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FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

**It is OFC's responsibility to provide leadership and maintain organizational and professional competence.**

**OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN**

### **A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – March 1, 2013**

March is going to be a busy month for the Office of Families and Children (OFC). Throughout the month, members of the office's five regional teams will hold their first meetings with the public and private agencies in their assigned regions. This may be the first opportunity for local participants to connect with some of us at OFC and put faces to names. Because stakeholder assessments, surveys and focus groups consistently identify high-quality personal relationships as a desired – and sometimes lacking – component of technical assistance, we decided to introduce ourselves and get to know our partners on a personal level. Although teams work together to support public and private agencies, our interactions rarely will involve the full team.

Participants at the March meetings also will get the chance to hear about OFC's Six Principles of Partnership. We established these principles as expected behaviors because we believe they will allow us to work more effectively together and with our local partners. Your county may have already taken the Six Principles to heart. If that's the case, feel free to join the conversation!

The Six Principles take time to become "business as usual" and are most effective when all partners are on board. We will work with the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program and our Six Principles instructors from Barium Springs to establish ongoing opportunities for communities that want to learn more. I believe that support never is one-sided – partners learn from each other – and was happy to note a nod to Ohio's training program when reading the Barium Springs' February newsletter (see the attached PDF, "Six Principles Newsletter"). In the Six Principles and all other aspects of our work, we should remember that enhancing our effectiveness doesn't mean we are doing poorly; it means we are committed to continuous improvement.

In keeping with the monthly OFC bureau highlights, this First Friday draws your attention to the Bureau of Fiscal Accountability. You probably associate this bureau with budget work, but it has many other functions. We'll take a look at several of the work groups it hosts in partnership with stakeholders.

#### **Spotlight on OFC's Guiding Principles in Action: The Bureau of Fiscal Accountability**

Regardless of your role in the child welfare system, if you have interacted at all with OFC, you probably have spoken with someone from the Bureau of Fiscal Accountability (BFA). To many, "fiscal accountability" means funding, and BFA is the point of contact for Ohio's child welfare budget and OFC's various funding streams. BFA manages OFC's budget, oversees OFC's contracting and procurement, processes all invoices for payment, and reconciles many grants. But BFA's responsibilities go beyond fiscal services to include program administration and office operations.

The bureau oversees the state's federal Title IV-E programming, including the Title IV-E Juvenile Court program and reimbursement rate setting for children placed in substitute care. It also is responsible for developing and monitoring Ohio Administrative Code rules in chapters 5101:2-47 and 49, which means that BFA staff spend a good deal of time providing training and technical assistance to court and agency staff.

Within the agency, BFA is the motor that keeps OFC moving! The bureau provides office support, such as procuring supplies and equipment, asset management, staff moves, management of facility issues, the leased vehicle program, and mail and phone operations.

Over the past year, BFA has established a number of working committees comprised of state staff, public children services agency (PCSA) representatives and private agency representatives to collaboratively tackle programming elements that have a significant impact for stakeholders.



The Bureau of Fiscal Accountability, left to right:  
Back row: Charlotte Gerhardstein, Dan Shook, Carole Fisher, Lisa Howard and Judy Saltsman  
Front row: Karen White, Jeanette Webb, Deanna Robb, Ryan Meanor and Ricardo Murph

### Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee examines OFC contracting and payment processes. Because of the breadth and complexity of the discussion, the committee formed three subcommittees to present recommendations to the Oversight Committee for final approval. Committee cochairs Crystal Allen, of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, and Mark Mecum, of the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies, are able to solicit plenty of comment from their associations' memberships regarding issues under the committee's consideration. They are aided by the cochairs of each of the three subcommittees. All recommended changes are subject to the established Joint Commission on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) clearance process for further stakeholder feedback, as described in the February 2013 First Friday.

### Title IV-E Cost Report and Monitoring Subcommittee

This subcommittee set out to accomplish a demanding task: review the current Title IV-E cost report form (JFS 02911 – Single Cost Report), its instructions and the related agreed-upon procedures (AUP), then make recommendations for revision. The workgroup wanted to establish a final product that simplified procedures, standardized processes, eliminated or reduced audit findings, and eliminated duplicate independent audits to save money at the local level.

The workgroup agreed to maintain existing methodology for cost reporting. However, the subcommittee recommended several enhancements to the cost report instructions, including more detailed language and examples, to make the cost report form easier to complete. The group hopes that by making it easier for users to complete the cost report worksheets, reimbursement ceilings will be more accurate. The cost report also includes lines for "Transportation - Maintenance" and "Transportation - Administration" to better identify providers' transportation costs. The cost report will generate daily costs for each category and will match the current Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) setup.

While the cost report instructions have been modified several times since state fiscal year (SFY) 2004, the current AUP has not been modified since SFY 2006, so the subcommittee recommended a full review of it. Fiscal subject matter experts formed a workgroup to address the issue. The workgroup strove for efficiency in its revisions while limiting the number of new program steps to keep costs low. Proposed revisions include a new "related parties" section to ensure costs are reported in accordance with federal requirements. Final revisions to the AUP will be put through JCARR clearance in the near future for further review and comments.

### Contract Subcommittee

This workgroup was created to bring consistency to the way public and private agencies contract for placement services. Members are creating a uniform contract, which will be mandated for use by public and private agencies. It will encompass 90 percent of all language in current contracts to help both parties understand the provisions and expectations of the agreement. If additional criteria are needed, the agency and provider can negotiate addendum items, as long as they don't exceed 10 percent of the total agreement. This is expected to benefit both parties by reducing the administrative burden of creating and reviewing contract language.

The subcommittee created a "Schedule A" form to document the per diem payments rates that are negotiated between an agency and provider for child placement. This form will be included as an appendix to the provider contract. Using Schedule A will eliminate the requirement for "by child" negotiations and rate documentation in each Individual Child Caring Agreement. The agreement and the Schedule A clearly indicate that the placement maintenance rate per diem agreed upon for foster homes will be the amount the private agency pays the foster parent. Thus, the amount a county agency identifies as the purchased foster parent payment in SACWIS is proportionate to the amount invoiced by the private agency and paid to the foster parent. Maintenance items negotiated outside the purchased foster parent payment are to be identified on Schedule A as an additional payment to the provider. Ohio Administrative Code rules will be amended accordingly.

### Level of Care Subcommittee

This group was charged with creating a level-of-care screening tool that links child characteristics, available services and levels of care, to help Ohio's child welfare agencies with placement decisions and service provision. Using this tool, placement agencies will be able to accurately and consistently assess the types of services a child needs and the level of care required to administer those services. Using this kind of screening assessment tool promotes consistent evaluations and services across jurisdictions and has the potential to improve child outcomes through better decision-making.

After reviewing existing assessment models, the subcommittee recommended the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) for Ohio adaptation. Developed by Dr. John Lyons of the Praad Foundation, this tool currently is used by approximately 39 states. Subcommittee members hope to be able to work with Dr. Lyons to adapt CANS to for Ohio use.

## **A Special Thanks to BFA's Subcommittee Members**

### Title IV-E Cost Report and Monitoring Subcommittee

*Cochairs:* Otis Crockron (PCSA) and Susan Zimmerman (Buckeye Ranch)

*Members:* Tim Dick (Clermont PCSA), Jewell Good (Montgomery PCSA), Nancy Harvey (Community Teaching Homes), Angela Houck (ODJFS Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services), Sheila Kochis (Franklin PCSA), Barbara Maxson (Hardin PCSA), Laura McMullen (Beech Brook), Karen Niese (Specialized Alternatives for Family and Youth), Glenn Richard (Youth Advocate Services), Lynne Smith (Clark PCSA), Tim Vale (Lighthouse Youth Services), and OFC's Charlotte Gerhardstein, Ryan Meanor, Deanna Robb and Dan Shook

### Contract Subcommittee

*Cochairs:* Donald Warner (Oesterlen Services for Youth) and Helen Lehman (South Central PCSA)

*Members:* Rusty Alexander (Specialized Alternatives for Family and Youth), Bruce Anderson (Licking PCSA), Melinda Eversole (Pickaway PCSA), Sheila Kochis (Franklin PCSA), Nancy Pepler (Beech Brook), John Stoia (The Twelve of Ohio), Michelle Stratman (Buckeye Ranch), Lora Wolfe (Hamilton PCSA), and OFC's Deanna Robb and Dan Shook

### Level of Care Subcommittee

*Cochairs:* Dr. Jeffrey Greene (New House of Hope) and Maureen Flynn (Summit PCSA)

*Members:* Kathryn Carr-Hurd (Franklin PCSA), Stephen Geib (Agape for Youth), Mark Groner (Beech Brook), Matt Kresic (Homes for Kids), Erin Reuter (South Central PCSA), Melissa Rodriguez (Specialized Alternatives for Family and Youth), Donna Seed (Lucas PCSA), Shayla Shavers (Youth Advocate Services), Shellie Stolfo (Choices, Inc.), Nicholas Tatman (Pickaway PCSA), Guillermo Torres (Cuyahoga PCSA), Margie Weaver (Hamilton PCSA), Anne Woodford (Buckeye Ranch), and Deanna Robb (OFC)

## **Regional Team Meetings: Coming in March 2013 to a Place Near You!**

Because of the success of a pilot project to determine whether local agencies thought regional cross-program teams would be useful for providing technical assistance, this approach has been expanded to all 88 counties. Newly formed teams have scheduled regional meetings to introduce team members and to explain the concept. Most importantly, these meetings offer an opportunity to open dialogue about what is important to each of us. We can't wait to get started!

The Northeast Region Team held its first meeting on February 27. Coach Lisa Wiltshire said she was "really pleased to see such a good representation of all invitees," including public and private agencies and juvenile courts. Asked about the benefits of the meeting, Lisa mentioned the "value in getting to meet and begin to know our county partners, so that we can move toward a meaningful and productive relationship."

Jennifer Justice emailed directors of public and private agencies and Title IV-E court contacts to invite them to their regional meetings. Participants are being asked to pre-register and identify the top two to three items they would like to discuss. Meeting dates, locations and registration contacts are attached. To receive a copy of your region's invitation, email [Joanna.Valentine@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Joanna.Valentine@jfs.ohio.gov).

We hope that combining the cross-program skills and expertise of OFC staff will help public and private agencies and Title IV-E courts meet the challenges of child welfare programming. We'd like to learn more about how you think we can work together to do this, so make sure to share your feedback and ideas with your agency's director for discussion at your region's meeting.

## **The Ohio Benefit Bank and Transitional Youth**

If you work with vulnerable families, you're probably familiar with the [Ohio Benefit Bank](#). This Internet-based, counselor-assisted service connects low- and moderate-income families to tax credits and work supports.

But did you know that the Ohio Benefit Bank also has self-service options (through [Benefit Bank Self-Serve Ohio](#)) to help youth and young adults who are transitioning from foster care to independent living?

- **Universal youth transition plan** — Caseworkers and adult supporters can use this plan to help foster youth plan strategies and set personal goals. It can be accessed by clicking the "Get Benefits" tab at the top of the home page, then clicking "Family Help" on the left, and then "Universal Youth Transition Plan" on the left.
- **Electronic storage space** — Former foster youth often say they have a hard time locating personal records, such as birth certificates, medical records, school records and Social Security cards. Lisa Dickson, communications chair of the Ohio chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America, describes tracking down vital records without adult assistance as "trying to pick up breadcrumbs." The Ohio Benefit Bank's electronic storage space allows foster youth to work with caseworkers or adult supporters to scan and store personal records that they will need when they leave care. Electronic storage is free, secure, available for life and accessible from any device with an Internet connection.
- **Help with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** — FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for grants, scholarships and student loans for college or job training programs.
- **Online Medicaid application** — Youth can apply for Medicaid coverage up to age 21.
- **Tax assistance** — The Benefit Bank can help former foster youth file annual tax returns.

Young people can work with their caseworker or adult supporter to create a username and password and complete the "Quick Check" that will give them a rough estimate of their eligibility for services.

## **Independent Living Update**

The independent living transitional youth coordinators are part of the planning team for this year's Ohio Reach Summit, which will take place on May 13 at the Crowne Plaza Columbus North. Ohio Reach is an organization dedicated to helping former foster youth go to college, stay in college and graduate. This is done in part through its network of foster care liaisons at many Ohio universities and community colleges.

The theme of this year's summit is "Going the Extra Mile." The keynote speaker will be Dr. Glenn DuBois, chancellor of Virginia's community colleges. In 2008, Dr. DuBois spent his summer vacation bicycling more than 700 miles to promote

“Great Expectations,” an effort that aims to increase the number of foster care youth who pursue and complete college.

Also speaking at the summit will be John C. Emerson, postsecondary education advisor for Casey Family Programs. Registration and breakfast will begin at 8 a.m., and the event will end at 3 p.m. To pre-register online, go to <http://ohioreach.wikispaces.com/>.

### **Rule Review Update: Substitute Care Rule Review Team**

Our ongoing work with local stakeholders continues alongside our regional team work. Each of the eight rule review teams has submitted its recommendations to the Rule Review Coordination Board, which is made up of the 16 team co-chairs. After the board examines the teams’ recommendations, it gives the revisions to OFC staff to start the rule promulgation process (described in February’s First Friday). OFC staff are working hard to process the rules promptly, in recognition of the long hours put in by other stakeholders in this process.

The Substitute Care Rule Review Team, co-led by Dave Beck and Amy Reinhart, the Substitute Care Rule Review Team was responsible for 52 rules that make up chapters 40, 42 and 48 of the Ohio Administrative Code. These rules establish criteria for placing children in substitute care. The team’s many hours, thoughtful insight and conscientious effort have paid off. Their review is finished, and the recommended rule revisions have been approved by the Rule Review Coordination Board. Now, OFC staff members in the Substitute Care and Permanency Section are working diligently to prepare the rules for clearance and the JCARR process.

Thanks to the members of the Substitute Care Rule Review Team for their commitment to the process and their strong knowledge base. Thanks also to the team members’ agency directors, supervisors and coworkers, who made their participation possible, and to the cochairs for their leadership, pre-meeting preparation and post-meeting work.

Amy Reinhart (Sandusky PCSA), cochair  
Dave Beck (OFC), cochair  
Daisy Anetor (OFC)  
Chip Bonsutto (The Mentor Network)  
Kristin Burgess (OFC)  
Darlene Dalton (OFC)

Elizabeth Petkoff (Buckeye Ranch)  
Erin Reuter (South Central PCSA)  
Marynell Townsend (Ohio Family Care Association)  
Michelle Vorhees (Allen PCSA)  
Karen Whillhite (Franklin PCSA)

### **New Public Service Announcement and Poster Series Promote Adoption**

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption works every day to break down the barriers to foster care and adoption. This poster series was created to dispel the many myths and misperceptions about children in foster care. A sample of one of the posters can be seen here on the right. [Order](#) one or 100; they’ll always be free.

Accompanying the posters is a new public service announcement promoting adoption of older youth in foster care, which began airing on February 27. Watch it [here](#) and feel free to share!



### **February 2013 Global Emails**

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

**2/05/13** - Independent/Transitional Youth Staff Statewide Meeting Regarding the Results of the Five Regional Meetings

**2/15/13** - Recent Recurrence Data Comparison Reports

**2/20/13** - Family Assistance Letter #123 – TANF Summer Youth Employment Program

**2/26/13** - Federal Indicator of Recurrence of Maltreatment

### **PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:**

It is OFC's responsibility to provide leadership and maintain organizational and professional competence.

If you want to subscribe to First Friday, have comments or ideas about content, or would like to be removed from the mailing list, please send an email [First\\_Friday@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:First_Friday@jfs.ohio.gov). For additions to or removals from the list, be sure to include your name, organization and email address.



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