



A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – October 4, 2013

I am so glad OFC can use First Friday to highlight the accomplishments made possible through collaboration with our public and private partners. The message of this month's principle is clear to me: Our outcomes *are* better when we work together, whether on behalf of a child in need or to create a new approach for families, as with the design and implementation of Ohio's Differential Response system.

This month's First Friday highlights the efforts of the Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers to build a collaborative statewide network of first responders for minors who are victims of human trafficking. I was honored to give opening remarks at their recent conference, in front of stakeholders from all over Ohio and beyond. It was clear that each individual in this impressive gathering of almost 200 professionals – representing all disciplines engaged in the investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse – is committed to the task that brought them together. Visit <http://www.oncac.org> to learn more about Ohio's children's advocacy centers.

OFC's flagship example of successful collaboration is ProtectOhio. If you are not familiar with this initiative, click the ProtectOhio button on the OFC website, <http://jfs.ohio.gov/Ocf/index.stm>. The structure of Ohio's Title IV-E waiver requirements has changed considerably over the last 17 years. ProtectOhio's dedicated consortium of county and state representatives has addressed these challenges and is considered to be a national leader for the promotion of flexible funding. I would like to express my appreciation to cochairs David Boyer (Muskingum County) and Louise Brown (Medina County), as well as OFC's James Lacks, for their ongoing ProtectOhio leadership.

ProtectOhio has reached a critical juncture: Ohio is halfway through its five-year federal extension of Title IV-E waivers. This month, the consortium was asked to establish a small working group to begin thinking about what should happen next. Group meetings will start as small discussions that will eventually grow to include full engagement of all stakeholders. The federal government has issued many new requirements for states applying for waivers. Ohio will have an opportunity to review how our current waiver is structured and evaluated, and to consider whether statewide expansion is in the best interest of the children and families we serve. The future of the nation's waiver program also is the subject of ongoing dialogue at the federal level, so it is vital that we stay informed. I encourage everyone to review materials on the Children Bureau's child welfare waiver website, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/programs/child-welfare-waivers>.

Finally, I would like to extend my personal appreciation for the hard work of everyone who participated in Ohio's recent Title IV-E Review. This review required more documentation than ever before, and the federal team noted many strengths. Although we won't know the final outcome for a few more weeks, it appears that we have work to do. If we take advantage of the lessons learned through this process, I am confident we can make the changes necessary to ensure federal compliance with the Title IV-E regulations. Success for families and children is dependent on our ability to work together.

Spotlight on OFC's Guiding Principles: The Bureau of Fiscal Accountability

OFC's Bureau of Fiscal Accountability has been busy! Over the past several months, staff have collaborated with county partners to gather records, perform test reviews and finish other preparations for the federal eligibility review of Ohio's Title IV-E program. During the week of Sept. 16, staff from OFC, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and a Marion County staff member participated in the 2013 Title IV-E foster care maintenance federal eligibility review.

To be considered in substantial compliance with federal requirements, Ohio needed to achieve a minimum passing compliance rate of 95 percent or above. To successfully pass the primary review, Ohio could have no more than four errors out of the 80 cases reviewed.

After a very long week of reviewing cases and discussing Title IV-E regulations, the final results still are unknown. ACF is seeking additional information for 13 cases. Bureau staff have about two weeks to gather this information from our county and private agency partners.

During the exit conference, ACF identified program strengths and areas needing improvement. Notable strengths include the following:

- Children were returning home or to other planned permanent living arrangements quickly.
- Cases were presented in court frequently.
- County complaints were detailed and well-documented.
- Title IV-E eligibility determinations were complete, detailed and easy to follow.
- Payment histories were complete and detailed.

These all are points to be proud of. But we also have a few things to work on—specifically, the following:

- With the exception of a few counties, many court orders for removal lacked specific information about who the child was being removed from and the circumstances that led to a “best interest” and “reasonable efforts” finding.
- Some court orders identifying whether the agency made reasonable efforts to finalize a child's permanency plan lacked specific information regarding the services being provided. In some cases, the court orders did not include actual judicial findings.
- Background checks for foster parents and staff working in residential centers and group homes were sometimes missing.

We expect to receive the final report within 30 days. OFC would like to thank our county and private agency partners for working closely with us to gather all the information needed for this review. Without your support and teamwork, this monumental task would not have gone as smoothly as it did.



Federal- and state-level members of the Title IV-E review team.

Collaboration = Cash Savings

Intuitively, we each know the truth in this month's principle. But the Mahoning County Juvenile Court recently saw the financial impact of what can happen when we work together.

County juvenile court staff often struggle with the complexities of completing their claims for federal Title IV-E reimbursement, and the Mahoning County Juvenile Court was no exception. Jenn Pangio, the court's Title IV-E administrator, came to her position with little training on the claims process, so she needed help learning how to claim maintenance and administrative costs for youth in the court's care and control. As she was learning the ropes, she also discovered that many previous quarterly claims and foster care maintenance payments had not been completed or submitted for reimbursement.

Jenn contacted OFC's Bureau of Fiscal Accountability for technical assistance. She attended their trainings and information sessions, such as the Title IV-E Guidance training for new court personnel, the webinar on how to allocate costs and prepare the quarterly billings, and the juvenile court roundtables. She also worked with staff from the ODJFS Bureau of Fiscal and Monitoring Services, Summit County Juvenile Court and the Mahoning County Children Services Board to learn more about completing claims.

As a result of this collaboration, the Mahoning County Juvenile Court now has a solid Title IV-E claims process. Jenn was able to claim two years of administrative reimbursement costs for the court. The claims totaled more than \$660,000, and 16 months of unclaimed foster care maintenance payments, totaling nearly \$80,000. These much-needed funds will be used to improve children and youth services in Mahoning County.



Through a collaborative training effort, Jenn Pangio was able to quickly learn the Title IV-E claims process and facilitate a major cash savings for the Mahoning County Juvenile Court. Staff in the collaboration include, left to right: Jenn Pangio, Mahoning County Juvenile Court; Ricardo Murph and Charlotte Gerhardstein, OFC Bureau of Fiscal Accountability; and Jane E. Wilson, Summit County Juvenile Court. Not pictured: Leighann Cook, ODJFS Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services, and Kathy Thomas, Mahoning County Children Services.

Maintaining Family Medicaid Coverage When a Child is Placed in Custody

Ohio Medicaid regulations allow a family to maintain family Medicaid coverage when a child is placed in the temporary custody of a public children services agency (PCSA), so long as the plan for the child is reunification. However, these families often lose their Medicaid coverage anyway.

OFC worked with the Office of Medical Assistance (OMA) to determine why this was happening, and OMA discovered the source of the problem. It identified several cases in which children were removed from the family case as a result of PCSA custody, but the caseworker did not code the AEIID screen in CRIS-E with the temporary absence code "33." Some cases were noted in C-LRC as having a reunification plan; others were not. OMA has alerted its county compliance area of this issue to resolve it.

Grandparent Kinship Group Recognizes ODJFS Leadership

ODJFS Director Michael Colbert and OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice were among those honored at the 2013 Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition Conference last month in Columbus. The event brought together about 100 kinship professionals and caregivers from across the state to discuss issues of concern to grandparents raising their grandchildren.

The awards were presented by coalition copresidents Patrick Donovan, kinship coordinator for Muskingum County Children Services, and Jamie Richardson, a programming specialist with the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio. They also honored coalition cofounder Sandy Powers, state Rep. Cheryl Grossman and Jessica Hollins, founder and executive director of My Very Own Blanket, an organization of volunteers who make blankets and other items for children in foster care.

An estimated 200,000 children in Ohio are being raised by their grandparents or other kinship caregivers, or at least 7 percent of all children in the state. To learn more, visit <http://www.ohiograndparentkinship.org/>.



Patrick Donovan (left) and Jamie Richardson (right) pose with Director Colbert after he accepted the award recognizing him as an honorary member of the Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition.

Human Trafficking First Responders Trained

As part of an effort to establish a statewide network of first responders for minor victims of human trafficking, nearly 200 professionals from local children services, law enforcement, judicial, mental health and medical agencies attended a two-day training last month. It was funded by OFC using funds from the federal Children’s Justice Act; ODJFS and the Ohio Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers were among the sponsors. The conference – “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: Interviewing Victims, Investigation and Prosecution” – took place Sept. 25 and 26 in Columbus.

“Human trafficking is not a simple issue that can be easily addressed by fixing something, or writing a new law,” OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice said in welcoming participants. “Progress requires the coordinated response of lots of smart people with complementary talents, resources, responsibilities – professionals like yourself – that understand the importance of working together in partnership.”

ODJFS has been at the forefront of efforts to prevent human trafficking in Ohio. Governor Kasich’s Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force charged the agency with leading a workgroup to identify youth most at risk, and to develop and implement a plan to provide services to them. The conference was one part of that plan.

Speakers discussed the myths of minor sex trafficking, the medical needs of victims, the importance of forensic interviews, resources for professionals, and how to identify victims and others who might be vulnerable, among many other topics.

The keynote speaker was Theresa Flores, a human trafficking survivor, author, victim’s advocate, licensed social worker and founder of Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution. She talked about how she was coerced into sex slavery as a teenager, how she escaped, and how she uses her experiences to educate others.

“Developing a relationship is key to helping these kids and these women,” Flores said. “You have to check with them every day and say, ‘How are you doing?’ Because nobody else cares.”

Human trafficking is a crime in which individuals are forced to engage in forced labor and/or prostitution. Each year, more than 1,000 Ohio children are victims of human trafficking, and an estimated 3,000 more are believed to be at risk.



OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice (left) and keynote speaker Theresa Flores (right) address attendees at the “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: Interviewing Victims, Investigation and Prosecution” training.

New Human Trafficking SACWIS Screen

Effective September 20, SACWIS users can now record prior human trafficking concerns for children in care. Users must answer a new question on the Basic Screen of the Intake module, regarding whether the child's report alleges human trafficking. The Harm Description List on the Disposition Information Screen also now includes new options: "Trafficked Child – Sexual Abuse" and "Trafficked Child – Forced Labor."

Users can examine cases with reports of human trafficking to determine whether the concern was raised during the reporting process or through the assessment. The state also will be able to report how many children had a disposition with a harm description as a trafficked child. SACWIS staff continue to work with users to explore ideas and are open to suggestions. For more information, email Michele.Lidle@jfs.ohio.gov or Colleen.Tucker@jfs.ohio.gov.

Child and Youth Exit Interview Form Now Available

Since June 1, all children in Ohio who are 5 and older and leaving a foster care placement should have had the opportunity to be interviewed to describe that experience. Asking children for their feedback has many benefits. It's empowering for the child, it will help guide possible future placements, and it will help strengthen Ohio's foster care system, by identifying strengths and weaknesses in both the system as a whole and individual homes.

OFC recently developed a form to guide caseworkers through this process: the JFS 01678, "Foster Care Exit Interview." Based on a similar form used in Florida, the JFS 01678 will help ensure that critical questions are asked, and that feedback is constructive.

We are interested to hear the creative ways agencies use this interview. To share your ideas or comments, email Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov. You can view the Ohio Administrative Code rule governing this process at <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/5101:2-42-65.1>.

Pinwheels for Prevention Available

For a limited time, you can order pinwheels from the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF) to help raise awareness about child abuse and neglect. Orders are subject to availability, so be sure to place yours soon. Cutoff for orders is October 11. A box of 24 pinwheels is \$20, while a box of 192 pinwheels is \$130.

To place an order, email ohio_children's_trust_fund@jfs.ohio.gov. Be sure to include the number of boxes requested, whether you would like the 24-count or 192-count, and your name, shipping address, email and phone number. Please include "Pinwheels 2014" in the subject of your email. Once OCTF receives your order, you will get an email confirming it. Email kristen.rost@jfs.ohio.gov if you have any questions.

MCWIC Partnership Celebrated

On Sept. 23, OFC celebrated its collaboration with the Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center (MCWIC) with a staff luncheon. More than three years ago, OFC received a federal grant to work with MCWIC on an organizational change initiative, now known as Partners for Ohio's Families (PFOF). PFOF seeks to improve outcomes for children and families through enhanced partnerships with public and private agencies. Since then, much has been achieved:

- The development and implementation of a new team-based technical assistance model.
- The completion of a comprehensive rule review, with a new stakeholder-driven process, which will be used again in the future.
- The development of new internal and external communication vehicles, such as First Friday.
- The creation of the Solutions Through Empowerment and Partnership Team (STEP) to guide changes.

OFC is grateful to MCWIC staff for all their hard work and support over the past three years! Although the grant supporting our collaboration has come to a close, OFC is firmly committed to continuing PFOF's work.



OFC and MCWIC staff gathered to celebrate their three-year partnership.

Top left: OFC STEP team.

Top right: MCWIC staff.

Left: Six Principles of Partnership Champions, OFC volunteers who believe in the principles and work to promote their full integration within OFC's daily work.

September 2013 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.

9/17/13 - Free Training Opportunity – Human Trafficking: Interviewing, Investigations & Prosecution
9/19/13 - NYTD Compliance Update
9/19/13 - KGAP Workgroup
9/27/13 - Regional Independent Living/Transitional Youth Meeting

PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:
Partnerships and collaboration enhance the quality of outcomes.

If you want to subscribe to First Friday, have comments or ideas about content, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please send an email to First_Friday@jfs.ohio.gov. For additions to or removals from the list, be sure to include your name, organization and email address.

