



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

OCF seeks and supports strategies to strengthen the voices of youth and families for its work.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

Table of Contents

From OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – 10/3/14.....	1
Youth Supporting Youth	2
Did You Know? YAB Funding Rules	2
Developing Leaders.....	3
Connecting the Dots Update....	3
Did You Know? Connecting the Dots and Big Brothers Big Sisters	4
Connecting the Dots Participant Profile	4
Conference This Month	5
Global Emails	5
Suits for Success	6
Foster Youth Rights Handbook.....	6
Rule Review Update.....	6
Did You Know? Licensing Rules	6
New Faces at OFC	7
Pre-Order Your Pinwheels Now!.....	7
Field Notes: New Administrator Training ...	8

From OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – 10/3/14

I had the pleasure of attending last month's Behavioral Health Summit, hosted by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. I am sure that everyone in the audience was as moved as I was by the fabulous youth and parent panel participants, who shared their personal experiences with the behavioral health system. Their stories highlighted both the successes and challenges of the system and helped remind each of us of the human story behind every case. I also would guess that I was not alone when their words took me back to a particular case in my own history in child welfare. Caseworkers tend to carry memories of the children and families they worked with. The successes are easy to recall, but my thoughts more frequently travel to those cases with outcomes I had tried to prevent. Could I have done something differently? Was there something that I missed?

The panels reminded us that we often overlook an important resource: parents, whether they be primary, kinship or adoptive. I believe that practice is changing, however. More than ever before, efforts are being made to integrate parents' voices into decision making, through such things as the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family program, Differential Response, primary parent partners,

child protection and adoption mediation, or parent membership on advisory boards. Administrators and caseworkers have learned that outcomes are improved when parents have a role in determining their family's future.

The parents on the Behavioral Health Summit panel demonstrated not only that they know their own families best, but also that they carry a deep understanding of our system, with insights gained from an entirely different perspective than our own. The same holds true for the families we serve each day. These parents have ideas about how to improve the system and outcomes for families and children. I want to continue to improve our efforts to listen to families and take their feedback into consideration as we move forward.

We also plan to continue listening to the youth themselves. At the state level, OFC often seeks the input of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OYAB) for guidance in policy-making and priority-setting. You can learn more about its work on page(s) 2. My thanks to the 14 counties that support local youth advisory boards. I am sure PCSAs benefit from local partnerships with YABs as much as the youth do.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

Additionally, I have been working with the Supreme Court of Ohio's Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency to support meaningful youth engagement in court proceedings. The Ohio Judicial College — with support from the American Bar Association, Casey Family Programs, the Ohio Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and OYAB — already has developed an excellent online course on youth engagement that has received national interest. The subcommittee also has been exploring ways to enhance opportunities for both youth and judicial officers. The subcommittee will present its final recommendations at the next meeting of the court's Advisory Committee on Children and Families in January 2015.

Finally, a reminder: Don't delay ordering your pinwheels for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month in April. It seems far away, but the purchase window is open for a limited time. You can find order information on page 7.

Youth Supporting Youth

OFC actively promotes integrating the voices of current and former foster youth into local and state-level decision-making by supporting the state-level OYAB and local youth advisory boards (YABs).

These boards are comprised of young people ages 14 to 24 who have experienced out-of-home care. Participating gives them the opportunity to develop as leaders, acquire professional skills — such as organizational skills and public speaking — and learn that they have both the ability and responsibility to affect their futures. Additionally, OYAB and local YABs allow youth to formulate ideas and present them to decision-makers in appropriate venues. In return, child welfare professionals, policy makers and other stakeholders benefit from the board members' thoughtful insight.

"I attend every meeting of OYAB that I can," noted OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice. "They are extremely informative, and I always walk away with a deeper understanding of some aspect of our system. So yes, I definitely learn from the meetings. But personal inspiration from these youth, who so want to improve the system for their 'brothers and sisters,' is something that I carry home, as well."

Each January, OYAB's officers develop a strategic plan for advancing services and supports for current and former youth in care. To best reflect members' voices, officers craft the plan based on information gathered at OYAB's state meetings. The 2014 plan addresses six primary areas of interest: outreach and policy, transitional housing, education, youth voice in court, independent living, and workforce development.

OYAB provides ongoing developmental guidance to counties that want to form a local YAB. The group is committed to making sure every age-appropriate youth can access the support, peer experience and developmental benefits a YAB offers. Ohio has several YABs forming now and 14 in place in the following areas:

1. Allen County
2. Athens County
3. Cuyahoga County
4. Fairfield County
5. Franklin County
6. Greene County
7. Hamilton County
8. Northeast Ohio, which includes Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake counties
9. Lorain County
10. Northwest Ohio, which includes Lucas and Wood counties
11. Montgomery County
12. Ross County (which may expand to include Hocking, Jackson, Pickaway, Pike and Vinton counties in a South Central Ohio board)
13. Stark County
14. Summit County

OYAB's Mission

We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that affect all youth who have or will experience out of home care.

Did You Know? YAB Funding Rules

Ohio Administrative Code 5101:9-6-30, which establishes funding for Ohio's Youth Advisory Boards, has changed. Now, each youth advisory board is required to have a written budget. This budget must be approved by a vote of the board, signed by two members of the board and a representative of the PCSA, and reviewed quarterly.

This change serves as a critical learning opportunity about sound financial oversight. It also allows the boards to clarify their priorities and state their values. The vote of final approval confirms that members are aware of, understand and share the budget's vision.

To get a copy of frequently asked questions about Ohio Youth Advisory Board funding, email Kristin.Gilbert@jfs.ohio.gov.

To learn more about OYAB, including its meeting schedule, visit www.pcsao.org/ohioyouth.htm.

Developing Leaders

OYAB has announced its officers for calendar year 2015. Congratulations to:

- Allissa Mitchell, President (Stark)
- Violet Ramunni, Vice President (Summit)
- Michael Bolwaire, Media Spokesperson (Cuyahoga)
- Samuel King, Parliamentarian (Franklin)
- Nathan Springs, Treasurer (Franklin)
- Damahri Carter, Secretary (Franklin)

These youth have been selected by their peers to lead OYAB in its work as a catalyst for positive change in the child welfare system. In addition to managing the operational functions of the board itself, the 2015 officers often will be called upon to educate and form partnerships with system decision-makers, a task that even seasoned professionals can find intimidating.

To help officers and selected leaders-in-training develop the skills and self-empowerment to succeed, OYAB held

its first Officer Training Bootcamp. Participants donated a Saturday to examine such topics as professionalism, public speaking and effective advocacy. Throughout the day, participants were encouraged to recognize their personal areas of strength and weakness, as well as the importance of working together.

Noted youth participant Violet Ramunni: "I saw today that we are family, and we have the power to make change."

OYAB appreciates the adult supporters who helped guide the training: Ann Bischoff of Kids Ohio; Lisa Dickson of Ohio's chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America; Doris Edelman, of the Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board; Alex Gilbert of Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates; Melinda Sykes Haggarty of the Ohio Attorney General's office; and Julie Willis of the Stark County Department of Job and Family Services.



Scenes from the OYAB Officer Training Bootcamp.



Connecting the Dots Update

Every year in Ohio, approximately 1,000 to 1,400 young people age out of foster care, and too often the futures they face are grim. National statistics show that foster youth have high rates of arrest and incarceration, early pregnancy or fathering a child, poverty, homelessness, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Former foster youth also have low rates of employment, high school graduation, college enrollment, and postsecondary degree or credential attainment.

Research shows that relatively inexpensive investments in foster youth can make a very big difference, however. Ohio is making these investments through its Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to Employment and Independent Living initiative.

Connecting the Dots is breaking down silos between agencies and programs to dramatically improve access to services from multiple entities. This includes Workforce Investment Act youth employment and training services, foster care independent living services, services provided through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families demonstration grants, an Ohio Department of Health program to reduce rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, an Ohio Department of Medicaid program to increase post-emancipation health coverage rates, and a Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program.

Achievements to Date

More than 500 current and former foster youth

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

have been helped by Connecting the Dots since it started in May 2013. This is 20 percent more than the initial enrollment goal of 425.

More than 1,300 children services staff, employment services staff, foster youth and foster parents have participated in training webinars.

More than 50 children services staff have been trained to present the Ohio Department of Health's Personal Responsibility Education Program. At least 89 young people have completed this training.

Two statewide Connecting the Dots conferences have been held for current and former foster youth and their adult supporters. More than 300 young people have attended. A third conference is scheduled for later this month and will be cosponsored by Ohio Reach, an organization dedicated to improving college access for former foster youth. (See page 5 for more information on this year's conference.)

As of September 10, 2014, youth

Did You Know? Connecting the Dots and Big Brothers Big Sisters

More than 70 current and former foster youth have been matched with Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors through Connecting the Dots. Here are just a few of the activities Big Brothers Big Sisters has hosted for participants in the pilot counties:

- The Montgomery and Summit county agencies sponsored bowling parties for youth and their mentors. Fifty youth attended in Montgomery County; 22 attended in Summit County.
- Hamilton County held a picnic for youth and their mentors, with 25 youth participating.
- Lake County has offered several events for youth and their mentors, including sailing, a picnic and a dinner. A total of 30 youth have attended.

participants had received the following services:

- Comprehensive guidance and counseling – 180 youths
- Supportive services – 155 youths
- Summer jobs – 135 youths
- Leadership development activities, including pregnancy prevention education – 103 youths
- Work experience – 90 youths
- Adult mentoring – 87 youths
- Educational supports such as

tutoring, study skills and drop-out prevention – 74 youths

Since April 2013, Connecting the Dots pilot projects have been under way in five areas: Hamilton County, Cuyahoga County, Lake County, Summit County, and a consortium of Montgomery and Greene counties.

Two areas developed new YABs. Three hired former foster youth to help with youth recruitment and program operations. Two have worked with local housing authorities to give emancipating foster youth priority for housing, dramatically reducing the risk of homelessness. In addition, the pilots have worked hard to streamline processes for helping youth get their birth certificates and Social Security cards, two basic documents needed to work. Other local achievements include the following:

- Cuyahoga County coordinated with The Purple Project and the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland to conduct a successful two-day summer conference attended by 108 youth and more than 50 adults.
- Hamilton County partnered with the University of Cincinnati and the Hamilton County Educational Mentoring Initiative to sponsor a career conference attended by more than 60 youth and more than 60 adult supporters. The county also provided a financial literacy program for 17 youths sponsored by Big

(continued on next page)

Connecting the Dots Participant Profile

Staff in the Connecting the Dots pilot areas surveyed current and former foster youth to find out more about them. Approximately 35 percent of those surveyed responded. Here are the results:

- 45 percent were under 18, 26 percent were 18, and 29 percent were 19 or older.
- 35.1 percent of those 19 or older had less than a high school diploma or GED.
- 86.5 percent who were 19 and older did not have a driver's license.
- 31.5 percent said their biggest educational barrier was too many changes in foster home placements.
- 27.1 percent said their biggest employment barrier was lack of work experience.
- 26.7 percent of all respondents had been homeless at least once; of those 19 and older, the rate was 59.5 percent.
- 36.4 percent said they worried about being homeless.
- 46.5 percent had been arrested, and 28.7 percent had been convicted of a crime.
- 15.6 percent were parents.
- 34.6 percent were receiving mental health treatment.
- 60.2 percent expressed interest in being matched with a mentor.

(continued from previous page)

Brothers Big Sisters and conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank.

- Lake County received \$10,000 in supplemental funding from AT&T for numerous summer enrichment activities conducted in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters.
- Montgomery and Greene counties hosted a successful youth conference attended by 97 youth and 56 adults from seven surrounding counties. They also conducted a program at a local camp for 24 youth.
- Summit County conducted a two-day summer camp attended by 35 youths. Afterward, 29 of the campers participated in a 10-week on-the-job training program at Goodwill Industries.

Conference this Month

For the third year in a row, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will host a conference for young people who have experienced foster care and their adult supporters. This year, the conference will be held Oct. 17 at Xenos Christian Fellowship, 1340 Community Park Drive, Columbus, and it will have a new name: "Fostering Pathways to Success."

"Fostering Pathways to Success combines the "Connecting the Dots Conference for Teens and Young Adults" with the "Ohio Reach Summit," an annual event for higher education and child welfare professionals.

As in years past, Ohio youth ages 15 to 21 who have experienced foster care are invited to attend. They can attend workshops on such topics as OhioMeansJobs resources, managing deadlines at college, apprenticeships, job interviews, taking care of their health and maintaining healthy relationships.

Also returning will be "Suits for Success," a clothing donation program that gives young attendees the opportunity to select professional clothing to wear to job interviews, jobs and other engagements. (See page 6.)

Sessions for Foster Youth and Alumni

- High School Success
- Navigating College Deadlines
- Healthy Relationships
- Health Clinic
- Suits for Success
- College Survival
- Job Interview Skills
- OhioMeansJobs Resume Clinic
- Apprenticeship Career Demonstrations
- College Fair

Sessions for Adult Supporters

- Best Practices in Higher Education
- How to Identify Pathways for Youth
- Orientation of New Campus Liaisons
- Housing Options
- Transition from Foster Care to College
- Understanding Permanency and Independent Living
- Educational Training Vouchers
- Youth Crisis Scenarios

Independent living coordinators, ongoing case managers, agency administrators, Ohio Reach college campus liaisons, higher education professionals, high school guidance counselors and others committed to the success of foster youth also are invited to attend. Workshops will be held for them, as well.

Keynote speakers this year will be Dr. Terrell L. Strayhorn, a multi-subject professor at The Ohio State University (OSU), and "The Amazing Tei Street," a motivational speaker

and program director for OSU's Office of Outreach and Engagement.

Prior conferences have been popular with youth. One wrote on a comment card: "You changed my life." Another described the conference as "by far the best experience I've had in care."

We encourage you to share this information with your colleagues and to attend with youth and young adults from your county. The conference and onsite parking are free. To register and for more information, visit <http://bit.ly/fosteringpathways>.

If you have any questions, please contact conference cochairs Alice Worrell, Connecting the Dots' project manager, at (614) 644-0351, or William Murray, IV, Public Children Services Association of Ohio's Ohio Reach coordinator, at (614) 224-5802.

October 2014 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.

9/23/14 - National Youth in Transition Database

Suits for Success

It's not too late to help current and former foster youth enter the workforce dressed to succeed. You can make arrangements to donate gently worn professional attire through Oct. 8 by contacting Laurie Valentine at Laurie.Valentine@jfs.ohio.gov or (614) 752-1122; Susan Halter at Susan.Halter@jfs.ohio.gov or (614) 752-0088; or Nancy Hammon at Nancy.Hammons@jfs.ohio.gov or (614) 466-9522.

Most-needed items are men's and women's suits, shirts, belts, new or very gently used shoes; ties, suit jackets and sport coats for men; and skirts and blouses for women. Donations are tax-deductible.

Youth attending the Fostering Pathways to Success Conference (see page 5) will be able to visit the Suits for Success area and select a donated suit, pair of shoes or other item of clothing. The Suits for Success area always is one of the most popular conference features. Along with an outfit and guidance on the type of clothing needed to transition into the workforce, youth walk away with a good boost of self-esteem.

In 2013, employees at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, other Ohio agencies, project supporters, the Ohio State Bar Foundation, and the Ohio Chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America donated 1,700 items to the conference's Suits for Success. With a bigger conference planned for 2014, the need for donations is bigger, too. Please consider going through your closet and donating those seldom-worn items to a youth in need.

Foster Youth Rights Handbook

Young people in foster care in Ohio now have a guidebook just for them: The Foster Youth Rights Handbook.

ODJFS developed the publication in partnership with OYAB. (For more information about OYAB, see page 2.) It includes a wealth of information to address youths' questions and concerns about being in foster care. Best of all, it was written from a youth perspective and contains multiple personal stories and quotes from current and former foster youth about their experiences in care.

Topics include an overview of the foster care system; youth rights and responsibilities while in care; caseworker and caregiver responsibilities; important information regarding health, safety and well-being; considerations to make when preparing to leave foster care; frequently asked questions; and a glossary of terms youth may encounter.

The handbook also can be a great tool for caseworkers. It can open the door for more in-depth conversations, especially if caseworkers encourage youth to ask questions or express concerns.

OFC is requesting that agencies give a copy of the Foster Youth Rights Handbook to each child age 12 and older who comes into the custody. Agencies also are encouraged to give a copy to youth already in foster care.

You can read or download the handbook at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/OFC/FosterYouth-Rights-Handbook.stm>. To order free printed copies, visit [Forms Central](#) and search for JFS 01677.

Rule Review Update

The following rules will be posted to Ohio's Families and Children Rule Review website, www.ohiorulereview.org, for the specified times.

From Sept. 2 to Sept. 16:

OAC 5101:2-5-09, "Personnel and prohibited convictions for employment."

Purpose: Five-year review

From Sept. 30 to Oct. 14:

OAC 5101:2-42-87, "Termination of substitute care and custody of a child."

Purpose: To incorporate stakeholder feedback

Please continue to visit the site periodically for new postings. We welcome your input and hope you use this opportunity to share your experiences.

The website received 1,090 hits during August 2014.

Did You Know? Licensing Rules

The Ohio Administrative Code contains 117 rules governing residential, foster and adoption services provided by publicly and privately licensed agencies. Those rules are contained in chapters 5101:2-5, 5101:2-7, 5101:2-9 and 5101:48.

New Faces at OFC

In the last six months, OFC has welcomed four new staff members and promoted two others. We are pleased to introduce you to these staff and their roles:

Nicholas Amanatides joined our SACWIS Finance team from the Summit County Department of Job and Family Services. He has a wealth of knowledge in case work and case management, having worked in both the human service and community corrections arenas. He is a graduate of Kent State University, where he studied psychology and majored in justice studies.

Amber Huber is a new member of the Foster Care Licensing team. Amber most recently was a Delaware County Children Services supervisor overseeing foster care licensing, adoptions, independent living, adoption assistance, the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children program and publicly funded child care. Amber also has worked for Franklin County Children Services and the National Youth Advocate Program. She holds a bachelor's degree with a double major in criminology and psychology, as well as a paralegal certificate.

Angela Lykins came to the SACWIS team's Help Desk from Franklin County Children Services, where she had more than 17 years' experience in assessment and case management. Angela earned her bachelor's degree in human ecology from The Ohio State University and her master's in education from Ashland University.

Karen McGormley recently was promoted from a position on the SACWIS team to section chief of Substitute Care and Permanency within the Bureau of Child and Adult Protective Services. Prior to joining OFC, Karen supervised adoption staff, including Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters, at Franklin County Children Services. She also managed the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children program for the agency and its managed care partners. Karen has a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University and a bachelor's degree in social work from Miami University. She is a certified adoption assessor and a licensed social worker.

Nicole Sillaman began working with the Ohio Children's Trust Fund as a program manager in July. She began her career at the Wexner Medical Center, where she worked in the Internal Medicine Residency Program. Eventually she became the center's pulmonary/critical care fellowship training program coordinator before joining the Trust Fund. Nicole has a bachelor's degree in health care management and an MBA from the Ohio State University, where she graduated magna cum laude.

Colleen Tucker-Buck joined the Bureau of Federal and State Child Welfare Initiatives in April as the child welfare initiatives administrator. In this role, she manages the



Left to right: Colleen Tucker-Buck, Angela Lykins, Nicholas Amanatides, Karen McGormley and Nicole Sillaman. Not pictured: Amber Huber.

Primary Parent Partner Program, and other collaborative projects. Colleen previously worked on the SACWIS team, where she helped facilitate several projects, including the merging of duplicate foster care provider records, private agency rollout, criminal background checks, agency certifications, federal compliance and federal site visits.

Pre-Order Your Pinwheels Now!

It's not too early to start planning for National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month in April 2015. Place your Pinwheels for Prevention bulk order now to receive a discount and ensure you have enough to meet your needs in April.

Each year, the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF) uses pinwheels to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect prevention. Each pinwheel represents an individual who has strengthened a family, relieved stressors, and helped prevent child abuse and neglect.

As the Ohio chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, OCTF purchases bulk pinwheels in advance of each year's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. Once again, OCTF is able to offer a limited-time opportunity for others to purchase pinwheels at the bulk discount price: \$21 for a box of 24 pinwheels, or \$133 for a box of 192.

All orders must be placed with OCTF by Oct. 10. Any order received after Oct. 10 will be filled based on availability. To order, visit www.jfs.ohio.gov/octf and click the "Pinwheels" button on the left.

For more information about OCTF, its April activities or the Pinwheels for Prevention Campaign, please contact OCTF Executive Director Kristen Rost at (614) 387-5478 or Kristen.Rost@jfs.ohio.gov.

Field Notes: New Administrator Training

On Sept. 4, the Bureau of Child and Adult Technical Assistance's Foster Care Licensing Section hosted an expanded New Administrator Training, an orientation for those providing licensed substitute care services to children in need. In the past, this training had been offered annually to individuals who are seeking information to apply for any ODJFS-certified service (such as children's residential or group homes), individuals from newly certified agencies, or individuals who are new to the role of agency administrator or board member.

This year, Foster Care Licensing also invited new supervisors, assessors and caseworkers who provide foster care and adoption services for PCSAs.

A total of 30 participants traveled to Columbus for the six-hour session, and an additional 21 joined via webinar. They learned not only about the complex set of rules and policies required for substitute care, but also about how to work successfully with all the many substitute care partners, including community residents, juvenile court systems, PCSAs and families.

Attendees included representatives from both public and private agencies. The afternoon was spent in small group sessions to allow for more in-depth discussion, and the feedback received was very positive. Participants seemed to enjoy the opportunity to learn from one another in order to better serve families and youth in need.

To learn more about this or future Foster Care Licensing training opportunities, please email Renee.Williams@jfs.ohio.gov.



Above: Participants in the New Administrator Training take a break for the camera.

Principle of the Month

OFC seeks and supports strategies to strengthen the voices of youth and families for its work.

Feedback and Subscriptions

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.



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES