



There is urgency and importance to our work.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – May 3, 2013

May is National Foster Care Month, during which we recognize the Ohio adults who “change a lifetime” by opening their homes and hearts to youth who are unable to remain with their biological families. I hope that you take this opportunity to reach out and thank a foster or kin caregiver for the work they do every day. We know that it is not an easy commitment and that caregivers need support to effectively juggle personal and professional demands. In this edition of First Friday, we examine how the Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA) is working to meet this need.

Most public children services agencies (PCSAs) consider their first line of support to be their assigned technical assistance specialist. The past several months have brought a significant number of staff changes to the OFC field offices, including the addition of four new technical assistance specialist positions. As we work to quickly fill vacant positions so we may continue to support your work, several PCSAs will be assigned new technical assistance specialists. We know that transitioning to a new technical assistance specialist assignment can be challenging for both the specialist and the PCSA, especially since there is no pause in the work that must be done. We hope to minimize this impact by transitioning the assignment change over time. If your PCSA is affected, you may have ideas for how we can make it a smooth transition. I would be glad to hear your suggestions.

I know that OFC is not alone in experiencing staff change. More than half the PCSAs have experienced a leadership change over the past year or two. Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Michael Colbert and I recently participated in the Ohio Judicial College’s New Judges Orientation, which had a class of 20, including 12 new judges with juvenile jurisdiction. Change also is coming to many PCSAs’ structure as some of Ohio’s stand-alone PCSAs combine with county departments of job and family services, and agencies move toward regionalization.

As we work through the challenges that inevitably accompany change, we must assume good intent, seek ways to support each other and understand the circumstances that necessitated the change. For inspiration, we might look to our youth in care, who are expected to function in a world of constantly shifting relationships, rules and structures.

I hope that, like me, you see this time of change as an opportunity to think about the ways things are, and the way they could be. This is a great chance to improve and grow.

Spotlight on OFC’s Guiding Principles: Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance

If anyone at a public or private children services agency was asked to quickly name an OFC staff person, the answer would likely be a member of the Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance (BCATA). BCATA staff provide technical assistance and oversight to public and private agencies and are agencies’ most consistent point of first contact. The bureau is comprised of 37 employees, including technical assistance specialists, licensing specialists and support staff, and is divided into two functional areas: the Agency Certification and Foster Care Licensing Section and the County Monitoring and Support Section. It is the only OFC bureau with staff housed outside the Columbus office.

The Agency Certification and Foster Care Licensing Section ensures the adequate and competent management of agencies that offer care to children in out-of-home settings, including foster care, adoption and residential

services. This section's licensing specialists monitor PCSAs, private noncustodial agencies and private child placing agencies to ensure compliance with the administrative, governance, fiscal, child services and treatment, and operational standards prescribed by the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code. Compliance is assessed through a series of announced and unannounced inspections and investigations. Approximately 300 agencies are certified by ODJFS and must be inspected by licensing specialists through physical site inspections, policy and/or record reviews, and interviews with child residents, foster parents and/or agency staff.

The work of the County Monitoring and Support Section primarily is carried out by technical assistance specialists, who conduct several reviews of all 88 PCSAs to ensure compliance with the Ohio Administrative Code. The reviews include Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE), Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), administrative reviews, child fatality reviews and complaint resolution. Technical assistance specialists also provide guidance to public agencies and IV-E courts regarding Ohio Administrative Code, child welfare programs and services, best practices, agency operational and/or organizational issues, agency policies, data analysis and outcome management, and linkage with appropriate resources.

Licensing and technical assistance specialists are assigned by region and agency. Because assignments are ongoing, these individuals develop personal relationships with staff at the public and private agencies they serve. It is not surprising that news of a change in a licensing or technical assistance specialist often is greeted with reactions ranging from caution to outright panic. We take that as a good sign!

It's often said that the darkest nights produce the brightest stars. From the standpoint of human resources, BCATA has seen some dark nights over the past year as a result of staff changes through promotions, resignations and retirements. Managers have been in a non-stop period of interviewing and hiring. While it always is difficult to lose staff with the knowledge, skills and natural talent necessary to work well with our public and private partners, we are happy to introduce these new technical assistance and licensing specialists, who are sure to shine:

Lynn Boose graduated from the University of Dayton with a bachelor's degree in communications and minors in sociology and women's studies. She has worked in child welfare for more than 12 years in Hamilton and Highland counties. Her experience includes ongoing services as a caseworker, manager and adoption/foster care assessor. Lynn is a technical assistance specialist in the Cincinnati Field Office.

Cynthia Jankuj earned her bachelor's degrees in psychology and political science and master's degree in public administration from Kent State University. She started working at the Cleveland District Office as a licensing/certification specialist in foster care in March. Before that, she was a planner in the QA Department of the Trumbull County Children Services Board, where she also spent three years as a caseworker. Cynthia loves to travel and has been a vegetarian for the last 15 years.

Robynn Jasper earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from The Ohio State University. She has 20 years of child welfare experience, starting at Franklin County Children Services as a child welfare caseworker, emancipation worker and court liaison. She also worked with exploited teens in partnership with the Columbus Police Department and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office. She then spent 10 years at Marion County Children Services as the intake and investigation supervisor. Robynn joined OFC in May 2008 as a SACWIS business analyst and now is a technical assistance specialist in the Columbus Field Office.

Amy Reinhart has a bachelor's degree from Kent State University and is a licensed social worker serving as a technical assistance specialist in the Tiffin Field Office. Prior to joining ODJFS, Amy was a supervisor at a county children services agency for more than 20 years.

Kimberley Stewart has a bachelor's degree in social work from The Ohio State University, a master's degree in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati and is completing a master's degree in social work from Boston University. She began her child welfare career at Franklin County Children Services as a university partnership student and later served as a child welfare caseworker for five years. Kimberley also spent three years working in juvenile and adult corrections. She was a licensing specialist in the Maumee Field Office and now is a technical assistance specialist in the Cincinnati Field Office.

Renee Williams earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work and her master's degree in public administration from The Ohio State University. She worked in the investigations department of Franklin County Children Services for 17 years, eight of them as a supervisor, and at Madison County Children Services for three years. She has been employed with OFC since June 2011 and recently became a technical assistance specialist in the Columbus Field Office.

May is National Foster Care Month

The Children's Bureau—together with the Child Welfare Information Gateway, the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections and the National Resource Center for Youth Development—is pleased to announce that the 2013 National Foster Care Month website is now online at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/>.

This year's theme is "Supporting Youth in Transition," and the website provides tools and information that highlight a variety of practices and approaches you can use to support your work with youth, such as:

- Resources to help create meaningful connections, partner with youth, advance permanency options, and prepare youth for successful transitions to adulthood;
- Real-life stories of children, youth and families involved in foster care; and
- Tools for promoting National Foster Care Month through email signatures and social media messages.

For more information, contact the Child Welfare Information Gateway at (800) 394-3366 or info@childwelfare.gov.

A Word from Barbara Manuel, chief of OFC's Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance

National Foster Care Month is a time when each of us is encouraged to pause in our day-to-day activities and say thank you to those individuals and families who have chosen to care for a child or a group of children in their home. When I was asked to write OFC's First Friday letter of appreciation, I immediately recalled my days as a caseworker and administrator in Cincinnati and the countless families who I depended upon to provide safety, love and stability to the children in their care.

It is true that these people do extraordinary things and give extraordinary contributions to the children they embrace within their families. But I don't think any one of them would want foster parenting to be thought of as only for the extraordinary. Foster parents are ordinary people who have love to share, as well as a desire to help a child because the child needs help, and it is the right thing to do. I am sure that we each know someone like this who deserves a personal shout-out.

There is the couple in their 60s at my church who just took in their two young grandnephews. There is the foster parent I've known since high school who makes sure every Christmas there is a gift under her tree for each of the 50-plus youth she has fostered over the past 20 years, because they always find their way back to her home during the holidays. But my first thank you this month is going to someone I interact with daily, who opened her home to a neighbor's child so he would not have to leave his neighborhood, his friends or his school. I asked her to share the experience of becoming a resource family. This is what she had to say:

Sometimes people come into your life, and you know right away that they are meant to be there; they serve some sort of purpose, teach you a lesson, or help you figure out who you are. This sums up how my husband and I feel about having John (not his real name) in our lives.

Over the past four years, John often spent time with our oldest son. From the beginning, I had a special place in my heart for him. His life was not always easy, and he didn't always make the best decisions, but my husband and I saw the good in him.

One evening, I was in a school meeting and received a text from my husband asking if I could come home, there was an emergency. When I arrived, a 14-year-old boy and one bag of clothes was sitting in my living room. It was John. The PCSA had received a report of suspected abuse, and John was being removed. His option was to stay with us or be placed into a foster home. It was never much of a decision. I am thankful for the caseworker who took the time and effort to seek out those who had a connection with John. I am thankful that John thought of us.

It wasn't an easy transition. John had to learn to live within our home, rules and structure, something he wasn't accustomed to. Our three boys suddenly were four in number, and there

was some serious adjustment to the new family dynamics. But in the short amount of time that John has been with us, he has made leaps and bounds not only with his behavior at school and grades, but his ability to express himself in an appropriate manner.

I can pinpoint the moment I realized that John had joined our family as more than just a place to live. The week before Christmas his case manager dropped off a gift card. John was so excited about this card that I agreed to take him to the store that night. Once there, he wanted only to shop for my three boys. I tried to explain that this was a gift for him, but he replied, "No, I don't need anything. I want to buy the boys and you presents for everything you have done for me."

Whatever happens, John has grown a place within our hearts and always will be a part of our lives. I always will be grateful to him for helping my family fill the space we didn't even know was empty!

Thank you to every ordinary individual who makes an extraordinary difference in the life of a child by opening your home, mentoring, offering a safe haven, or just being there.

Franklin County Office Consolidation Plan Announced

When ODJFS Director Colbert announced the agency's statewide office consolidation plan in January, he mentioned several consolidation options for Franklin County offices. After careful consideration, a decision has been reached.

In order to save ODJFS \$3.1 million annually, ODJFS will no longer be maintaining offices in the Lazarus Building in downtown Columbus. OFC staff currently stationed at Lazarus will move to 4200 E. Fifth Ave. in Columbus, also known as the Air Center, by June 14. We will keep partners updated on how this will impact contact information for OFC staff and other logistical aspects, such as meetings scheduled to be in the Lazarus building in downtown Columbus.

Mural Unveiled at Office of Families and Children

In the April edition of First Friday, we teased the unveiling of a new OFC mural that was created as part of the office's Partners for Ohio's Families (PFOF) campaign. PFOF aims to improve the technical assistance the state provides to local agencies and to achieve better outcomes for Ohio's children and families. As part of that, PFOF is working to improve internal communication and to remind staff of their mission: ensuring the safety of Ohio's most vulnerable citizens.

The new mural was designed by Jennifer Chema, a graphic designer and videographer in the ODJFS Office of Communications, and painted by students at Dana Elementary, an ODJFS Partners-in-Education school. Officially unveiled on April 17, it serves as a visual reminder of OFC's customers and PFOF's work.

"I'm so thrilled to have this reminder of why we do what we do in terms of supporting children and families in the state of Ohio," said OFC Deputy Director Justice.

OFC staff came up with the idea for the mural last spring. It consists of five panels, which together are 20 feet wide by 37 feet tall, representing adult protective services, child protective services, foster and kinship care, and adoption. The fifth panel represents Dana Elementary. All five panels are portable and will accompany OFC to its new location at 4200 E. Fifth Ave.

About 40 students in first through fifth grades at Dana helped Chema paint the mural from January through early March. The students worked under the direction of art teacher Kerry Hartnett. They enjoyed working on the mural while in art class and even during indoor recess, Hartnett said.

"They looked forward to working on it every day," she said. "It's a great group of kids, and they thought it was really cool to be a part of it."

Hartnett added that working on the mural had a special significance for the students, because Dana Elementary is scheduled to close at the end of the school year after 100 years in operation. Over the past several years, ODJFS has lent support to Dana in a variety of ways, from school supply drives to adopt-a-

family campaigns. After Dana closes, students will report to the new Starling prekindergarten through eighth grade school. Starling is also an ODJFS Partners-in-Education school.



Above: Dana Elementary students with (left to right) Jim Lacks, PFOF member; Kristin Gilbert, OFC project manager; Jennifer Chema, ODJFS graphic designer; Carolyn Brewer, PFOF member; Michael McCreight, Health and Human Services assistant director; Kerry Hartnett, Dana Elementary teacher; OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice; and ODJFS Director Michael Colbert.

Below: A composite image of the murals.



A Word from the Ohio Family Care Association

OFCA celebrates the commitment of foster parents across our state. May is the perfect time to remember the contributions of foster families who open their homes to help struggling families in every Ohio community.

Did you know that Ohio foster families make up more than 75 percent of the adoptive homes for children in the child welfare system of our state? This far exceeds the national average of 54 percent, showing that Ohio

foster caregivers see their service as a lifelong commitment to the children in their care. OFCA is proud to partner with these dedicated families, providing support, advocacy and education.

OFCA recognizes the unique challenges foster families face and seeks to provide support and connections that help families share strategies for successful parenting, time management and endurance. OFCA is working on ways to connect foster parents through regional support groups, online forums, and individual referral.

As a statewide organization that represents foster, adoptive, kinship and respite care providers and parents, OFCA seeks input from these families to understand the daily challenges they face while parenting vulnerable children. This information is shared with state leaders to inform and shape the policy and practice decisions that benefit caregivers and the youth they serve.

Education and high-quality training also are necessary for success. Children entering foster care may have complex emotional, medical and physical needs; caregivers need timely information to best meet those needs as children enter their care. OFCA makes resource families aware of trainings and educational resources at the local, state and national levels, as well as scholarships and educational opportunities for foster youth.

Finally, OFCA seeks to empower foster families and encourages agencies and state leadership to embrace the important role foster parents have in shaping the future of a child's life. Biological families are an integral component to this success, and children are better served when foster and biological families develop strong, lifelong relationships. OFCA has begun reaching out to birth, or primary, parents to learn from their experiences on how best to partner with the families of current foster children.

OFCA also supported development of the Ohio Primary Parent Advisory Council, which is comprised of Ohio parents who have been system-involved, successfully reunified and are at least one year beyond case closure. The parents on this council have an important perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the system and how we can all do better in caring for the most vulnerable children of our state.

For more information about the programs and services of OFCA, or to join our mailing list, please visit www.ofcaonline.org or email office@ofcaonline.org.

Child Welfare Advocates Honored on CASA Day

About 100 volunteers and staff from the Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) organization were recognized for their efforts to advocate for youth in the child welfare system on "CASA Day in Ohio," held April 30 at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center in Columbus. Ohio CASA is part of a national organization that supports volunteer advocates for children in child welfare cases.

"The CASA volunteer will research everything about the child – school, friends, home – everything about the child, and then make recommendations to the court on what's the best way to make it through adulthood," said Ohio CASA Executive Director Doug Stephens.

OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice thanked the CASA volunteers and staff for their advocacy, noting that ODJFS has partnered with local CASA programs since the 1980s. The agency sponsors CASA training programs, and in September ODJFS will once again sponsor Ohio CASA's annual conference, known as "Celebrate Kids!"

"At the state office, we definitely recognize how important your work is," she told the CASA representatives. "We know that a number of factors affect outcomes for children. One of these is a positive relationship with an adult, and you provide that relationship. You give courts a complete and accurate picture of children's lives and you bring them into the decision-making process about their own futures."

William Batchelder, speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, presented a resolution observing CASA Day. Melinda Sykes, director of Children's Initiatives for Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine's office, said the attorney general has dedicated \$2 million to expand Ohio CASA to counties that don't currently have the program. Ohio Supreme Court Justice Judith French, who hosted CASA Day, praised the volunteers' commitment to the youth they serve.

"The children that CASA volunteers seek to help come from all walks of life, all counties, all backgrounds," she said. "They become involved (in the child welfare system) through no fault of their own for a variety of reasons. But CASA's goals are always the same: to help them become productive young adults."

John Davis, a high school senior from Greene County, said having a CASA representative advocating on his behalf has helped prepare him to succeed in college and in life. Davis is president of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board, a statewide organization of youth who have experienced foster care. For more information about Ohio CASA, visit <http://www.ohiocasa.org>.



Left to right: Ohio House of Representatives Speaker William Batchelder, OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice and high school senior John Davis speak at the CASA Day in Ohio event.

Partners for Ohio's Families: Then and Now

It may be hard to believe, but it has been three years since the first round of regional forums, when the Midwest Child Welfare Center (MCWIC) travelled the state to ask public and private agencies about their relationship with OFC and how we could better work together. We hope that those who participated can see how their input shaped some aspect of PFOF.

It now seems appropriate to ask: Have we made a difference? What has changed for the better (or worse)? What still needs attention? We'd like to hear your experiences, opinions and suggestions. Later this month, MCWIC will distribute a link to an online survey that can be taken by any public and private child welfare agency employee. Responses will be confidentially compiled and summarized by MCWIC.

Throughout June and July, MCWIC will host facilitated conversations about the survey findings, your experiences with OFC and ways to continue moving forward. Results will be summarized and broadly disseminated by MCWIC. Most importantly, they will help us identify what is important to the public and private children services agencies we support, how we can improve service to them, and which practices we are doing right and should continue. If you have ideas about changes that could let OFC better support the delivery of services to improve outcomes for children and families, this is your forum.

You will receive registration information in mid-May, but save the date now to help make a difference.

- Northeast Ohio Regional Training Center (Akron) —June 24, 1 to 4 p.m.
- Beechbrook (Cleveland) —June 25, 9 a.m. to noon
- Zane State College's Willett-Pratt Training Center (Cambridge) —June 26, 9 a.m. to noon
- Ohio University Inn (Athens) —June 27, 9 a.m. to noon
- Youth Advocate Services (Columbus) — June 28, 9 a.m. to noon
- Southwest Ohio Regional Training Center (Hamilton) —July 8, 9 a.m. to noon
- Central Ohio Regional Training Center (Columbus) —July 9, 1 to 4 p.m.
- Lutheran Homes Society (Toledo) —July 10, 9 a.m. to noon
- Montgomery County Family Services (Dayton) —July 11, 9 a.m. to noon

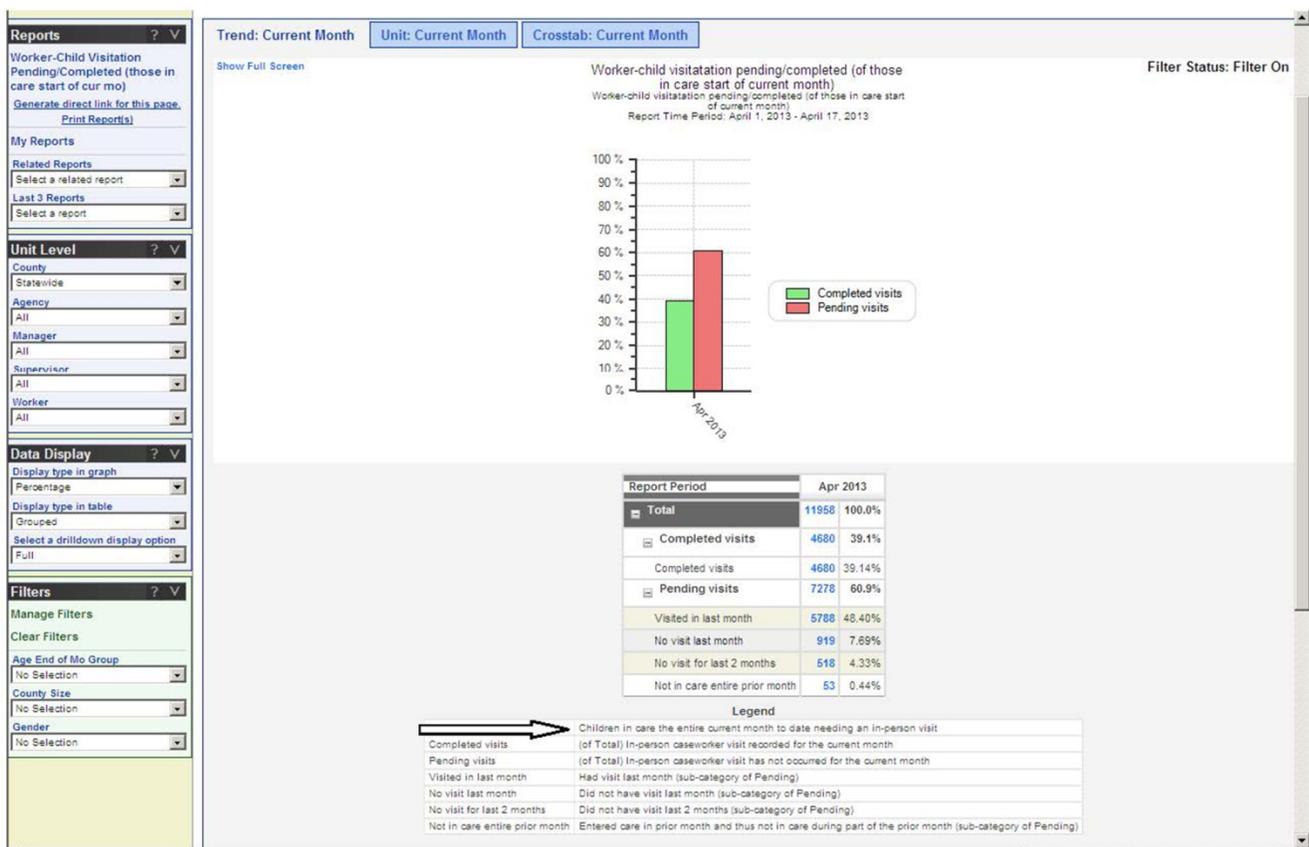
Using Data to Self-Assess: ROM's Worker-Child Visitation Pending/Completed Snapshot

ROM identifies the population of children in agency custody who require a visit during the current month. The other two ROM monthly visitation reports, "Months Worker-Child Visit Made" and "Months with Visit in the Placement Setting," report only on previous months.

The report time frame is the *Current Month*, which displays in the report header. Worker assignment is based upon the SACWIS Primary Worker, as of the end date of the "Report Time Period" (in the view below, April 17, 2013).

The "Pending Visits" expanded view section provides the user with four categories – "Visited in Last Month," "No Visit Last Month," "No Visit for Last Two Months" and "Not in Care Entire Prior Month" – which provide quick views of children who have not been visited in the current month. The user can view child details by clicking the number to the right of the category. This report helps users plan monthly visits by identifying children who have been seen but lack required SACWIS data entry.

Usage Tip: This is an excellent report to run early in the month in the "Unit: Current Month" view. It can then be distributed to unit supervisors or staff as a tool for planning monthly visits.



For additional information about this or other ROM reports, contact the SACWIS Help Desk.

Rule Review Update: The Resource Home Certification and Approval Team

Co-led by Anna Wyss-Zilles (OFC) and Tracy Roberts (Pathway Caring for Children), the Resource Home Certification and Approval Rule Review Team was responsible for 105 rules that make up chapters five, seven, nine, and select rules from chapters 33, 40, 42 and 48 of the Ohio Administrative Code. These rules establish criteria related to substitute care and placement. The team revised all assigned rules, which then were approved by the Rule Review Coordination Board. The rules now have moved into the following review stages.

The following rules became effective on April 1.

- 5101:2-5-04.1 Acceptance of Accreditation in Lieu of Certification Requirements
- 5101:2-5-14 Treatment or Diagnostic Services

- 5101:2-5-15 Volunteers and College Interns
- 5101:2-5-34 PCPA and PNA Case Plans and Administrative Case Reviews for Direct Placements
- 5101:2-7-08 PCPA and PNA Governance and Administration
- 5101:2-7-11 Socialization and Education
- 5101:2-7-15 Discharge Summary

The following rules have completed the clearance stage. The Business Impact Analysis is being drafted so they can move to the original filing stage.

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|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| • 5101:2-5-38 | • 5101:2-9-09 | • 5101:2-9-27 |
| • 5101:2-9-04 | • 5101:2-9-15 | • 5101:2-9-31 |
| • 5101:2-9-07 | • 5101:2-9-18 | • 5101:2-9-35 |
| | • 5101:2-9-26 | |

The remaining rules are in the internal review stage as OFC staff in the Substitute Care and Permanency section review them.

Thanks to the members of the review team for their commitment to the process. Thanks also to the team members' agency directors, supervisors and coworkers, who made their participation possible, and to the cochairs for the premeeting preparation, post-meeting work and their leadership:

Anna Wyss-Zilles (cochair), OFC
 Tracy Roberts (cochair), Pathway Caring for Children
 Anthony Paris, Mahoning CSB
 Charlie Christian, Ohio Family Care Association
 David Beck, ODJFS
 Betsy Keefer Smalley, IHS
 Sandra J. Carsey, LSW

Kim Romeo, Necco
 Gail Adams Licking PCSA
 Deanna Herold, Franklin PCSA
 Nancy Wolfe, Community Teaching Homes
 Tami Holcomb, MSSA, LSW
 Peg Burns, The Ohio Council
 Cynthia Mason, Trumbull CSB
 Tara Unger, ODJFS

April 2013 Global Emails

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

- 4/17/13 - Notice of Intended Action for the Center for Child & Family Development
- 4/30/13 - Federal Indicator of Recurrence of Maltreatment

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:

There is urgency and importance to our work.

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. For additions to or removals from the list, be sure to include your name, organization and email address.



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