



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

Each OFC staff member has a responsibility and commitment to the agencies and individuals that OFC serves.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – September 6, 2013

September marks the end of Ohio's partnership with the Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center (MCWIC). Personally, I have mixed emotions about this. MCWIC provided resources and an array of support that allowed us to approach our tasks in a manner not usually afforded to child welfare. I also am sorry to lose our almost daily connection with our colleagues at MCWIC. If you have participated in one of the work or advisory groups hosted by Partners for Ohio's Families (PFOF) over the past three years, you know that all of us – state, local, and public and private agency staff – have developed friendships that exceed standard professional relationships. I hope you all are able to join me in saying "thank you" to MCWIC staff, either in person or through email.

At the same time, I am excited to see where the next few years take us on our own. I believe that PFOF's many components have had a significant impact on how we do our work. As the various pieces of the grant evaluation come together, the findings look very positive. It appears that we are on the right track, and I am committed to continuing our focus on the five elements of the PFOF work plan: building a team approach, building institutional behavior, establishing structured communication, building a knowledge base, and supporting agencies to self-assess.

This issue of First Friday looks at the bureau that supports much of the work we do to build a knowledge base and help agencies to self-assess: the Bureau of Automated Systems. It is easy to forget how different child welfare was in Ohio before we had the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). SACWIS team members work every day to respond to users' changing needs and to adapt to the sometimes conflicting demands of accountability, accessibility and ease of use. If you are unfamiliar with the tools and resources that are available to users, I hope you take the time to learn more. You also might have some good ideas about what else we can do to make the system better. We always appreciate hearing your feedback.

First Friday is one of many methods we use to communicate with local staff. As with most updates of this nature, we receive little feedback on how it is received. During my visit to the Lake County Department of Job and Family Services last month, I learned that children services administrator Teresa Palm sends First Friday to all children services supervisors, and that they appreciate its news, updates and opportunities to learn more about OFC staff and programs. That was so great to hear! As always, I very much appreciate the hospitality of public and private agencies who open their doors to me and my staff. We never fail to be impressed with the dedication and commitment of Ohio's child welfare community.

Spotlight on OFC's Guiding Principles: Bureau of Automated Systems

The OFC Bureau of Automated Systems partners with county stakeholders, information technology staff and federal partners to support mandated child welfare activities. The bureau is led by Tresa Young, and it has four core sections: Help Desk/Business Support, led by Kevin Bullock; Testing/Applications Support, led by Iroabuchi Arum; Financial Support, led by Alicia Allen; and Data Reporting, led by Kristine Monroe. They supervise approximately 26 business analyst and other professionals, working together to maintain and improve SACWIS, provide user and policy support, and improve child welfare outcomes.

Together with county staff, the Automated Systems team has improved SACWIS and data reporting over the last several years. Although many SACWIS improvements are still in the works, recent innovations already set Ohio's system apart from many other states. These include invalid payment processing functionality, automated system tracking, an online National Youth in Transition Database survey, extensive user documentation and training webinars on the SACWIS knowledge base, private child placement agency access, and online data quality integrity tools. State staff members are grateful to county staff who value meaningful data and use it to improve and monitor practice. The bureau frequently solicits SACWIS feedback from local staff through regular user group meetings, joint application design sessions, testing activities, build calls, surveys and focus groups. If you would like to participate in these feedback activities, please email tresa.young@jfs.ohio.gov.

Over the past 12 months, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families has issued a series of program instructions and memorandums to encourage states to implement programs that monitor and improve data quality and service availability. Meaningful improvements in child-level and system-level outcomes are possible if agencies are able to (a) anticipate the challenges that children will bring with them when they enter the child welfare system, (b) rethink the structure of services delivered throughout the system, and (c) minimize practices that don't achieve desired results while expanding evidence-based interventions. These efforts require a commitment to developing and offering evidence-based treatments, as well as documenting the delivery, effectiveness and cost of services associated with families in need.

Many new data quality monitoring tools are available to counties, including the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) exception reports, service utilization reports, comprehensive visitation reports for children in care, and Alternative Response summary reports. They are available in SACWIS, Results Oriented Management (ROM) and the Business Intelligence Channel (BIC). Based upon county feedback, we continue to focus on and improve system reports. We also continue to work on streamlining SACWIS data entry to help ease the challenges child welfare agencies face due to staff turnover, limited funding and potential financial sanctions. At the same time, we ask for your continued commitment to ensure that Ohio's child welfare system meets mandated requirements and outcomes for the families we serve. We greatly appreciate counties that continue to involve staff in SACWIS development and data reporting activities.

New National Youth in Transition Database Standard Begins Soon

In the July issue of First Friday, we told you about the second round of survey collections for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). To meet federal funding requirements, states must collect information on each youth who receives independent living services, as well as demographic and outcome information for some of those youth over time. Outcome information is gathered by surveying youths on or around their 17th birthdays. This group is known as the "baseline population." The same youth are surveyed again as a "follow-up population" on their 19th and 21st birthdays.

In Ohio, the second round of survey collections for the NYTD cohort study begins October 1, when we must begin surveying a new 17-year-old baseline population. The information must be collected on or within 45 days of their 17th birthdays, within the same reporting period as the birthday. The reporting periods are October 1, 2013, through March 31, 2014, and April 1 through September 30, 2014. A SACWIS tickler will identify youth in the population and remind staff that a survey is required.

Please remember: Youth surveyed in the 17-year-old baseline population must be included in the 19- and 21-year-old follow-up populations in future federal fiscal years. Please make sure you collect complete future contact information from the youth before they leave custody so they can be reached for future surveys. If you have questions, please email Elaine.Early-Hall@jfs.ohio.gov or Cathy.Ghering@jfs.ohio.gov.

Have You Visited the SACWIS Knowledge Base?

If not, you are missing out on a valuable and easy-to-access resource. Since it went live in February 2012, the user-friendly knowledge base has offered an array of tools to aid visitors in locating needed support. Tools include the following:

- Keyword search box
- Article library
- Ability to add attachments to articles
- Ability to add and categorize new articles based on menu/submenu bars
- Ability for ODJFS staff to post audio and video files for “How To” demonstrations
- Forum for group discussions
- Instant messaging
- Event calendar with upcoming events info
- “SACWIS News” module
- SACWIS module buttons, including intake, case, provider, administration and financial
- Interface to view SACWIS Help Desk ticket status
- Section for county users to electronically submit SACWIS Help Desk tickets

The SACWIS knowledge base contains 372 articles written by SACWIS staff, more than 30 webinar training videos and YouTube videos to complement to knowledge base content. Check it out for yourself at <http://jfskb.com/sacwis/>.

Did You Know?

Ohio's SACWIS is one of the few web-based child welfare information systems in the country and serves more than 7,000 users. Between July 2012 and July 2013:

- More than 1,400 users participated in an April survey, in which 83 percent of respondents rated SACWIS as supporting "all" or "most" required child welfare activities.
- The SACWIS Help Desk resolved 8,430 problem reports, or an average of 648 reports each month.
- 1,200 enhancements were introduced.
- 39 percent of enhancements were to online ROM and BIC reports, the most since SACWIS was implemented.
- Collaborative partnerships between the SACWIS team and county agencies ensured that all federal reports (AFCARS, NCANDS, NYTD and monthly visitation statistics) were submitted within required time frames at acceptable quality thresholds.
- The SACWIS team worked hard, and continues to do so, to expand access to the system and make it easier to use SACWIS in the field.

New Special Projects Section Established

The Special Projects Section is the newest addition to the Bureau of Child and Adult Protection Services. Led by Sonia Tillman, this section oversees a range of important and high-priority initiatives, including Differential Response and Connecting the Dots. Sonia's team includes Susan Halter and Laurie Valentine, our transitional youth coordinators, and Regina Dawson and Alex McFarland, our Connecting the Dots program coordinators. Please don't hesitate to reach out to them if you have questions about these efforts.

New Faces and New Places

The past several months have continued to bring change to OFC staffing through retirements, resignations and promotions. Please join us in welcoming the following staff to their new positions.

Alicia Allen is a new human services program administrator in the Bureau of Automated Systems. Many of you already know Alicia from her prior role as a business analyst on the SACWIS Finance Team. She brings to her new position a familiarity with management, policy and SACWIS, as well as financial management experience from her employment with the Ohio Department of Youth Services. Alicia has a master's degree in political science and public policy administration and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Edward "Brett" Couch joined OFC as a foster care licensing specialist in the Cincinnati field office. His impressive range of expertise includes 15 years of child welfare experience with Butler and Warren public children services agencies and experience with vocational rehabilitation and psychiatric and hospital care. He

has been an Occupational Safety and Health Administration trainer, a crisis prevention instructor and a training supervisor. Brett also is a licensed emergency medical technician.

Amanda Fenimore is a new foster care licensing specialist in the Maumee field office but has been with ODJFS since 2005, most recently as a business analyst in the Bureau of Child Care Automated Systems. Before joining ODJFS, she was employed by the Ohio Department of Youth Services. Amanda grew up in northwest Ohio. She has a bachelor's degree from The University of Findlay and a master's degree from Tiffin University.

Corie Huxford is a new foster care licensing specialist in the Columbus field office. A licensed social worker, Corie has a diverse 16 years of experience in child care and child welfare. She has filled roles at children's residential centers, foster care agencies and the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Karen McGormely comes to the Bureau of Automated Systems as a business analyst with almost 20 years' experience in child welfare, the last 17 with Franklin County Children Services. Karen's technical skills and expertise with adoption and the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) will be a great asset to her new position. While at Franklin County Children Services, she served as an adoption and Wendy's Wonderful Kids supervisor, as well as the office's ICPC consultant. She has a bachelor's degree in social work from Miami University and a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University.

Kristine Monroe has been promoted from a business analyst to a human services administrator in the Bureau of Automated Systems. In her five years with the bureau, she has developed extensive expertise with the AFCARS, ROM and BIC reporting systems. Prior to joining OFC, she spent six years as a child welfare caseworker with the National Youth Advocate Program and Franklin County Children Services. She has a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in social work.

Heather Spencer has joined OFC's Substitute Care and Permanency Section as a human services developer assigned to ICPC. Previously, she was a business analyst for the Bureau of Automated Systems, where she helped build ICPC functionality into SACWIS.

Sonia Tillman has expanded her role as OFC's Differential Response coordinator. Now she oversees the new Special Projects Section, which includes both Differential Response and Connecting the Dots. Sonia is a specialized adoption assessor with 18 years of child welfare experience from working at both the Hamilton and Montgomery county departments of job and family services. She has a bachelor's degree in criminology/criminal justice from The Ohio State University, a master's degree in applied behavioral sciences from Wright State University, and a master's degree in social work with a concentration in social work administration from the University of Cincinnati.

Evidence-Based Practices in Child Welfare

If you recently applied for outside funding or discussed programming, it is likely that someone has asked if you use evidence-based practices (EBPs). While most of us know what EBPs are and want to use them to replicate successful programs, navigating the vast amount of information on EBPs can be overwhelming.

The National Resource Center for Permanent Family Connections has developed a new webpage on its main website that focuses on this important topic. Content is gathered from the center, the U.S. Administration for Children and Families' Children's Bureau and its Training and Technical Assistance Network, and individual states. The website provides brief introductions to common practices, as well as databases and directories of EBPs and a "What's New" section. Make sure you visit the site often, as additional EBP overviews and content will be added regularly. You can find it at <http://www.nrcpfc.org/ebp/index.html>.

We Heard You: Child Welfare Managers' Meeting

During the recent regional team meetings, you told us that you would like more opportunities to learn about new rules and policies, and that we should consider webinars and virtual meetings using electronic conference sites. We heard your requests and are making that happen.

On Aug. 21, the Bureau of Child and Adult Protection Services brought back the child welfare managers' meetings, this time in webinar format. More than 100 public and private child welfare agency representatives

listened to policy and program updates from the bureau's Child Protective Services and Substitute Care Policy staff. Bureau staff provided guidance on such things as new policy for foster care exit interviews and youth consumer credit reports, as well as pending changes to foster caregiver training stipends and the audit requirements for agency certification/recertification. Don't worry if you missed the webinar; a recording will be available soon via the SACWIS knowledge base. (See above for more information on the knowledge base.)

Your post-webinar feedback was so positive that we have decided to offer child welfare manager webinars on a quarterly basis. The next one is planned for December 2013 and will be listed on the OFC event calendar. If you would like to be added to the notification list or have any questions regarding the Aug. 21 webinar, contact Jennifer Kobel at (614) 752-1109 or Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio Child Welfare Featured in National Publication

The September issue of Children's Bureau Express (CBx), the monthly online digest distributed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, mentions two Ohio initiatives: Connecting the Dots and Differential Response. Franklin County's Differential Response practices were called out in an article titled "Differential Response and Disparities in Child Welfare," while Connecting the Dots was featured in a standalone article. Congratulations to all of the committed state and local staff who work to make these and other collaborative initiatives successful and sustainable.

Those who are not familiar with CBx should be sure to check it out this month and in the future. It is a valuable compilation of the latest resources, scholarly publications, promising child welfare practices, and upcoming training opportunities and webinars. View it at <https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm>.

Partners for Ohio's Families Advisory Board

For the duration of our MCWIC grant, the state-level PFOF Advisory Board has provided key guidance and direction for all of our PFOF activities. We hope that in the three years of the board's operation, you have felt its influence, reached out to one of its members with ideas, or witnessed your idea in action.

During the board's spring and summer meetings, members discussed whether PFOF would continue to be needed after the MCWIC partnership came to an end, and if so, what function it should serve. The consensus was that maintaining and improving our partnerships with local agencies will always be a priority, and that much work remains to be accomplished. We have work groups and ad hoc committees for specific issues, but we still can benefit from an overarching advisory board whose main concern is how well OFC and its stakeholders support each other, to better serve families and children.

The board will continue to share information and solicit feedback, and it will continue to advise OFC regarding the regional technical assistance teams, the rule review process, the Deemed Status Workgroup and ongoing quality assurance. The board has decided to be nimble in its approach to these and other issues and to reassess its results on an annual basis. It also plans to allow for broader participation over time, to ensure that it always will have experienced and well-informed leadership.

At its Nov. 14 meeting, the PFOF Advisory Board will adopt its new post-MCWIC charter, which will impact all of us in Ohio's child welfare community. The charter and meeting minutes will be posted on the PFOF website. Please take the time to keep up with these activities and make your perspective known to board members. You can find their names here: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/PFOF/PDF/PFOF-Advisory-Board-2013.stm>.

August 2013 Global Emails

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

8/13/13 - State Adoption Incentive Program

8/15/13 - National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Survey Response Rate

8/26/13 - State Adoption Incentive Program (follow-up)

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:

Each OFC staff member has a responsibility and commitment to the agencies and individuals that OFC serves.

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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