



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

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OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – July 6, 2012

As the ODJFS Office of Families and Children (OFC) team implements the five components of the Solutions Through Empowerment and Partnership (STEP) plan, we talk a lot about partnership: What it means, what it looks like and how to know when it is successful. We've been having ongoing discussions about each principle of partnership and how they each might appear in our daily work. For example, few would argue against the principle of "Everyone desires respect," but how do you show respect to colleagues and stakeholders? Simple courtesy and polite behavior can go a long way, and I have implemented a STEP-developed policy to help OFC employees plan meetings in a partnership framework.

When it comes to public and private agencies, team members struggle with the inherent conflict between "acting like a partner" and their supervisory responsibilities. We see a similar struggle with new Differential Response caseworkers as they learn to work with families in different ways while ensuring the safety of the children above all. In these and other situations, however, dual roles do not need to be at odds. We must be able to quickly provide and receive clear feedback on our expectations, with both sides acting as partners. We all must answer to our varied roles and performance expectations while also taking time to view circumstances from multiple perspectives. Keeping an open mind can help us better understand any situation.

Ohio is entering the final year of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan. The good news is that we have met improvement goals for the national permanency standards and for the "Absence of Child Abuse or Neglect in Foster Care" safety goal. We still have a lot of work to do before we meet the goal for "Absence of Recurrence of Maltreatment" and other CFSR items.

Additionally, two new federal reviews are in our future: a review of Ohio's Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and a review of our Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance/Federal Eligibility (IV-E) programs. (See below.) OFC team members have begun efforts to improve our performance. On an ongoing basis, we need to take advantage of new management tools such as the Interactive Dashboard (www.summitonchildren.ohio.gov) and the Results Oriented Management application, which allows us to assess how we are doing on multiple levels. I know that working together in partnership will lead to success.

Results Oriented Management

OFC is collaborating with Casey Family Programs, Kansas University and public children services agencies to implement Results Oriented Management (ROM), a child welfare data management reporting tool. Regional trainings were offered throughout the state, and a webinar on basic ROM functions can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8JEluSU-u0&feature=plcp. The tool provides easy access to 47 reports, many of which are similar to federal child welfare outcome measures. ROM also allows data to be easily manipulated into multiple formats, including spreadsheets, cross tabs, county/child views and more.

Ohio's ROM system resides on a secure state server. Data are extracted every 48 hours from SACWIS into a "data mart" and then formatted to meet ROM reporting requirements. At this time, ROM contains seven base working tables. Historical data includes information for all children who were in care on or after April 1, 2009.

The Ohio ROM Reporting system is administered by ODJFS via the following browsers:

- Internet Explorer 7 or later (IE-6 is possible but not recommended)
- Firefox
- Google Chrome

Login access to the Ohio ROM Reporting system requires the form JFS 7078, "Code of Responsibility," to be completed. For more information, visit www.jfskb.com/sacwis/index.php/rom-bic/356-rom-access-process. Once access has been granted, a user ID (Novel ID) and password are required to log in.

Q&A with OFC's Rule Review Coordinator, David Thomas

Our Partners for Ohio's Families initiative has three main components. The first addresses issues of culture and climate within OFC. Under this initiative, the OFC team also is proposing ways to ensure that the level of technical assistance we provide to public and private agencies has the right kind of support to meet our common goals. The third undertaking is a comprehensive rule review, to get rid of redundancies, inconsistencies and any potentially unnecessary rules, and to make all rules easier to understand. In order to give everyone a look inside this review process, we posed some questions to our rule review coordinator: David Thomas.

Q: How are the review teams making decisions?

A: Each team developed a process for decision-making when members first assembled. This was agreed to and documented in the team's charter. While all teams chose to strive for consensus-based decision-making, most teams acknowledged that consensus may not always be achievable. When consensus cannot be reached among team members, most teams have chosen to apply majority rule. Generally, team charters define "majority" as "50 percent plus one."

The concepts of partnership and consensus in decision-making were the foundations of the review. The assembly of teams made up of diverse stakeholders with divergent viewpoints was intentional, as was the development of mechanisms to share power and to garner practice-informed policy recommendations.

Conceptually, the rule review is simple: A group of diverse stakeholders from Ohio's child welfare community examines a specific set of rules. Through discourse and analysis, the group arrives at consensus-based recommendations based on the collective knowledge of its members. Application of this concept is more difficult, and it is important not to minimize the personal investment, effort and time it takes to arrive at consensus. The rule review co-chairs and team members should be applauded for their commitment to the review model and for their efforts to reach consensus-based recommendations whenever possible.

Q: What are some of the successes and challenges of the rule review?

A: This question is best answered by team co-chairs, so we asked them for their perspectives. Here is a summary of what they had to say:

Successes

- The process in and of itself
- Practice-informed policy
- Enhanced consistency among rules
- Incorporation of the process within OFC
- The collaboration between public and private agencies
- The inclusion of stakeholders from Ohio's child welfare community
- The application of criteria established by the Partners For Ohio's Families Advisory Committee
- Reduction of the language contained in the rules
- The diverse perspectives of the team members
- Reduction of the length of rules
- Learning from one another
- The foster parent inclusion

- The empowerment of the teams
- The commitment of the team members
- The quality of learning, sharing and collaboration
- Addressing expectations as to minimum standards verses best practice

Challenges

- The number of rules assigned to several of the teams
- The timeline for completion
- The number of team members on some of the teams
- Engaging current and former foster youth in the process
- Engaging resource families in the process
- Maintaining momentum
- Minimum standards verses best practice

It is interesting to note that the final listed “Success” is also the final “Challenge” noted by team co-chairs. This is an excellent window into the process, its values and its struggles. The opportunity for focused discussion has been rich, and from this discussion, many ambiguous or divergent interpretations of rules’ purpose and intent have been clarified. In the end, however, some disagreement is inevitable, leaving some team members less than satisfied with the outcome than others.

Preparing for Federal Reviews

The federal government periodically reviews states’ child welfare systems to ensure they are meeting all performance standards and protecting the health and safety of children. Two significant reviews are about to be conducted for Ohio: an AFCARS review and a Title IV-E review.

AFCARS Assessment Review

The AFCARS review looks at the ability of states’ automated information systems to gather, extract and submit AFCARS data accurately. Right now, Ohio is engaged in the pre-site visit phase, during which data from 15 test cases are transmitted to the U.S. Administration for Children and Families’ Children’s Bureau. Initial findings will be added to the issues focused on during reviewers’ on-site visit the week of August 20, 2012. During the on-site visit, reviewers will evaluate 80 foster care and 30 adoption cases. The review’s final report will document its major findings and include a two-year correction plan, if needed. To learn more about the process, refer to the June 7, 2012, global email listed below or go to www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/afcars/review.htm. Past AFCARS reports can be accessed at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm.

IV-E Review

September 2013 is fast approaching for the IV-E Review Team (pictured below). This is the probable date for Ohio’s on-site federal Title IV-E review. The minimum passing rate of 95 percent means that Ohio can have no more than four errors in the 80 cases randomly selected for review. Because case files can be drawn from any county, it is imperative that all counties are prepared. Ohio has had great success with this review in the past, thanks to careful preparation, and OFC expects the same positive outcome for this review.

County preparation will begin with a July 11 webinar for Title IV-E agency staff who work closely with Foster Care Maintenance eligibility determination. See the June 19, 2012, global email (referenced below) for registration information. **The registration deadline is today**, so if you are interested and have not yet registered, please do so right away. Monthly review-related activities have been scheduled from now until March 2014, the date when any required corrective actions should be received from county agencies.

OFC also will conduct two preliminary reviews to help prepare for the review. The first will be held this month and will randomly assess 80 cases from the period November 1, 2011, through April 30, 2012. The second will occur in March 2013, covering the period September 1, 2012, through February 28, 2013. Information from these reviews will guide our future preparation.



The Title IV-E Review Team: Lisa Howard, Carole Fisher, Deanna Robb and Dan Shook (not pictured).

Spotlight on OFC's Guiding Principles in Action: Title IV-E Review Team

This month's principle, "Each OFC staff member has a role in OFC's work and must be held accountable to promote safety and a sense of belonging for children, youth and vulnerable adults," can be applied to many scenarios. It should remind each OFC staff member that every task – whether it be answering a phone or finalizing a statewide policy – is important and is a part of a bigger whole. It should also remind staff that we are answerable to others.

Federal reviews, monitoring and similar activities are good examples of why we need to emphasize 100 percent responsibility, a concept widely discussed within the Six Principles of Partnership training. The Title IV-E Review Team's work should remind us that Ohio's success is the result of a collaborative environment in which individuals focus on problems together and take individual and collective ownership of results.

June 2012 Global Emails

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

- 6/7/12** – Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Report System (AFCARS) Assessment Reviews
- 6/19/12** – Safety Assessment for Children in Substitute Care-Worker and Child Visitation Tool Webinar
- 6/19/12** – Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance/Federal Eligibility Review Information Webinar
- 6/20/12** – Title IV-B Part 1 Program and Administration Allocation
- 6/21/12** – Adoption Foster Care Analysis Reporting System "AFCARS" Review Q&A
- 6/25/12** – Access to SETS General Data Screens
- 6/26/12** – Performance Tools

Principle of the Month:

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