



**PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES**

There is urgency and importance to our work.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – May 2, 2014

I start this month fully energized from the many terrific Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month activities held throughout April. Thanks to all of you who participated in Wear Blue Day on April 9. It's been fun to see the photos of familiar and not-so-familiar faces giving a shout-out to prevention awareness. OFC staff didn't miss out on participating, either, and I posed with members of the Supreme Court of Ohio's Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency in the court's impressive Judicial Center.



OFC staff (left) and the Supreme Court of Ohio's Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency (right) wore blue on April 9 to support child abuse and neglect prevention.

In May, we transition to celebrating National Foster Care Month, a time to honor those important people who care for children when they can't safely remain with their families. For some, foster care is the right choice; it offers them safety, stability and a chance to develop in a way that cannot be promised in their own homes. Use this month to say thank you to any foster parents you know. Foster parenting is a remarkable and selfless gift, a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week commitment that requires resilience and a very special set of skills. I'd like to take this opportunity to give my own shout-out to Ohio's foster parents. Thank you all. You're amazing, and everyone here at OFC appreciates the work you do.

Why is it that children in comparable situations can sometimes have such different outcomes? I believe that how communities and agencies approach collaboration and in-home safety can make all the difference. Time and again, we've seen that successful programs work well with other stakeholders. They manage to get beyond divisive issues and focus instead on the unifying goals.

Last month, I visited the Stark County Department of Job and Family Services and learned how this professional community collaborates to keep families safely together. With a relatively small budget comprised of contributions from participating agencies, Stark County has established a high-fidelity wraparound model. During my visit, a panel of community partners discussed their experiences. The panel's parent representatives and their teenage children were grateful for the county's efforts to work together.

Each family felt strongly that, if not for this model, their children would have entered care. It was very powerful to hear how the agency's support kept these families together. Just northeast, Trumbull County Children Services has established its own unique high-fidelity wraparound program with positive outcomes. Each community has collaborated to build programs that are right for its needs.

I have written many times about how motivating it is to visit local programs and to hear from individuals working hard to support Ohio's children and families, but it's true! When participating in a primary parent work group meeting, I thought about the barriers that Stark and Trumbull counties overcame to develop the partnerships that now are standard to their operations. I know it took hard work, time and personal investment. But the benefits are phenomenal!

Primary parents include birth, adoptive and foster parents who have been the subject of abuse, neglect or dependency allegations. All have current or prior open child welfare cases. Although enlisting the help of this group can be challenging, they are an intensely valuable resource. That's why OFC and Casey Family Programs are financially supporting Ohio's Primary Parent Partner Project. We believe this investment will yield high returns. I hope that public agencies reading this have applied for the planning grant opportunity that I emailed to directors on March 19. Stay tuned for more information!

Celebrate Foster Care Month!

May is National Foster Care Month, and this year's theme is "Building Blocks Toward Permanent Families." We encourage you to spread the word through resources at www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth. The federal Children's Bureau funds this site, together with the Child Welfare Information Gateway, the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections, and the National Association of State Foster Care Managers. Public children services agencies, private child placing agencies, private noncustodial agencies, foster parents and foster youth can use the website to:

- View [resources](#) about this year's theme
- Access a link to a [widget](#) to add to a website or an [email signature](#)
- Find a [FAQs](#) handout to share with colleagues at meetings and conferences
- Get inspired by [real-life stories](#) from families, youth, foster parents, caseworkers and others
- Check out helpful [outreach](#) tools

Bookmark the website and feel free to forward it to your agency's public information office, recruiters, caseworkers, managers and other child welfare colleagues. Be sure to check back throughout the month for more updates, including the presidential proclamation, real-life stories and videos, and more!

For more information regarding Ohio's Foster Care Month proclamation, email Jennifer Kobel at Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov. For information regarding the website, feel free to contact the Child Welfare Information Gateway directly at (800) 394-3366 or info@childwelfare.gov.

OFC Joins Ohio Department of Education Advisory Panel

OFC is pleased to be a part of the Ohio Department of Education's State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC). The panel was established to address special education and related services for children with disabilities, including children with disabilities in foster care. Along with OFC staff, other participants include service providers, individuals with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.

One area the group is focusing on is surrogate parents. These are individuals appointed to act in the place of parents when it comes to making children's educational decisions. Surrogate parents are appointed if no parent can be identified or located, if the child is in the custody of the state, or if the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Most school-age children in foster care need a surrogate parent. The group is looking at ways to encourage foster parents to be trained and appointed to fill this role.

SAPEC also is exploring ways to improve communication between public and private agencies and school districts. The group reviewed information that the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati provided regarding the Kids in School Rule! (KISR!) program. KISR! promotes improved educational outcomes for Cincinnati Public School students in the custody of – or under the protective supervision of – Hamilton County. It is a

partnership between Cincinnati Public Schools, the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, and the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati.

If your agency is involved in or aware of programs that promote the educational stability of children in foster care, SAPEC wants to hear about it! Please email information to Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov. Best practices will be shared with agencies and school districts across the state.



A KISR! student meets with his KISR! liaison at a Cincinnati public school. Photo courtesy of Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services.

New OGKC Leadership Announced

The Ohio Grandparent/Kinship Coalition (OGKC) is an advocacy organization consisting of kinship caregivers, kinship professionals, and child and family service agencies across the state. The group recently elected new officers: Copresidents Tim Harless and Melissa Ruffner will lead the organization for the next two years. They begin their terms after a strategic planning session in which several new goals were established. Right now, OGKC is focused on two of them.

The first goal is for the organization to use its 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status to pursue grant funding for administrative support. The second goal is to reach out to additional stakeholders and agencies with interests in the kinship care community and engage them in the OGKC mission and functions. With renewed energy, fresh faces and a new strategic plan, OGKC looks forward to furthering its advocacy efforts.

National Youth in Transition Database Update

The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) stores demographic and outcome data from a series of surveys that are given to randomly selected youth who have received independent living services. Those selected to participate are asked to complete the first survey within 45 days of their 17th birthday, and then subsequent surveys when they are 19 and 21. The first surveys for the first cohort group were conducted in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2011. The first surveys for the second cohort group are being conducted now. We are halfway through collecting surveys from applicable youth in agency custody.

A SACWIS tickler has been set for each applicable youth in agency custody, to notify county staff that a NYTD survey should be completed. Though it is not mandatory, OFC suggests that each county survey every 17-year-old within the same time frame. This creates a rhythm that will not be lost by staff re-assignments, staff turnover and the three-year break between surveys.

NYTD surveys for the first cohort group showed the following outcomes:

	17-year-olds	19-year-olds
Employed full-time	0.00%	12.37%
Employed part-time	16.67%	24.74%
Participating in an apprenticeship	29.17%	29.90%
Receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits	12.50%	9.28%
Receiving educational aid	5.21%	16.49%
Receiving financial assistance	15.63%	16.49%
Completed high school	8.33% (86.46% remain in school)	47.42% (high school diploma or GED)
Receiving adult support	89.58%	85.57%
Homeless	22.92% (ever homeless)	26.80% (within last two years)
Incarcerated	56.25%	36.08%
Had a child	16.67%	14.43% (within last two years)
Medicaid*	83.33%	73.20%

* Medicaid eligibility has been extended for youth previously in foster care until age 26.

For more information on NYTD, contact Elaine Hall at (614) 752-0080 or Elaine.Early-Hall@jfs.ohio.gov.

New Adoption Forms for Birth Parents

Governor Kasich signed Substitute Senate Bill 23 on December 19, 2013. This law gives birth record access to nearly half a million individuals who were adopted between 1964 and 1996. In response to the law, ODJFS created two new forms for use by the Ohio Department of Health. Both forms can be found on Forms Central.

The JFS 01683, "Birth Parent Name Redaction," form allows birth parents to remove their names from the documents received by an adoptee or an adoptee's lineal descendant who requests birth records. The form must be notarized and submitted with two forms of identification. Birth parents have until March 19, 2015, to complete this form. The form will stay in effect indefinitely unless the birth parents choose to have the form removed from the file and their names released. Beginning March 20, 2015, the Ohio Department of Health will no longer accept the form.

The JFS 01684, "Contact Preference for Birth Parent(s) of Adopted Children," form allows birth parents to choose what type of contact, if any, they prefer with the adopted person and/or his or her lineal descendants. The form allows three options: contact by the adopted person directly, contact through an intermediary or no contact at all. Once completed, this form stays in the adoption record on file with the Ohio Department of Health. If the adopted person or his or her lineal descendant wants a copy of the file, this information will be provided.

Anyone interested can complete the forms and submit them to the following address:

Ohio Department of Health
Attn: Special Registration
P.O. Box 15098
Columbus, OH 43215.

For more information, contact Tara Ricketts at (614) 752-0079 or Tara.Ricketts@jfs.ohio.gov.

Did You Know? A Look at Adoption Re-Homing

Recently, the media has given much attention to the practice of private, undocumented "re-homing," or the unofficial transfer of a child from his or her adoptive family to a new home. ODJFS would like to remind agencies of their responsibility to report the disruption or dissolution of foreign adoptions.

According to Ohio Administrative Code rule 5101:2-48-25, public and private custodial agencies *must* report to ODJFS when a child enters foster care due to the disruption or dissolution of a foreign adoption. Agencies report this by completing the JFS 01670, "Inter-Country Adoption Data Collection," form and submitting it to

the ODJFS Office of Families and Children, P.O. Box 183204, Columbus, Ohio 43218. In turn, ODJFS must submit that data to the federal government, as a result of the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000.

Typically, media reports about “re-homing” refer to transfers made without court or government oversight and without consideration of safety standards. If a child comes into the custody of your agency because he or she is no longer in his or her adoptive home, you must submit the JFS 01670 form. If you have questions or concerns about the JFS 01670 or the reporting requirement, please contact Tara Ricketts at (614) 752-0079 or Tara.Ricketts@jfs.ohio.gov.

Upcoming OFCA Forums

The Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA) is initiating quarterly forums throughout Ohio for primary parents and caregivers. The goal is to support the development of stronger partnerships among child welfare professionals, primary parents and caregiver families, including foster, kinship, respite and adoptive families. May’s sessions will feature a blended discussion that brings together representatives of all parenting roles, breakout sessions for each parenting category, and a large group report-out on needs identified and lessons learned. Regional contacts will be identified, and priorities for the next quarter’s forum will be established.

All forums will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and include a light lunch. Dates and locations are as follows:

- May 19: Southeast Region (Zanesville)
- May 20: Southwest Region (Cincinnati)
- May 23: Northwest Region (Toledo)
- May 27: Northeast Region (Uniontown)

To learn more and register for your area’s forum, email office@ofcaonline.org or call (614) 401-OFCA (6322).

Don’t forget OFCA’s annual conference, set for June 13-14. This year’s conference promises “14 hours of quality training...uniquely designed for anyone parenting a child touched by the child welfare system.” Visit OFCA’s [website](#) to register and learn more.

Rule Review Website

Check out a new resource that lets you share your thoughts about the administrative rules that govern Ohio’s child and adult protection programs: www.ohiorulereview.org. The purpose of this site is to engage stakeholders earlier in the process, as rules are being developed, and to reduce the need for revision during the formal clearance period.

At OFC, we believe everyone has valuable insights to offer, from child and adult protection professionals to others who care about how Ohio’s programs for families and children are administered. The Partners for Ohio’s Families’ rule review used a similar website to solicit stakeholder input. This new site keeps what you told us you liked without some of the details you found cumbersome.

Every OFC administrative rule is scheduled for review at least once every five years. State law requires this to ensure that each rule still is necessary and relevant. Rules also may be scheduled for review when federal or state laws or policies change.

Rules scheduled for review or amendment will be posted on www.ohiorulereview.org 30 days before they begin the promulgation process, and the comment period will remain open for 30 days. Notice about the comment period will be posted as a SACWIS broadcast message, on the SACWIS knowledge base and included in publications such as First Friday. After the comment period closes, the website will produce a report that includes all comments on the rules. OFC policy developers then will consider this feedback in their rule review work.

Unlike the formal clearance process, commenters will not receive a formal OFC response, though rule developers will take comments into account prior to filing with the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review.

Visitors to www.ohiorulereview.org can suggest rules that may benefit from review, select rules they'd like to comment on, view others' comments, and agree, disagree or respond to comments. The website also has information about the rule-making process and links to additional resources.

For a preview of what the website looks like, see the screenshot below. For additional information or to make suggestions, email Lakeisha.Hilton@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio's Families and Children Rule Review Site: Your Opinion Counts!



This website offers you the opportunity to comment on the Ohio Administrative Code Rules that govern programs for Ohio's families and children, including child and adult protection, substitute care, adoption and related funding and administrative functions. Whether you are a child professional whose daily tasks are guided by the rules, someone who has had experience with some aspect of Ohio's child welfare system, or simply an individual who cares about how Ohio's programs for families and children are administered, you have knowledge and insight to offer.

What are rules?

Ohio Administrative Code rules are written statements of law adopted by an administrative agency to carry out the purpose and intent of a statute enacted by the Ohio General Assembly. The rules on this site have been promulgated by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services as statutorily authorized. Once they were adopted through a process established by the [Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review \(JCARR\)](#), they became codified in the Ohio Administrative Code.

How were these rules selected for comment?

All of the rules displayed on this site are scheduled to be reviewed or revised. State law requires agencies to review its rules at least once every five years to ensure their continued need and relevance. Some rules may be scheduled for amendment to reflect changes in state or federal law or policy.

How will my comment be used?

This site is intended as one method of outreach to bring you as a stakeholder into the rule process as early as possible. You will not receive any written acknowledgement of your comment from the site, but all comments made on this website will be included in a report that will be discussed and considered as a part of the internal review of the rule-making process.

For more information on the rule-making process, [click here](#).

We look forward to learning from you. Thank you for making your voice heard!

Rules Open For Comment

Rule	Comments Open Until
Chapter 5101:2-1 Children Services Definition of Terms.	
5101:2 Division of Social Services 5101:2-1-01	05/01/2014 (13 days remaining)

Open for Comment

The following rules were posted to the Ohio's Families and Children Rule Review website at www.ohiorulereview.org for 30 days beginning on May 1, 2014:

5101:2-5-20
5101:2-5-21
5101:2-5-24
5101:2-5-30
5101:2-48-12
5101:2-48-12.1
5101:2-48-12.2

Purpose of Review: Foster care and adoption rule alignment.

We welcome your comments.

National Missing Children's Day

In 1983, President Reagan proclaimed May 25 as National Missing Children's Day in honor of 6-year-old Etan Patz, who disappeared in 1979 during a two-block walk to his school bus stop in lower Manhattan. Since then, citizens, public agencies and private organizations have gathered in communities nationwide to honor the day by renewing their commitment to find missing children and celebrating recovery stories.

This year, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children is promoting conversations about safety between trusted adults and children. The program, called "Take 25," encourages parents, law enforcement officers, educators and others to spend 25 minutes talking to children about safety. Age-appropriate discussion guides, safety activities and updated safety tips are available at www.take25.org/resources. Check out the attachments for more information about how you can support this effort.

In addition, the Attorney General's Ohio Missing Persons Unit has scheduled child safety events the week of May 19 through 25. For more information, email brent.currence@ohioattorneygeneral.gov.

Resource for Foster Youth Considering College

Applying to college and figuring out how to finance it are difficult for anyone, but more so for youth aging out of foster care. If you know of any foster youth interested in applying to college, be sure to refer them to this U.S. Department of Education website: <http://studentaid.ed.gov>. It has a wealth of information about how to apply for college, the types of financial aid that may be available, and how to apply for that financial aid.

Exit Interviews: Children Leaving Foster Care

It has been almost six months since the JFS 01678, "Foster Care Exit Interview," form was integrated into SACWIS. Since then, nearly 1,500 exit interviews have been reported, and more than 1,100 of them were conducted in collaboration with the child or youth. Those conducted without child or youth participation usually happened because the child or youth was less than 5 years old, had a disability that prevented participation or was unavailable for other reasons.

As always, OFC would love to hear your feedback, either positive or constructive, on how the exit interview process is working for your agency and how you would like to see this data used. Email your thoughts and suggestions to Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov.

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 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.



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