



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

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OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – September 7, 2012

The Permanency Roundtables – which Casey Family Programs, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services hosted to examine the issue of permanency for children – concluded last month. My thanks go out to the counties that assembled teams of stakeholders, as I was able to experience first-hand many of their thought-provoking discussions. The youth panels were particularly interesting, reminding us all about the importance of periodically stepping out of our traditional roles and approaching our issues from different angles.

We strive to achieve permanency for every child in our care. At OFC, we often find ourselves viewing permanency in terms of various federal measurements. Judicial officers may associate permanency with appropriate case closure. Caseworkers may think of permanency as a composite term for various required planning and report activities. A youth at the Permanency Roundtables described the concept as knowing there was someone who always would accept his collect phone call. From this youth's perspective, permanency simply means a lifelong and unconditional connection, a need we all share and understand.

During the strategic sharing sessions with Ohio's foster youth, hosted by Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the loss of contact with siblings often was expressed as the most difficult aspect of foster care. Doug Stephens, interim executive director at Ohio CASA and former director of judicial and court services for the Supreme Court of Ohio, called the sharing sessions a real "eye-opener." He added that his 30 years of working in the court system taught him that permanence should emphasize the parental bond and minimize placement changes. The sharing sessions made him realize that the youth he works with wish to be kept with their siblings to help them maintain that sense of permanency, even when parental placements are difficult or not possible.

Our goal always should be finding a safe and permanent family for every child, but we also should explore ways to provide youth with the opportunity to develop other significant connections with siblings, other kin, mentors, trusted adults and peers. Our problems are complex, and it is unrealistic to think feasible solutions can be reached easily. But we can challenge ourselves to add new information to the equation through events such as the Permanency Roundtables, which help us see our issues from the perspective of our colleagues and clients. For more information on what was discussed at the roundtable event, keep reading. Below we offer a sneak peak at the Permanency Roundtable Report, courtesy of PCSAO's Scott Britton. It gives us a snapshot of the themes common to all of the event's sessions.

Permanency Roundtable Report Overview

This summer, a partnership between PCSAO, ODJFS and Casey Family Programs came together to host four forums focusing on improving permanency outcomes for foster children. Offered regionally in Youngstown (May 30), Athens (June 28), Perrysburg (August 14) and Dayton (August 15), the series was titled "Permanency Solutions for Foster Children: Permanency Trends, Barriers, and Plans for Longstaying and Reentering Youth." County PCSAs formed teams of stakeholders that included juvenile judges, prosecutors, private providers, adoption advocates, Ohio Family and Children First members, and elected officials.

Together, these county teams examined state, regional and county data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System; heard from panels of foster alumni; and learned about best practices being employed by colleagues. OFC highlighted new department initiatives to improve permanency outcomes, including adoption incentives, Wendy's Wonderful Kids and maintenance of the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program at state fiscal year 2013 levels.

After their mornings of establishing a shared understanding of the issue from a broader perspective, each of the county teams developed a plan for action within their own jurisdictions. Common ideas emerged from county plans across the state, including feedback regarding the federal Title IV-E Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program, expanding trauma-informed practice, reducing the use of Planned Permanent Living Arrangements, and improving timeliness by caseworkers and judges. PCSAO will issue a comprehensive report and conduct follow-up with state policy makers this fall.

Spotlight on OFC's Guiding Principles in Action: David Monder

As one of the two program managers at the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF), David Monder (pictured below) is responsible for formulating and directing the implementation of the OCTF state grant award and providing training and technical assistance to 44 of Ohio's 88 counties. In David's daily interactions with our county partners and stakeholders, he truly embodies September's guiding principle, "Each staff member has a role in our work and must be held accountable to promote safety and a sense of belonging for children, youth and vulnerable adults."

For the past three years, David has ensured that he is responsive to our county partners and always provides them with the most accurate information. He patiently provides technical assistance on data collection and works collaboratively with each county to find the right curriculum or program.

"David has been, and continues to be, a tremendous asset to the Family and Children First Councils," says Chad Hibbs, president of the Ohio Family and Children First Coordinators Association. "Regardless of the question or the request, he always answers promptly, and David always provides some suggestions for further thought on the issue. It is a pleasure working with him."

"I think David is one of the more professional managers I work with," says Lisa Willis, who works in the ODJFS Office of Contracts and Acquisitions. Because David also manages all OCTF contracts, providing budgetary, programming and operational assistance and ensuring fiscal and program compliance, he often interacts with Lisa. "He is accurate, checking his facts and figures thoroughly before submission. He always advocates for his office and customers," Lisa adds.

"David is one of the most responsive people I know," echoes his supervisor, Kristen Rost. "He works daily to create a safety net of services for Ohioans."

We talked with David to learn more about him and his approach to work.

What exactly is OCTF?

The Ohio Children's Trust Fund was created in 1984 and is Ohio's sole public funding source dedicated to the primary and secondary prevention of child abuse and neglect. It is funded with fees collected at the local level on certified copies of birth certificates, death certificates, and divorce decrees and dissolutions.

We are kind of new to OFC, having previously been housed in the Director's Office. It actually is a return home; when OCTF first was created and for several years, it was a part of OFC. We are a bit different than most of the programs because we are governed by a board of 15, including eight public appointees by the Governor, four legislative members and three agency directors (Ohio Departments of Health, Job and Family Services, and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services). The board supervises the policies and programs of OCTF, and ODJFS serves as the administrative agent for procurement and budgeting purposes.

How has it been returning to OFC?

I think it is a very good thing. Prevention work should not happen in a vacuum, and I think being a part of the office helps us break down some of the program silos at the state level. It has given OCTF staff a greater understanding of and accessibility to other child welfare programming, and hopefully, the rest of the office feels the same about the OCTF. For example, both the Trust Fund and OFC view domestic violence prevention as a priority, and we have come together to fund the Intimate Partner Violence training in the rollout of Differential Response. I believe that prevention work, like everything else, requires everyone at the table.

Day to day, what do you do?

In addition to contract work, I oversee the Trust Fund's budget, and I am responsible for our work with 44 counties. Carolyn Brewer oversees the other 44 counties.

The OCTF allocates \$3.8 million to Ohio counties through each local Family and Children First Council. The councils select and identify the programs the county will support, and submit the application to OCTF. We review the application to make sure it is complete and in compliance with guidelines, the data is clean, and there is an effective plan for achieving results. We work with counties throughout the process and in an oversight capacity.

Are your guidelines flexible, or do you select programming that you support?

It's a little of both. OCTF is moving toward a more consistent prevention approach across the state, but we try to balance that by recognizing the need for local control and innovation in child abuse and neglect prevention programming.

OCTF's state fiscal year 2013 guidelines consist of a menu of evidence-based programs that have been shown to work and to have positive outcomes in preventing child abuse and neglect. Counties can select from that menu, or they can propose other programming if they are able to demonstrate its effectiveness.

I am accountable as a steward of state funds; I have to ensure that dollars are used in a manner that produces results, but I also am accountable to counties. I come from a legislative background, and I view counties as the Trust Fund's constituents. I work with councils to make sure we can arrive at programming that best meets everyone's needs. We wouldn't just deny funding; that would be a failure for both the county and OCTF.

Is it difficult to measure progress with prevention?

Yes, it is. However, research has demonstrated that five protective factors — parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children's social and emotional development — reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with the tools they need to parent effectively. By incorporating these protective factors into programming, programs build relationships with families. When these relationships are established, a program can learn to recognize the signs of stress and help build families' protective factors in their time of need. Counties use the research-based tool, the Protective Factors Survey, to assess the impact of their programming.

You were in the Ohio legislature. Why did you leave?

During my tenure in the legislature, I was afforded the opportunity to work on myriad issues. I found, however, that I was a generalist in a lot of areas. I was closely involved in the passage of multiple pieces of legislation pertaining to children and family issues. One of the legislators I worked for served on the OCTF Board for many years, so I had a significant amount of interaction with the Trust Fund Board and its operations. This involvement, along with my desire to delve deeper into children and family issues, led me to seek employment with the Trust Fund.

What's important to you?

I am married and have a 2-year-old son with Down syndrome. He's an amazing guy, and I have learned so much from him. Through my family, I get the dual perspectives of being a human services programmer and a consumer of human services programming. In my limited spare time, I enjoy studying military history.

What's your personal motto?

It's not the end of the world.



David Monder

New Foster Youth Initiatives

The Supreme Court of Ohio (SCO) is leading two initiatives to support youth transitioning out of foster care and to give them a voice in decision-making.

1. Youth Discharge Form: A team comprised of judges, magistrates, foster youth alumni, child welfare workers, and SCO and ODJFS staff is working with juvenile courts in Hamilton, Lucas, Marion, Stark and Union counties to pilot a foster care discharge hearing form. The form is being adapted from one that foster youth in Philadelphia created. In this pilot:
 - The form is being used for all youth age 15 and up who are being discharged from foster care.
 - Youth work with a trusted adult to complete the form for court. Ultimately, the caseworker is responsible for making sure the form has been completed and that it reflects the youth's understanding of the plan and concerns.
 - The court holds a discharge hearing for youth being released from foster care, at which time the form is reviewed and used to confirm the transition plan and address concerns that might be raised.

The form is being tested for 12 months, and a recommendation will be made to the Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts at the conclusion of the pilot.

2. The Judicial College has released a new online course featuring original material and expert faculty from Ohio and Washington, D.C. The course was made possible through a partnership with ODJFS, Casey Family Programs and the American Bar Association. Titled "Ensuring Meaningful Opportunities for Youth Engagement in Court," it focuses on children's involvement in court during major permanency decisions such as adoption, foster care or emancipation. It is open to judges and

magistrates in all jurisdictions. A self-study Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) course, it has been approved for two general CJE credit hours and will be available through the end of the year.

James Landon, education program manager with the Judicial College, said the course is designed to explain the value of engaging youth in court proceedings in an age-appropriate manner. It also examines the potential issues of involving children in court proceedings while offering solutions to those concerns. Landon said many judges, clinicians and youth currently and previously in foster care agree that it can be empowering to have the opportunity to participate in court proceedings.

Thank You: Connecting the Dots

Thank you to the many hard-working adult and youth supporters, volunteers, donors, and county partners who made the Connecting the Dots Conference in early August such a success. Statewide partners included the Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OYAB); the ODJFS Offices of Families and Children, Workforce Development, and Unemployment Compensation; OhioMeansJobs; the Ohio State Bar Association; the Ohio Attorney General's Office; the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies; the Ohio Department of Mental Health and its ENGAGE initiative; Ohio CASA; and PCSAO. Casey Family Programs provided swag bags for youth and publications for participating adults. The Annie E. Casey Foundation made it possible for Michael Sanders, a trainer and consultant with the foundation, to facilitate the youth panel. EMK Press, the Dave Thomas Foundation and Foster Focus Magazine donated raffle prizes.

The Planning Committee members came from a diverse representation of agencies, including the Center for Vocational Alternatives, Cincinnati Works, Franklin County Children Services, Lorain County Children Services, Montgomery County Children Services, ODJFS, Ohio CASA, Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth, Starr Commonwealth, Village Network and the Ohio chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America. More than 200 youth attended the conference, and more than a thousand items were donated to Suits for Success.

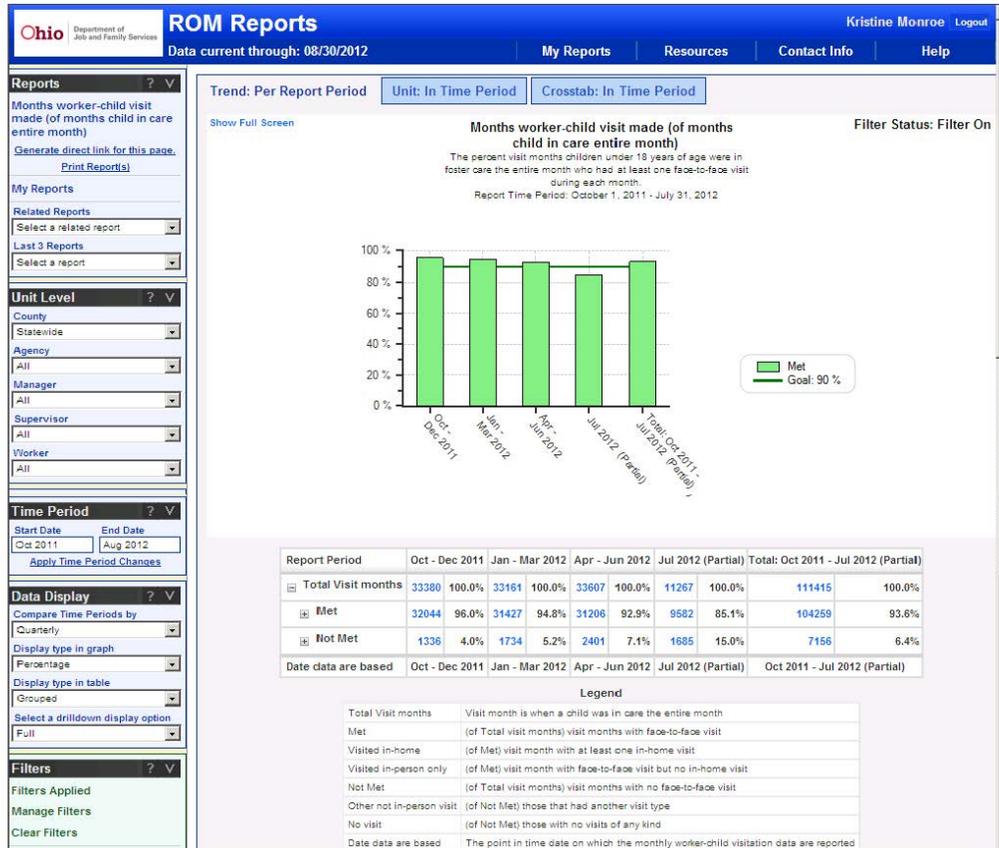
"The great work that you [OYAB], state staff and county partners did on the Connecting the Dots conference has clearly been an inspiration to our young people and all involved in this process," ODJFS Director Michael Colbert later wrote. If you were unable to attend this great event, you haven't missed your chance. Director Colbert has pledged the support of ODJFS for a second annual OYAB Connecting the Dots Conference. Watch for the 2013 date.

Using Data to Self-Assess: Results Oriented Management Reporting Tool

Starting this month, each First Friday will feature data that supports agencies' ability to self-assess and make decisions. This month, First Friday looks at the Results Oriented Management (ROM) measure *Months worker-child visit made (of months child in care entire month)*. Anyone who has access to SACWIS can access ROM data.

The federal fiscal year (FFY) concludes on September 30, 2012. Soon after, Ohio is required to submit data showing our compliance with federal visitation measures. The report in the screenshot below shows Ohio's most recent performance for the above measure. As you can see, the state is doing quite well; at the end of July, we had a 93.8 percent compliance rate with the federal standard. The graph also shows that, although visitation rates for the first quarter were an astounding 96 percent, the rates dropped and were only 85.1 percent for the month of July. There could be many reasons for this, including possible issues with data entry. Please encourage workers to enter activity logs into SACWIS in a timely manner so that federal reporting accurately reflects the number of children being visited each month.

ROM also offers a user-friendly filter that displays county-specific data, to help counties see how well they're doing with each measure. Data can be examined on a variety of levels, including child-specific, to assess performance. Please email Kristine.monroe@jfs.ohio.gov or Tim.Doyle-Wenger@jfs.ohio.gov if you need help accessing this data.



Rule Review Update

Over the next several months, the Ohio Rule Review teams will complete their work. Team members know firsthand the time, labor, thoughtful discussion and compromise that go into the process. Those who aren't on the teams but have offered feedback have asked for examples of rules that have been changed and whether their comments made a difference. In this issue of First Friday, we'll examine Ohio Administrative Code rule 5101:2-42-65, "Caseworker visits and contacts with children in substitute care," as an example to answer those questions.

The review team recommended several modifications to this rule, including the removal of some duplicative terminology, clarification of language and increases in time frames to aid rule compliance. The team also suggested some Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) revisions that would make it easier for workers to document mandated foster home visits. Comments left on the rule review website and the rule review criteria were both taken into consideration when modifying this rule.

Examples of the recommended changes include:

(C) (1) (d) In a foster home which has two ~~foster substitute~~ caregivers on the certificate, assure that each caregiver receives at least one of the face-to-face visits referenced in paragraphs (C)(1)(a) to (C)(1)(c) of this rule in each ~~two three~~-month period. If a caregiver is out of the home for the entire ~~two three~~ month period (e.g. military leave or extended hospital stay) the caregiver is exempt from the visits for that time period.

(C)(2) *For a child for whom a special, exceptional, or intensive needs difficulty of care payment is made pursuant to rule 5101:2-47-18 of the Administrative Code and placed in a treatment or medically fragile foster home certified pursuant to chapter 5101:2-5 of the Administrative Code:*

(C)(2)(c) One face-to-face visit with the substitute caregiver and child ~~every two weeks twice monthly, but not within the same week, within the treatment or medically fragile foster home. One of the monthly visits shall occur within the treatment or medically fragile foster home.~~

(3) For a child placed in a ~~children's residential center (CRC)~~ residential facility as defined in rule 5101:2-1-01 of the Administrative Code certified in Ohio:

(a) One contact with the ~~CRC residential facility and the child as developmentally appropriate~~ within ten days of placement, ~~not including the first day of placement.~~

(b) Monthly face-to-face visits with the child, within the ~~CRC residential facility.~~

(c) The caseworker within the ~~CRC residential facility~~, performing casework duties, shall not conduct visits on behalf of the PCSA or PCPA.

The changes in (C)(2)(c) addressed a comment by a stakeholder on the website that stated:

"This rule makes sense for medically fragile children but the fact that it includes 'difficulty of care payments' means that every child we have placed outside of our agency's network (in 'therapeutic' foster homes) has to be seen every other week even if his/her behavior is stable. This definition is too broad and should give the agencies more flexibility on a case by case basis."

By changing the visits to twice monthly, children's safety is maintained, but caseworkers have more flexibility to manage their visits and comply with the rules. Many of the comments regarding this rule addressed the time frames and the difficulty in compliance. The Rule Review Team considered the safety, permanency and well-being of the child, as well as the ability of the worker to manage the visits in order to comply. Other language to help clarify time frames was recommended, and redundant language related to other rules was removed.

August 2012 Global Emails

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

8/15/12 - Medicaid for Former Foster Youth

8/16/12 - State Adoption Incentive Program

8/21/12 - Differential Response Statewide Implementation Schedule

8/22/12 - Human Trafficking Webinar

8/22/12 - Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence Rate

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:

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