



### **A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – March 7, 2014**

Congratulations to Cuyahoga County for becoming the 79<sup>th</sup> county to go live with a Differential Response (DR) System this week! I often speak of how this method of responding to reports of suspected abuse and neglect can make a difference for families. I don't as frequently discuss how the development of DR in Ohio changed the Office of Families and Children (OFC). The way OFC came together with county representatives at the start of DR to establish a framework as equal partners, rather than a convener seeking input, was a new experience that was sometimes difficult. Ask any early design team member about the experience, and they always remark about leaving each meeting physically exhausted and sometimes reluctant to return.

Fast forward seven years: This week, Trumbull County public children services agency's Darlene Shope and I cochaired the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Differential Response Leadership Council, the current evolution of that early design team. We are beginning to plan our new configuration for when DR is statewide and the council no longer operates as a workgroup under the Supreme Court of Ohio. There is excitement about moving to the next phase, and continuing to support and learn from each other.

The Leadership Council has invested the time necessary to develop a trust that allows us to assume good intent, avoid conspiracy theories, be transparent whenever possible and negotiate in good faith. We accept progress as it comes, which usually is in incremental steps. We may not always agree, and we acknowledge that there are inherent imbalances in power that may affect final decision-making responsibility. But I think we've learned to be clear about when and how that happens among us.

Our early DR state-county experiences have opened the door to many similar collaborations. For example, we created the Partners for Ohio's Families Advisory Board, which recently reconfigured itself from a grant-focused advisory group to a forum where state, local, public and private partners can discuss how to better help each other. We'll need that willingness to seek common solutions as we address the findings of the Title IV-E federal review. This month's First Friday gives a clearer picture of the areas we need to focus on.

I am honored to have the opportunity to share our successes and concerns in a national conversation, thanks to my recent appointment to the executive committee of the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA). I view my participation as a way to convey to national leaders our collective thoughts regarding federal legislation and policies. Not only will this new role allow me to provide this feedback on behalf of OFC and our partners, but it will allow me to keep us all better informed about legislation, trends and initiatives across the country. I will use First Friday to share regular updates on NAPCWA activities, and I invite all of you to let me know about any messages you think I should convey to the committee. You can learn more about NAPCWA at <http://www.aphsa.org/content/NAPCWA/en/home.html>.

I can't speak about OFC's evolving collaborations without noting the upcoming departure of one of our longtime friends, Crystal Allen. As the long-time executive director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), Crystal has been an articulate and informed advocate on behalf of Ohio's children. We didn't always agree, but that was OK; we sometimes had different roles. I appreciate that our differences in opinion never affected our ability to respect each other's positions or share a friendly meal. I am interested

to see where Crystal's new role with Casey Family Programs takes her, but I feel confident that her work will have the same drive: better outcomes for families and children.

## **Results from the 2013 Federal Title IV-E Review**

The October 2013 First Friday described the preparation undertaken for the federal review of Ohio's Title IV-E foster care program. On Jan. 29, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) issued its final report of the findings. ACF determined that Ohio's Title IV-E foster care maintenance program is not in substantial compliance with federal eligibility requirements.

ACF reviewed 80 cases in which federal foster care maintenance payments were made during the review period of Oct. 1, 2012, through March 31, 2013. It identified eight case errors and one payment error. This exceeded the four-error maximum allowed to meet compliance. Ohio must repay the Title IV-E maintenance and administrative funds associated with the errors, which equals approximately \$75,000. The eight case errors identified were as follows:

1. Five cases did not meet the judicial determination of reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan.
2. Two cases did not meet the specified relative requirements established under Aid to Families with Dependent Children program regulations.
3. One case did not meet safety requirements when a child was placed into a foster home that was licensed but had not yet completed the required fingerprint check through the National Crime Information Center database.

Pursuant to 45 CFR 1357.71(i), Ohio now must develop a one-year Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to resolve the areas identified as needing corrective action. The Region V staff from ACF's Children's Bureau will help Ohio develop and implement PIP strategies. We also will be able to access technical assistance through the federally funded Training and Technical Assistance Network.

Eventually, a secondary review will be conducted; its timing will be based on the PIP approval and completion dates. The secondary review will focus on 150 cases. To be considered in substantial compliance, Ohio must have a 90 percent accuracy rate, which means we can have no more than 15 errors. Additionally, no more than 10 percent of the dollar value of all reviewed cases can be in error.

We look forward to collaborating with county and private agencies to ensure a smooth secondary review.

## **Bringing SACWIS to Ohio's Title IV-E Courts**

Almost half (41) of Ohio's 88 counties have Title IV-E Juvenile Courts that are responsible for the care and placement of unruly and delinquent youth. These courts have sub-grant agreements with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) outlining their responsibilities. This ensures compliance with Title IV-E laws and regulations and allows the courts to receive Title IV-E subsidies to cover the cost of care for eligible youth. The agreements require the development of case plans that comply with the Ohio Administrative Code for each youth in care, periodic case plan review, and documentation within Ohio's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

Until recently, because of statutory restrictions, juvenile courts did not have access to SACWIS. To comply with sub-grant and federal requirements, public children services agencies (PCSAs) had to enter the required data on behalf of the courts. This process was cumbersome and time-consuming for both agencies. Last year, however, administrative and statutory changes gave certain judicial staff direct access to SACWIS so courts could stop relying on PCSAs for data entry.

To facilitate this change, in July 2013 OFC brought together representatives from juvenile courts, PCSAs, the Supreme Court of Ohio (SCO), and OFC's bureaus of Fiscal Accountability and Automated Systems to form the IV-E Court Rollout Steering Committee. The group met monthly for half a year and developed a plan that included pre-implementation piloting by selected courts and a phased rollout for the remaining courts.

Many thanks to Cuyahoga, Hamilton and Miami county juvenile courts for volunteering as the pilot sites. To ensure that pilot staff fully understand how to correctly enter information in SACWIS, the Bureau of Automated Systems is hosting ongoing virtual technical assistance sessions.

Eventually, each juvenile court will be able to directly complete “person records” and “intakes” and enter visits/activities, legal information, removal circumstances, placement information, contract information, service authorizations, and eligibility and payment processing information within SACWIS. The experiences of the pilot sites will identify whether additional changes might be needed and will provide valuable information about the time frame and processes for bringing the remaining courts on board. Look for more information regarding the final rollout schedule as the pilot draws to a conclusion. For additional information, email [Cathy.Ghering@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Cathy.Ghering@jfs.ohio.gov).

We achieve better outcomes when we work together! Thank you to the individuals and agencies who donated time and experience to the IV-E Court Rollout Steering Committee:

**County Juvenile Courts:** Jennifer Shunk, Belmont; Audrey Beasley, Anthony Cook and Elise Tompkins, Cuyahoga; Anita Moore and Greg Shrader, Gallia; Travis Stevens, Guernsey; Brent Laman, Hamilton; Samantha Wilson, Licking; Laurie Bayles, Lucas; Julie Harmon, Terra Homan and Elizabeth Yingst, Miami; Patricia Hodgson, Shannon Jones, Jenn Pangio and Kathy Stocker, Montgomery; Stephanie Weeks, Ottawa; Joyce Salapack, Stark; Raylene Smead and Jane Wilson, Summit; Laura Schneckner, Warren; and Lora Graves, Wood.

**Ohio Department of Youth Services:** Jodi Slagle

**SCO:** Corey Schaal and Sharon Schnelle

**ODJFS OFC:** Kevin Bullock, Genia Dickinson, Cathy Ghering, Charlotte Gerhardstein, Lucy Gobble, Karen McGormley, Ricardo Murph and Tresa Young

**ODJFS Office of Legal and Acquisition Services:** Denise Pleska

**ODJFS Office of Information Services:** Rob Phillips

## **New Faces and New Places**

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

### **Bureau of Automated Systems: New Business Analysts**

**Lesley Biesk** brings a wealth of financial experience and more than 10 years’ supervisory experience to her new position. She comes to us from the ODJFS Office of Child Support and has nearly 20 years of experience in child support account reconciliation, balancing child support accounts for the 88 county child support enforcement agencies and managing unclaimed funds. Lesley attended Hocking College, where she majored in accounting.

**Lucy Gobble** comes from the National Youth Advocate Program, where she supervised a team of six family case managers and one treatment advocate. She was her agency’s liaison with the SACWIS Help Desk and a SACWIS Super User. Lucy has eight years of experience in child welfare and a bachelor’s degree in psychology and community/agency counseling.

**Michelle Lidle** joins OFC with many years as a SACWIS user under her belt. Her experience completing IV-E eligibility determinations and re-determinations for foster care maintenance and adoption subsidy information in SACWIS is a great addition to the team. Michelle has a broad range of program experience that includes administrating the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program, serving as the agency’s Multi-Ethnic Placement Act monitor, facilitating Semiannual Administrative Review meetings and providing child protection services. Michelle has a bachelor’s degree in sociology and anthropology.

**Taylor Porter** comes to OFC from the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. Taylor worked on behalf of Franklin County PCSA to find permanency for children in foster care through the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program. Taylor also brings private-sector and additional social service experience to his new position. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and communications from the University of Cincinnati.

**Jennifer Watson** has 12 years of social services experience. For the past three years, she has been a screener and investigator at the Delaware County Department of Job and Family Services. She previously worked at the South Carolina Department of Social Services, where she supervised specialized foster home services. Jennifer has a master's degree in public administration from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

**Lindsay Williams** is a five-year business analyst veteran who is moving within the bureau to the SACWIS Reporting area. She has a strong background in SACWIS administration and knowledge of all areas of the SACWIS application. Prior to joining the SACWIS team, she was employed by Richland County Children Services as the placement program supervisor. She also holds a master's degree in social work from The Ohio State University.

### **Bureau of Child and Adult Protection**

**Michelle Cleavenger** is the new administrative professional for the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children area within the Substitute Care and Permanency Services section. Michelle has two years of experience as a Bureau of State Hearings assistant in the ODJFS Office of Legal and Acquisition Services. She has a strong familiarity with various ODJFS administrative areas, as well as knowledge of CRIS-E and child support. Prior to joining ODJFS, Michelle managed a business in Ashville.

**Amy Welling** is responsible for managing the OFC Putative Father and Adoption Assessor Registry programs. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University and comes to OFC from the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services, where she worked in child support for six years.

### **Bureau of Fiscal Accountability**

**Lakeisha Hilton** is the new program administrator for this bureau. She manages three essential duties: ProtectOhio, rules and forms coordination, and public records. Read more about her below.

### **Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance**

**Katie Adams** is a new licensing certification specialist in the Dayton Field Office. She comes to OFC from the Highland and Clinton county departments of job and family services, where she worked as a protective caseworker 2 and a child protective services caseworker, respectively. Katie holds a bachelor's degree in sociology and communications from Wright State University.

**Katina Ferguson** has joined the Toledo Field Office as a new technical assistance specialist. She comes to us from University Hospital, where she was a medical social worker. Previously, she worked at Lorain County Children Services as a direct services caseworker and supervisor. Katina attended Spelman College and Case Western Reserve's Mandel School of Applied Social Science, where she earned a master's degree. She also is a licensed independent social worker.

**(Mary) Deirdre Grennan** is a new licensing certification specialist in the Dayton Field Office. Deirdre joins us from the Darke County Department of Job and Family Services, where she was as a social service supervisor for almost 14 years. Deirdre earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in communications/journalism from Eastern New Mexico University.

**Gina Velotta** is the new foster care licensing/technical assistance manager in the Dayton Field Office. Gina comes to OFC from Summit County Children Services, where she supervised the Abuse and Neglect Hotline since 2008. She also held positions as a child welfare investigator and supervisor in Cuyahoga County. Gina attended Kent State University and earned her master's degree in public administration at Cleveland State University.

**Renee Williams** has been promoted to foster care licensing supervisor position in the Columbus Field Office. You might be familiar with Renee from her time as an OFC foster care licensing specialist or as a technical

assistance specialist. She also has worked as a child welfare caseworker and a supervisor in Franklin and Madison counties.

**Anna Wyss-Zilles** has been promoted to technical assistance manager, overseeing staff in the Toledo and Akron field offices. During her tenure with OFC, Anna has been a foster care licensing specialist and a technical assistance specialist in the Tiffin Field Office. She also has experience in child welfare and child support at the county level. She was instrumental in updating the current version of the Foster Care Licensing Standard Operating Procedure Manual. Most recently, she served as the cochair of the Resource Home Certification and Approval Rules Review Committee during OFC's comprehensive rule review. Anna has a bachelor's degree from Notre Dame College of Ohio.



Top-left photo: New Toledo Field Office staff member Katina Ferguson. Not pictured: Anna Wyss-Zilles.

Top-right photo, left to right: New central office staff members Michele Lidle and Jennifer Watson (back row); Lesley Biesk, Lindsay Williams and Taylor Porter (middle row); and Amy Welling, Lucy Gobble and Michelle Cleavenger (front row). Not pictured: Lakeisha Hilton and Renee Williams.



Bottom photo, left to right: New Dayton Field Office staff members Deirdre Grennan, Gina Velotta and Katie Adams.

### **Meet Lakeisha Hilton**

The Bureau of Fiscal Accountability looks a little different these days, thanks in part to its recent acquisition of three large responsibilities: administration of ProtectOhio, coordination of rules and forms, and management of OFC's public records. These tasks create some big shoes to fill, and the bureau was lucky that one person is more than up to the task: Lakeisha Hilton.

Although she's new to the Bureau of Fiscal Accountability, Lakeisha has worked in Ohio's government for more than 15 years, more than half of those with ODJFS. In addition to her most recent position in OFC as a foster care licensing supervisor in the Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance, Lakeisha has been a legislative aide with the Ohio House, the ODJFS legislative liaison assigned to OFC and the Office of Child Support, and acting director for the ODJFS Office of Legislation. Lakeisha's varied background brings an assortment of professional skills that are a perfect match for her new position. Following is a closer look at what it entails.



Lakeisha Hilton, Bureau of Fiscal Accountability program administrator.

## **ProtectOhio**

ProtectOhio has been Ohio's federally approved Title IV-E waiver demonstration project since 1997. Lakeisha helps facilitate discussion among the members of the ProtectOhio Consortium, which consists of 17 waiver counties; 17 comparison counties; an evaluation team made up of the Human Services Research Institute, Chapin Hall Center for Children and Westat; OFC; and federal representatives from ACF. Lakeisha helps plan meetings for the consortium and its three subcommittees: Family Team Meetings, Kinship Supports and Waiver Expansion/Sustainability. Because Ohio's fourth waiver authorization is set to expire in 2015, the consortium hopes to demonstrate the benefits of renewing it. The waiver allows participating counties to use federal Title IV-E foster care dollars more flexibly, to see whether doing so results in better outcomes for children and families.

## **Rules and Forms**

Policy developers within each program area write rules, and Lakeisha coordinates the steps required to begin filing them. She also acts as a liaison with the various ODJFS offices that are involved in the process. Within the next several months, OFC will unveil a new rule review website modeled after the one piloted by the Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center during OFC's comprehensive rule review. We tweaked the look and tried to simplify the process a bit, but the purpose is the same: to give stakeholders the opportunity to discuss rules before the clearance process begins. Lakeisha also will be overseeing the new website and comment process.

OFC is responsible for a lot of forms and publications, and it is a big task to ensure that they are continuously reviewed and updated. Lakeisha tracks form supply and demand. She conducts a comprehensive review of all OFC forms each year and is OFC's first point of contact when a form needs to be created, revised or eliminated. She works with the ODJFS Office of Communications and uses the Integrated Forms Management System to ensure that agency policies and procedures are followed and that information is current.

## **Public Records**

Lakeisha is responsible for maintaining the delicate balance between guarding confidential information and ensuring our transparency to the public. She works closely with the Office of Legal and Acquisition Services to ensure that OFC responds with a spirit of openness to its many requests for information while complying with state and federal laws that define the content and circumstances for release.

In addition to these three major responsibilities, Lakeisha also is a member of OFC's internal Partners for Ohio's Families workgroups, Solutions Through Empowerment and Partnership (STEP) and Culture and Climate. Next time you see Lakeisha, please welcome her to her new role.

## **CASA Manager Implementation Update**

By fall 2014, all Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs in Ohio will be entering data on assigned cases using CASA Manager software. Not only does CASA Manager support more efficient case handling by Ohio's local programs, but it also gives the Ohio CASA/Guardian Ad Litem Association (Ohio CASA) access to real-time data regarding the 7,000-plus cases its 2,000 volunteers serve annually. Of Ohio's 34 CASA programs, 27 are using CASA Manager. The remaining programs are in various stages of installation. Ohio CASA expects all its programs to use this application and fully participate in data collection.

CASA Manager was developed by a former California CASA employee and rapidly is becoming the data collection software most frequently used by CASA programs throughout the country. Ohio CASA has been able to support its use here with the help of the SCO and ODJFS.

The software organizes information by case, not individually, and does not collect confidential information. It collects data regarding the demographics of cases and volunteers, timeliness of cases, and the status of assigned cases. Managers can track the services recommended for and provided to youth, as well as the progress of the cases. In Ohio, CASA Manager also collects information specific to the federal Child and Family Services Review and SCO's federal Court Improvement Program. Recently, Ohio CASA used CASA Manager to identify trends regarding the ages and demographic diversity of youth served.

“Data is powerful,” said Doug Stephens, Ohio CASA executive director. “Not only is CASA Manager helpful at keeping track of cases and making sure we are offering the highest quality of service possible, but it also helps us tell our story. The more people that know about the work of CASA, the more support we gain, which will attract more volunteers to help the children.”

Added Steve Hanson, manager of the SCO’s Children, Families and the Courts Programs: “We hope this tool will provide much needed insight into the movement of cases through Ohio’s juvenile court system. This partnership with Ohio CASA helps us get a better handle on the data, since there is not a statewide court case management system.”

### **PFOF Advisory Board Update**

The Partners for Ohio’s Families (PFOF) Advisory Board has a new function! It now serves as a forum to promote partnership aimed at improving Ohio’s child welfare system. To better reflect this newly defined purpose, meetings are led by representatives from Ohio’s PCSAs, private child welfare agencies and ODJFS. Be sure and congratulate Scott Ferris (Allen County PCSA), Don Warner (Oesterlen Services for Youth) and Michael McCreight (ODJFS) on their newly elected positions.

The board meets quarterly to discuss items of interest and common concern. At the end of each meeting, topics are selected for the next meeting. The board’s February agenda included discussion of the Multiethnic Placement Act reviews, the Bureau of Fiscal Accountability’s Title IV-E Oversight Committee, and how the enhanced federal focus on Continuous Quality Improvement programming will be integrated into Ohio’s five-year Child and Family Services Plan and Annual Progress and Services Report. Board members also received updates on ongoing OFC initiatives, such as Regional Technical Assistance Teams and OFC’s proposed rule review website.

Part of each PFOF Advisory Board representative’s role is to provide you with regular updates about board work and bring your concerns forward for discussion. Do you know who your representative is? You can check out the charter and list of members at <http://www.jfs.ohio.gov/PFOF/Index.stm>. Feel free to reach out to the board members with your feedback; they’d like to hear from you.

### **March 2014 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.

**2/10/14** - Independent Living/Transitional Youth Staff Statewide Meeting Regarding Feedback from the Five Regional Meetings

**2/24/14** - Results from the 2013 Federal Title IV-E FCM Review

**2/26/14** - Results from the 2013 Federal Title IV-E FCM Review

### **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 wish to be removed from the mailing list, please send an email to [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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FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES**