



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

Every person has **value** and should be treated in a
manner that is **respectful and culturally responsive**.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – October 5, 2012

I recently had the opportunity to hear a caseworker speak proudly about the fulfillment she felt when she was able to return a child safely home. She shared the child's family's joy and sense of accomplishment as her own. I know the difference a caring and committed caseworker, foster parent, judicial officer or mentor can make in a family's ability to regain balance.

For most of us, it is easy to enjoy the personal satisfaction that comes with a safe reunification, adoption or foster youth achievement. It is not always as easy to find that same fulfillment on a day-to-day basis when the *work* overshadows the *celebration*.

At the Office of Families and Children (OFC), we often discuss the importance of feeling valued and of valuing our stakeholders and our hardworking colleagues. The fact is, child and adult protection services is a relatively underappreciated profession. We do not receive a lot of big "thank yous," awards or financial incentives.

But those in this field likely were drawn to it by a different value: finding personal satisfaction by making things better for others. We must remind ourselves that this is why we are here, and find our value through the work itself. Each of us has to believe that what we do as individuals makes a difference, and remind ourselves of that when making decisions that impact children, older adults, families and agencies.

Of course, thank yous and recognition don't hurt, either. For my part, I want to thank OFC staff and our public and private partners for the daily part they play in making life better for Ohio's families. While I believe that there are ways to improve, that does not mean that what we are doing now is wrong; it means this job and the needs of families do not allow us to stand still. Please know that I value you for the expertise and knowledge you bring to the table, and for the time and hard work you dedicate to our shared goals.

Ohio CASA Gets New Executive Director

OFC welcomes Doug Stephens as the new executive director of Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). Ohio CASA is the nonprofit state organization that supports county court-appointed special advocate and guardian ad litem (CASA/GAL) volunteers and programs through its leadership, administrative assistance, training and quality assurance.

CASA volunteers are extensively trained community members, appointed by their local juvenile courts, to advocate for a child's best interests, including the need for a safe and nurturing permanent home.

All Ohio CASA programs comply with national CASA standards, which exceed the requirements of Ohio Rule of Superintendence 48 regarding guardians ad litem.

Stephens' past work in child and family law makes him a natural fit as Ohio CASA's executive director. Many OFC staff know Stephens from his prior position as director of the Judicial and Court Services Division at the Ohio Supreme Court. In 1995, he worked closely with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to negotiate the first inter-branch agreement in Ohio. This collaboration between the Supreme Court and ODJFS still serves as the foundation for much of our joint work, including the Ohio Differential Response project.

"After 30 years in the court business, what I learned that first year is still true today: The most important work the courts do involves abused and neglected children," Stephens says. "Ohio CASA volunteers served 7,284 children in 38 counties in 2011. My goal – Ohio CASA's goal – will always be to provide a CASA volunteer for every child in need in all 88 counties." He adds that he feels blessed to be able to pursue work that has such a direct positive impact on children's lives.

Prior to his management career at the Supreme Court, Stephens worked at the Delaware County Juvenile and the Licking County Probate/Juvenile courts, where he served as court administrator. In 1990, Stephens joined the Supreme Court as its first statistics officer, managing the court's Statistical Reporting Section. He also served as the court's judicial assignment coordinator before being appointed director of the Judicial and Court Services Division in 2001.

Ohio CASA's former executive director, Jackie Wilson, will continue to work with OFC as the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption's director of training. In her new role, she will prepare the targeted recruiters hired throughout Ohio as a part of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids partnership between OFC and the foundation.

Child Protection Citizen Review Panel Recommendations

The 1996 amendment to the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act requires all states to convene local Citizen Review Panels to evaluate the effectiveness of local and state children services programs. Four Ohio counties – Athens, Henry, Summit and Warren – hosted panels in early 2012.

Ohio CASA facilitated the sessions and aggregated the recommendations from the panels into a final report. Local juvenile court judges invited session attendees who represented a cross-section of area individuals with an interest in and knowledge of the foster care system. They included children services agency staff, court personnel, CASA program staff and volunteers, school administrators, service providers, foster care parents and providers, local attorneys, and other interested parties. Sessions were hosted by:

- Judge Robert W. Stewart and CASA Program Director Rebecca Miller (Athens County)
- Judge Denise Herman McColley and CASA Program Director Pat Kryder (Henry County)
- Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio and CASA Program Director Beth Cardina (Summit County)
- Judge Mike Powell and CASA Program Director Malia Mumma (Warren County)

The majority of the discussion focused on four previously identified topics of interest:

- A child's voice in court
- Educational well-being plans
- Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (PPLA)
- Aging out needs

In each discussion, the topic was introduced with a simple statement of declaration. Then, a single piece of data was shared that represented the topic's current status in Ohio. This was followed by a

discussion prompted by other statements related to the original topic. Conclusions and recommendations were suggested.

Nine recurring recommendations emerged from the four discussions and were integrated with recommendations made by Youth Advisory Boards. Below are the recommendations themselves, as they appear in Ohio CASA's final report.

Recommendations

1. A plan and method of evaluating foster youth's educational progress should be developed and made a mandatory part of all case plans statewide. Although the mandated use and some basic elements will be the same for all 88 counties, some variation should be allowed based on school districts and child circumstances. The plan should be in writing before the beginning of the youth's ninth grade or as soon as reasonable if entering care later.
2. All case plans, including this educational material, should be signed by the youth, as age appropriate, indicating their knowledge of and participation in the drafting of the document. Additionally, case plans and other communications with the court should always include specific input from foster parents.
3. More data regarding youth in custody should be accurately collected and made available to the local professionals to assist in their service providing. PPLA placements, filing trends and service trends are just a few of the elements that should be tracked.
4. More continuous education should be offered statewide for case workers, supervisors and managers, including law, rule and policy updates.
5. Trainings should be provided on an ongoing basis regarding the rules and policies surrounding the appointment of GAL/CASA's, including but not limited to Superintendence Rule 48 enforcement and monitoring components.
6. Less formal gatherings of professionals should be encouraged on an ongoing basis. Similar to this year's Permanency Forums (Note: co-sponsored by the Office of Families and Children, Public Children Services Agencies of Ohio and Casey Family Programs), a lot of valuable information sharing will occur in a "roundtable discussion" setting that does not otherwise occur. This can also help establish philosophical expectations and limitations that are not addressed by written policies. Furthermore, it should lead to a stronger sense of accountability among the participants.
7. State Ohio Department of Job and Family Services workers should spend more time meeting face-to-face with local agency personnel in their counties to better understand actual practice and challenges. These meetings could be in the form of the trainings and roundtables already discussed or at other opportunities.
8. *In camera* hearings with the youth should be strongly encouraged for many hearings. Ongoing trainings should include this recommendation to help ensure the hearings are held as often as possible.
9. The rules and policies regarding the appointment of guardians ad litem/CASAs for youth adjudicated dependent should be reviewed to ensure appointment is occurring consistently and appropriately statewide. At a minimum, guardians ad litem should be appointed for all dependent children placed in foster care.

For a full copy of the report, contact Ohio CASA Executive Director Doug Stephens at dougstephens@ohiocasa.org.

Rule Review Update: #5101:2-48-12, Completion of the Homestudy

Stakeholders have asked that consistency between rules be considered during the rule review process. Rule Review Teams routinely identify language that may overlap with, or have ramification to, other teams' work. The teams bring these items to the Rule Review Coordination Board (pictured below) for discussion and resolution.

A stakeholder requested the following via the rule review website:

"When an ODJFS certified agency approves a family as foster-to-adopt caregivers, they follow both the adoption and foster care rules. The JFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members" is due 12 months prior to the recommendation for being a foster caregiver, but 6 months prior to the recommendation for being an adoptive parent. This causes a problem for applicants and agencies because health insurance policies typically only cover this medical service once annually. Therefore, could ODJFS amend this rule to require the 01653 to be due 12, not 6, months prior to the agency recommendation for initial approval for these cases? I believe doing so also supports the intent of HB 7 of the 126th GA which requires alignment of the foster care and adoption home study content, process, and time periods."

Sparked by this comment and the experience of members, the Resource Home Certification Team linked this rule with the foster care rules to create consistent assessment requirements between adoption and foster care. It was determined that the effort and time employees spend on the assessments have a financial impact on their creation. Aligning these time frames achieves cost savings by reducing employee work load. The Rule Review Team also recommended changes to clarify the information needed for the financial statement activities required when completing a homestudy. Sections of the rule with examples of recommended changes are highlighted below:

5101:2-48-12 (X)

(X) The agency shall require the following for the homestudy:

(1) In order to complete the [JFS 01673 "Assessment for Child Placement \(Homestudy\)"](#) (rev. ~~8/2005~~ 6/2011) an assessor shall conduct a face to face interview with all members of the household over the age of four years. The interview with all members of the household over the age of four years may be a joint interview or separate individual interviews.

(2) [JFS 01673-A](#) signed by the adoptive/foster parent(s), assessor and assessor's supervisor.

(~~2~~3) The JFS 01530, if applicable.

(~~3~~4) The [JFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members"](#) (rev. 6/2009) completed by a licensed physician, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse practitioner or certified nurse-midwife ~~not more than six months~~ *within one year* prior to an initial recommendation by the agency for approval...

(c) The agency may require an applicant to secure and provide to the agency a report of an additional examination by a licensed physician, or psychologist, or other certified or licensed professional if any of the following apply:

(i) The applicant or any person residing within the household has suffered a serious illness or injury within the past year.

(ii) It is determined to be necessary by the recommending agency to ensure the safety, health, or care of any foster child who may be placed in the home of the applicant

(5) References are required and shall be contacted by the agency prior to approving the homestudy:

(a) The names of three people unrelated to the applicant, that do not reside with the applicant and can be contacted by the agency as references.

(b) The agency may require the person to provide the names of the references and any signed release of information statements before the person participates in any preservice training required by rule 5101:2-48-09 of the Administrative Code.

(c) The applicant shall provide the name of any other agency or organization the applicant has had a homestudy approved as well as a written and signed release of information statement so any such reference may be contacted.

(d) The agency shall contact all adult children not residing in the home.

(e) Prior to approving the homestudy, the agency shall contact all references given by the applicant, including any other agency or organization the applicant has been previously approved as an adoptive parent.

(f) All contacts with references shall be documented in the narrative section of the JFS 01673.

(6) The [JFS 01200](#) "Fire Inspection Report for Residential Facilities Certified by ODJFS" (rev. 10/2000) fire safety approval or other form used for a local or state fire inspection. The report shall not be dated more than ~~six~~ **twelve** months prior to the agency's recommendation for approval.

(7) The [JFS 01348](#) "Safety Audit of a Foster Home" (rev. 1/2003), also used for adoptive homes, and documentation the residence satisfactorily meets all safety standards.

(8) ~~The [JFS 01681](#) "Applicant Financial Statement" (rev. 10/2000).~~ *The applicant shall have an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of the household and to make timely payment of shelter costs, utility bills, and other debts. To show the household has an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of the household and makes timely payment of shelter costs, utility bills, and other debts, an applicant shall provide at a minimum:*

(a) A completed [JFS 01681](#) "Applicant Financial Statement" (rev. 10/2000).

(b) Proof of income for the household for the most recent tax year prior to the date of application.

(c) Proof of income for the household for a two month period. The verification of income shall not be dated more than six months prior to the agency's recommendation for initial certification.

(d) At least one utility bill for each utility necessary to maintain the household. The bill or bills shall not be dated more than six months prior to the agency's recommendation for approval.

Section (AA)(1)

(AA) If the decision of the assessor is to approve the applicant(s) as an adoptive parent(s), the written notification required in paragraph (Y) of this rule shall include, at minimum, the following information:

(1) Date of approval of the adoptive homestudy with the date the approved homestudy or update expires. *If the applicants are being approved for both foster care certification and adoption approval, the adoption approval span will be the same as the date of the foster care certification.*

Teams often have recommendations that extend beyond their authorization, such as SACWIS modifications or legislative changes. These recommendations are compiled and submitted as a component of the team's report. During this particular review, the team recommended SACWIS changes that would allow more than one approved adoption home study to be entered into SACWIS for an individual family. This recommendation came about because the team felt that some families might be open to all possibilities, including public, private and international adoptions.



Back row, left to right: Dave Beck, OFC; Carole Fisher, OFC; Karen McGormley, Franklin PCSA; Jennifer Marple, Lorain PCSA; Amy Reinhart, Sandusky PCSA; Leslie McGee, OFC (blocked); Lisa Wodkowski, Tuscarawas CDJFS; and David Thomas, OFC.

Front row, left to right: Angie Hughes, Delaware PCSA; Anna Wyss-Zilles, OFC; Cheryl Yoder, MCWIC; Tara Unger, OFC; Susan Shafer, OFC; Toni Gillette, Ross PCSA; Tracy Roberts, Pathway Caring for Children; and Warne Edwards, OFC.

The Rule Review Coordination Board is facilitated by OFC's Partners for Ohio's Families' rule review coordinator, David Thomas, and includes the co-chairs of the eight rule review teams. Cheryl Yoder from the Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center provides additional support to the board. The

Rule Review Team co-chairs do double duty, coming together on a monthly basis to ensure cohesiveness across the eight teams. The board:

- Manages conflicts among Rule Review Teams.
- Resolves issues related to rules that cross multiple review teams.
- Identifies rules that could impact other program areas under review by other teams.
- Provides guidance regarding conflict or duplication of rule content among the teams.

All of the recommended changes from the eight Rule Review Teams come to the board for final approval. The board will likely continue to meet through the first quarter of 2013. The Rule Review Coordination Board also will make recommendations for an ongoing process of rule development and review that promotes coordination and integration among program areas and stakeholders.

Many thanks to the agencies that have generously supported the Rule Review Coordination Board and all the Rule Review Teams.

Priority Training Opportunities

A four-and-a-half minute video has been designed to inform public children services agency staff and caregivers about a new resource on the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program website called Priority Training Opportunities. This is a list of all the available trainings for child welfare staff that relate to needs identified in federal Child and Family Services Review and Child Protection Oversight Evaluation reviews. The list can be found at <http://www.ocwtp.net/PriorityTraining.htm>. It includes downloadable documents for each training opportunity.

The video is short, engaging and useful. Please share it with your staff and take advantage of this valuable resource.

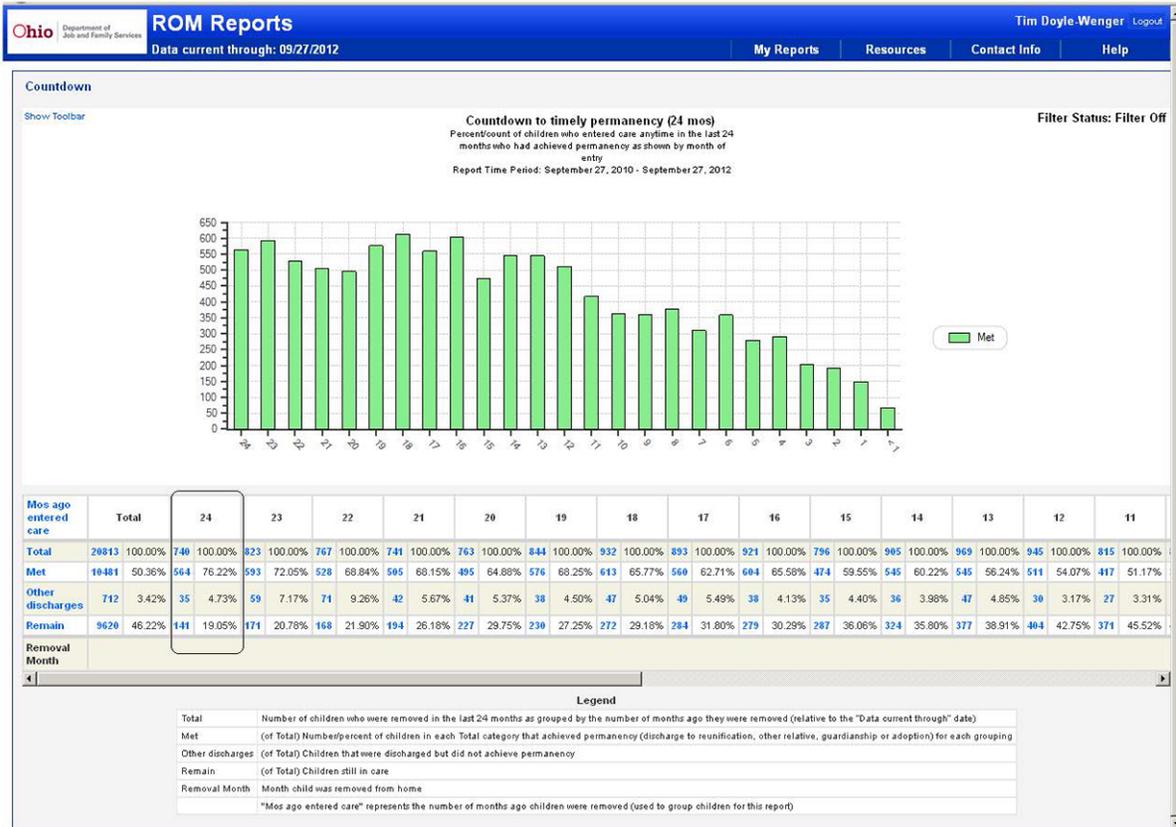
For more information about this video or the web page it is promoting, please contact Leslie Ahmadi at lahmadi@ihs-trainet.com or Kelli Hughes at kellihughes@ihs-trainet.com.

Using Data to Self-Assess: ROM Countdown to Permanency

The Results Oriented Management (ROM) Countdown to Permanency report gives workers and supervisors at public children services agencies (PCSAs) a user-friendly process that supports case management efforts to achieve timely permanency for children. The report lists children who have entered care in the last 24 months by the number of months they have been in care, based on the date in the "data current through" report.

The agency-specific view of this report allows PCSAs to track their progress toward achieving timely permanency for children in their care. Permanency is defined as a discharge to reunification, guardianship, kinship care or adoption. Non-permanency outcomes include emancipation, runaway, death or transfer to another agency.

In ROM, data displays as "Met" and "Remain." In the example shown below, the caseworker can select "141" to view the specific children who need continued efforts toward achieving permanency. ROM's Report Definitions tool can be accessed via the Help Link and provides additional support regarding the function of this report.



Please email Kristine.Monroe@jfs.ohio.gov or Tim.Doyle-Wenger@jfs.ohio.gov for more information on how to obtain access to ROM.

September 2012 Global Emails

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

9/6/12 - National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Survey Second Round Training

9/12/12 - Medicaid School Program Providers

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:

Every person has value and should be treated in a manner that is respectful and culturally responsive.

