women of the Ohio National Guard who work so hard on our behalf.”



Left to right: Adrian McLemore, Ohio Foster Care Alumni; Jennifer Justice, OFC deputy director; and Chief Master Sergeant Brian K. Wear, Ohio National Guard and East Central Ohio Regional Training Center director.

Ohio PREP Training Available

The Ohio Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) is a federally funded program for transition-aged youth in care. The program has two basic goals: (1) to prevent unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections among youth and (2) to train youth participants in such topics as healthy relationships, financial literacy, and career and educational planning. Ohio PREP is unique in that it is targeted to youth ages 14 to 19 who are either in foster care or involved with the juvenile justice system. The Ohio Department of Health leads this effort, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

The program uses a train-the-trainer model. Staff from each region are trained in the evidence-based “Reducing the Risk” curriculum. Then they train front-line foster care and juvenile justice staff to teach the curriculum to youth in their care. All materials, training and ongoing technical assistance are provided to staff free of charge.

Ohio PREP is in the fourth year of a five-year authorization. To date, Ohio has 70 master regional trainers and 707 trained agency staff from 185 local agencies. Approximately 1,900 youth have received PREP training.

To learn more about training opportunities and locations in your area, contact your regional coordinator. You can find that person's name in the list below. For a map of the Ohio PREP regions, go to http://www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/chss/adolescent%20health/prepregionalmap8_11.ashx.

- Region 1 (northwest) — Carol Haddix, haddix@co.lucas.oh.us
- Regions 2 (west central) and 3 (southwest) — Leslie Mitchell, lmitchell@ppsw.org
- Region 4 (south) — Diego Espino, Diego.Espino@ppcoh.org
- Region 5 (southeast) — Linda Mehl, lmehl@belmontcountyhealth.org
- Region 6 (northeast) — Dana Hale, dhale@cantonhealth.org
- Region 7 (lake central) — Angela Newman-White, anewman@ccbh.net
- Region 8 (north central) — Jessie Wingert, jwingert@schd.org
- Region 9 (central) — Tammy Derden, tammy.derden@nationwidechildrens.org

For more information, email Susan.Williams@jfs.ohio.gov.

Thank you, Casey Family Programs!

To be successful, collaborations require enough time to sharpen their focus, become productive and develop an interdependent relationship that extends beyond the need that initially brought the partners together. The most dynamic collaborations are strategic, long-term and have a common vision. One highly effective partnership, which OFC is supremely grateful for, is our seven-year collaboration with Casey Family Programs.

History

You probably know that Casey Family Programs has played a vital role in the design, piloting and rollout of Ohio's Differential Response system. Since 2007, Casey Family Programs' financial and programmatic support has enabled a range of Differential Response activities, including direct services to families, staff development, technical assistance to agencies and communities, and creation of the county-to-county onsite learning program, Alternative Response Experiential Learning.

You may *not* be aware of our many other partnerships with Casey Family Programs. Each is intended to move us closer to the goals of safely reducing the number of children in foster care and improving outcomes for Ohio's children and families. The following are a few examples:

- The Ohio Intimate Partner Violence Collaborative to improve services for families affected by domestic violence.
- The Crossover Youth Practice Model to enhance collaboration on behalf of young people involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Results Oriented Management system implementation to make data more accessible.
- Specialized training for judges and magistrates to encourage meaningful participation by youth in court proceedings.
- Forums to bring policy-makers together with child welfare professionals to better understand the issues faced by our children and families.
- Many opportunities for Ohio child welfare professionals to participate in national conferences and other state-to-state learning events.

Future Initiatives

Our partnership with Casey Family Programs continues to thrive, with many exciting initiatives on the horizon for 2014. In addition to continued support as Ohio completes statewide implementation of Differential Response, Casey Family Programs is partnering with ODJFS, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) and several Ohio counties to support a Permanency Round Table (PRT) pilot this year. PRTs give counties a structured format through which to identify individualized and realistic strategies for overcoming the obstacles to permanency that youth in their care may be facing. The PRT pilot will involve six counties: Athens, Fairfield, Guernsey, Hamilton, Montgomery and Summit. They will participate in an advisory group, receive specialized training, implement a two-part process that includes a youth-centered component, and report their outcomes.

Also in 2014, Casey Family Programs is partnering with Ohio on strategies to strengthen our engagement of primary and birth parents, possibly through the development of parent-mentor programs. For example, parents who have had successful outcomes with the child welfare system could support other system-involved families. Stay tuned for more details about these exciting new projects! If you have questions about these initiatives, please email Carla.Carpenter@jfs.ohio.gov.

Individuals Create Partnerships

We hope you have had the pleasure of working with Susan Kelly, Ohio's lead Casey Family Programs consultant. As senior director of strategic consulting, she has been key in our efforts to implement solution-focused strategies with families. When we say "she wrote the book" on these strategies, we mean it literally. Susan is the co-author of [Building Solutions in Child Protective Services](#), a resource that has been a go-to guide as we have implemented Differential Response across Ohio.



As Susan prepares to take on a new senior executive role at Casey Family Programs, we at OFC extend our thanks to her! We appreciate her leadership, guidance and consistent commitment to the partnership between our agencies.

"Susan has been a wonderful partner, and I have truly enjoyed working with her on the various initiatives targeted at safe reduction of out-of-home care," OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice said. "I wish her all the best in her new role at Casey Family Programs."

Although we will miss working with Susan on a regular basis, the good news is that we have a terrific – and familiar – face filling her role. We join many Ohio stakeholders in congratulating Crystal Allen, currently the PCSAO executive director, who moves to Casey Family Programs as a senior managing consultant on April 1.

January 2014 Global Emails

The following emails were sent in January from Jennifer Justice to PCSA directors and/or private agency directors. They are organized below by mailing date and key word.

- 1/2/14 - Issuing Foster Home Certificates
- 1/21/14 - Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program Report
- 1/22/14 - National Youth in Transition Database Teleconference

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:

Each OFC staff member has a responsibility and commitment to the agencies and individuals that OFC serves.

If you want to subscribe to First Friday, have comments or ideas about content, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please send an email to First_Friday@jfs.ohio.gov. For additions to or removals from the list, be sure to include your name, organization and email address.



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES