



PARTNERS
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

Partners are given **voice** in a decision-making process.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

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From OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – 8/5/16

It's official! We received formal notification that Ohio has satisfied the terms of a 12-year corrective action and resolution plan and agreement with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This agreement was initiated in response to a federal Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) compliance review conducted in 1999.

Special thanks to OFC's Joan Van Hull for all the hard work and leadership she provided to both the state and counties during this effort. We are looking at what this means for us in terms of policy, practice, technical assistance and monitoring. In the meantime, please continue with business as usual. We know this is a busy time, and we don't want to make any quick decisions regarding this important issue. Thank you for your support during this process.

Like many offices, OFC has been experiencing a number of retirements and internal movement, so you can expect to see familiar faces in new places, as well as many new faces. See pages 2-4 to meet our Technical Assistance Team and also to learn more about our new Data Analytics and Rapid Consultation Section. I'm also including a photo of my senior team below. Feel free to reach out to any of us. We like to hear what's on your mind! A newly updated contact list is attached.

My calendar continues to be fully packed with interesting meetings. At last month's Ohio Metro District Strategy Meeting, which was cohosted by ODJFS, Casey Family Programs and PCSAO, we spent most of our time talking about report screening and learning how

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OFC Senior Staff (left to right): Carla Carpenter, Dan Shook, Joan Van Hull, Kristen Rost, Kevin Bullock, Joanna Valentine, Kristin Gilbert, Deputy Director Jennifer Justice, Lisa Wiltshire, Lakeisha Hilton

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several agencies are making their screening processes more consistent and reliable. OFC's Gina Velotti is chairing a screening protocol workgroup. Stayed tuned for updates.

I was fortunate to participate in the "Leading with Evidence: Connecting Child Welfare Practice with Research" meeting organized by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the William T. Grant Foundation. I always appreciate the opportunity to gather with child welfare leaders from other states. Our geography, operations and populations are different, but our challenges and commitment

are the same. We have so much to learn from each other.

One event I work hard to attend is the quarterly meeting of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board. Is it possible to be inspired, impressed and challenged simultaneously? During July's meeting, youth spoke extensively about their educational challenges. HHS just launched an **Educational Stability for Children and Youth in Foster Care web page** with lots of good resources to open discussions, but the real work is in our hands. When we talk about outcomes for older youth, is there a more important goal than educational success and confidence?

And, of course, my favorite annual event was held last month: the Fostering Pathways to Success conference. As always, it was fabulous. My sincere congratulations to the hard-working team of volunteers who planned and executed this day of education and networking. I especially appreciate the adult supporters who ensured youth transportation to the event. It's no secret that your calendars are overflowing and that a full day of travel is no small sacrifice. I am sure I am joined by youth participants in saying "thank you." For those who weren't able to enjoy this excellent day, September's First Friday will include some photos. Be sure to check them out.

Meet the OFC Technical Assistance Teams

We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce – or reintroduce! – you to the technical assistance teams in our Bureau for Systems and Practice Advancement. These hard-working teams are based in field offices throughout the state. They provide a bridge between policy (federal and state) and local practice. Most spend their days on the road visiting their assigned agencies, and many have new members. To help you get better acquainted with them, and to get a better understanding of how they spend their time, we asked them to tell us a little about their regions and the agencies they cover.

Columbus Team

The Columbus Technical Assistance Team is based at 4200 E. Fifth Ave.,

at the Air Center office park. The team has five technical assistance specialists, with a sixth coming soon. The newest member, Scott Gall, joined the group on July 25 after many years at the Hamilton County JFS. Together, the team has more than 105 years of combined child welfare experience.

The Columbus team provides technical assistance and oversight to 25 PCSAs and nine Title IV-E juvenile courts. The region reaches northeast to Holmes County, south to Lawrence County, west to Fayette and Madison counties, and east to Washington County – 12,436 square miles. The population for the region is more than 2.5 million people. In 2015, the agencies assigned to the team completed nearly 21,000 child

abuse or neglect assessments/investigations, served 5,869 children in foster care, and served more than 20,500 children through noncustodial, ongoing cases.

The Columbus team said the best part of their job is the variety, meeting new people and learning something new about child welfare daily. They attribute much of this positive experience to the cooperativeness of PCSA staff throughout the region. In the words of team member Erin Reuter: "Their willingness to seek out technical assistance, be a part of case reviews, and openness to trying different approaches within child welfare is one of my favorite things about our region."

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Columbus Manager Justin Abel, Melissa Flick, Robynn Jasper and Erin Reuter



Scott Gall and Betsy Bentsen

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Dayton Team

The Dayton Technical Assistance Team is based at 6680 Poe Ave., Suite 350. It has four technical assistance specialists with a collective 86 years of child welfare experience. The Dayton office is unique in that technical assistance specialists and Foster Care Licensing staff all report to the same manager. Although the two units fall within separate OFC bureaus, they work well as a team and always support one another!

The Dayton team serves 19 PCSAs and 10 Title IV-E juvenile courts. The region reaches north to Logan County, southwest to Scioto County, southeast to Highland and Pike counties, south to Hamilton County, and west to Butler, Preble, Montgomery and Darke counties. The population for the region is more than 2.8 million people. In 2015, the agencies assigned to the team completed nearly 18,000 child abuse or neglect assessments/investigations, served 6,425 in foster care, and served more than 21,000 children through noncustodial, ongoing cases.

The Dayton team said the best part of their job is meeting people from across the state and learning innovative ways to address the issues facing child welfare agencies. They recognize the diversity of the counties in their region and noted that there is great collaboration among the PCSAs they serve, including an active PCSA directors' group. When asked what topic they wish agencies would ask them about more often, they said they would love more counties to ask about the data reporting tools available in SACWIS and ROM.

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(Left to right) Dayton Team Manager Gina Velotta, Lynn Boose, Melissa Potteiger and Susan Shafer. Not pictured: Susan Halter

Toledo Team

The Toledo Technical Assistance Team is based at 1 Government Center. It grew to four technical assistance specialists with the July 25 addition of Kaitlin Ruddy, who previously worked on the state's SACWIS team.

The Toledo team serves 22 PCSAs and six Title IV-E juvenile courts. Its region covers 9,512 square miles and reaches west to Williams County, southwest to Mercer County, and east to Huron, Crawford and Morrow counties. The population for the region is nearly 1.5 million people. In 2015, the agencies assigned to the team completed 10,598 child abuse or neglect assessments/investigations, served 2,045 children in foster care, and served 7,526 children through noncustodial, ongoing cases.

When asked to name the best aspect of the job, team member Sherry Scott-Ward responded: "I enjoy working with the people. A lot of my counties are very interested in improving their practice and strive to do the best work possible to ensure child safety and family preservation. I get to travel to different counties and learn about their regions/communities, as well."

Team member Amy Reinhart shared a similar sentiment. Her favorite part of the job, she said, is "the wonderful people I've had the opportunity to meet and work with."



Kaitlin Ruddy of the Toledo Team



(Left to right) Toledo Team Members Amy Reinhart, Sherry Scott-Ward, Nancy Soldner and Manager Anna Wyss-Zilles.

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Akron Team

The Akron Technical Assistance Team is based at 161 S. High St., in the Ocasek Building. The team's five technical assistance specialists serve 22 PCSAs and 13 IV-E juvenile courts in a region that covers 10,222 square miles. It reaches northwest to Erie County, southwest to Richland County, northeast to Ashtabula County and southeast to Monroe County. The population for the region is nearly 4.5 million people.

In 2015, the agencies assigned to the team completed 31,507 child abuse or neglect assessments/investigations, served 7,239 children in foster care, and served 31,459 children through noncustodial, ongoing cases.

The best part about being a technical assistance specialist is helping agencies make policy and procedure changes to improve outcomes for children and families, team member Sally Buccieri said. "I

have and will continue to encourage agency staff to not hesitate to call with questions (about any topic) at any time, as I believe in being proactive," she said.



Akron Team Members Katina Bays, Cynthia Binko and Sally Buccieri. Not Pictured: Cheryl O'Brien, Warne Edwards and Manager Anna Wyss-Zilles

New Data Project May Improve Outcomes for High-Risk Children

Initial planning is under way for a new data project that could improve outcomes for children with open cases who have been identified as having a high probability of serious injury or death. The Predictive Analytics Project will begin in January with Franklin and Hamilton counties. Eventually, OFC hopes to expand it to additional counties, as well.

Predictive analytics is a field of data science that applies computational analysis to current and historical data in order to predict future outcomes or behaviors. Many fields use it to identify where to target their efforts in order to achieve optimal outcomes. For example, the marketing industry uses predictive analytics to analyze consumer data and better target their advertisements.

A small number of states have begun using predictive analytics

to identify factors that, when found together, can be indicators of child fatalities, near fatalities, serious injuries or the likelihood of future maltreatment. Child welfare staff can then intervene to attempt to prevent these incidents from occurring.

Although predictive modeling can't predict the future, or prevent all negative outcomes, it can be used to direct staff time and resources to the highest-need cases. As with all data tools, it must be used in conjunction with sound clinical judgment and effective intervention.

To manage this project, OFC has established a new section – the Data Analytics and Rapid Consultation Section – within the Bureau for Systems and Practice Advancement. Kristine Monroe and Lindsay Williams are leading this group. Both previously worked



(Left to right) Data Analytics and Rapid Consultation Section Technical Assistance Manager Lindsay Williams and Administrator Kristine Monroe

in the OFC Bureau of Automated Systems' Data Reporting Section.

OFC released a request for proposals on July 22 to select a vendor to develop both a predictive analytics model and a quality assurance system. For more information about this project, email Kristine.Monroe@jfs.ohio.gov or Lindsay.Williams@jfs.ohio.gov.

Regional Dependency Caseflow Trainings a Success

To improve child placement and permanency timeliness for cases that come to the attention of juvenile courts, ODJFS and the Supreme Court of Ohio sponsored **four regional caseflow management courses** in April and May. Thank you to the 45 county teams that participated!

Each day-long session was a mixture of presentations and team activities. Juvenile judges led teams of four additional key leaders from their communities. Participants included child welfare directors and staff, juvenile attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, school representatives, court staff, magistrates, and others.

At the end of each session, the teams committed to plans for assessing and improving practices while strengthening oversight and improving Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) measures. Casey Family Programs made \$1,000 available to support participating counties' continued planning and implementation.

Franklin County Juvenile Court Judge Elizabeth Gill attended the May 12 training with her team and reported learning much from the experience.

"We are grateful for the Supreme Court's leadership and foresight for

giving us the opportunity to sit down with our system partner Franklin County Children Services and other juvenile courts to review our handling of cases involving abused, neglected and dependent children," she said. "This forum provided us with tools to access and improve our work. Importantly, it helped identify processes that contribute to delay and assisted in mapping out a plan to improve the court's thoughtful and timely resolution of cases involving our community's most vulnerable."

The most commonly identified challenges to case processing were lack of service, appointment of counsel, communication and paternity identification. Solutions to delays sometimes can be a simple change in procedure. Other barriers may require more long-term exploration. Regardless of the outcome, teams said they appreciated the opportunity to view the process, responsibilities and limitations from the varied viewpoints of team members.

Because of the trainings' success, the Supreme Court will provide an annual dependency caseflow course in Columbus for new judges and for courts that want to enhance their services. Stay tuned for more information.

CFSR Update

We are excited to report that OFC submitted its letter of intent to the HHS Children's Bureau in July indicating our intent to pursue the state-run review option for Round 3 of the CFSR. Please see the **May 2016 First Friday** for a summary of this option versus the traditional federal review.

In the coming weeks, we'll discuss our proposed methodology, case sampling process, reviewer training and qualifications, and overall procedures for conducting the review with the Children's Bureau's CFSR team. OFC will learn in October whether our plan is approved. As

the methodology is finalized, we'll share periodic updates.

The onsite review will occur between April 1 and Sept. 30, 2017. **Reminder: Records from any case open from April 1 through Nov. 15, 2016, will be eligible for inclusion in the review sample. The end date may be subject to change.** The work your agencies do today will be reflected in next year's results.

Thank you for all you do to ensure quality practices that will result in positive outcomes for Ohio's children and families!

Rule Review Update

The following Ohio Administrative Code rules and ODJFS forms have been posted to **ohiorulereview.org** for the times specified below.

From July 16 through Aug. 14:

- 5101:2-47-26.1, "Public children services agencies (PCSA), private child placing agencies (PCPA), private noncustodial agencies (PNA): Title IV-E cost report filing requirements, record retention requirements and related party disclosure requirements"
- 5101:2-47-26.2, "Cost report 'Agreed Upon Procedures' engagement"

From July 27 through Aug. 25:

- 5101:2-5-13, "Required agency policies, plans and procedures"
- 5101:2-48-05, "Agency adoption policy and recruitment plan"
- 5101:2-48-16, "Adoption preplacement and placement procedures"
- JFS 1654, "Adoptive Placement Agreement"
- JFS 1689, "Documentation of the Placement Decision-Making Process"
- JFS 1690, "Documentation of the Pre-Adoptive Staffing and Updates"

The website received 207 hits in July. Please continue to visit it periodically for new postings. We welcome your input and hope you use this opportunity to share your experiences.

HOPE Parent Partners Update

Primary parent partners are birth, adoptive or foster parents who have previously had child welfare cases that were resolved to reach the best possible outcomes for their children. They use their own experiences to connect as advocates and mentors with parents who have open child welfare cases. For counties that seek their help, primary parents can be an invaluable resource.

A lot has happened in the eight months since First Friday last profiled Ohio's pilot primary parent partner program, Helping Ohio Parent Effectively (HOPE). Cuyahoga, Richland, Stark and Trumbull counties have fully implemented HOPE programs. In addition, in April two additional sites were competitively selected from a tough field of applications. Congratulations to Athens County Children Services and Montgomery County Job and Family Services' Children Services Division! They will no doubt benefit from the experience and resources of the four existing HOPE counties.

Program sustainability depends on counties' ability to recruit and train new parent partners. With this goal in mind, a three-day workshop was offered in April for prospective parent partners, child welfare staff, resource parents and former foster youth. The Building a



Building a Better Future Training participants pose for the camera.

Better Future training session was supported by OFC, PCSAO, Casey Family Programs and the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. Participants were encouraged to learn from each other to gain the tools and skills needed to better help parents, and the feedback was very positive.

"It helped to see we all have the same emotions despite different experiences," noted one child welfare professional on a feedback form. A parent partner noted: "There was a lot of great discussion about problems in the system and different ways parent partners can help close some of the gaps in service."

HOPE is supported by OFC, Casey Family Programs and PCSAO. Thanks to Casey Family Programs for the funding to support counties during the planning and implementation of their programs.

Did You Know?

Ohio was awarded nearly \$6.5 million in federal funding to increase access to oral health care. CFSR Rounds 1 and 2 both identified dental care as an area needing improvement. In June, 16 Ohio communities received HHS funding to reduce barriers to preventative dental care and dependence on emergency dental treatment. Poor oral health often is associated with other physical illnesses. For that reason, all grantees are local public health centers. All are located in these cities: Akron, Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Franklin, Fremont, Hamilton, Lima, Lorain, Milford, Piketon, Sandusky and Zanesville. For the list of grantees, visit the [Health Resources & Funding Administration website](#).

July 2016 Global Emails

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

7/1/2016 – Safe Haven Practices

7/8/2016 – Child Fatality or Near Fatality Requirement Changes

7/9/2016 – Managed Care Regional Training Flyer

7/15/2016 – Managed Care Regional Training Flyer (revised)

7/26/2016 – Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Point of Contact

Join the CQI Network!

To facilitate information-sharing and learning across agencies, OFC is forming a statewide continuous quality improvement (CQI) network, and we need your help!

In a July 26 memo to all public and private agencies and Title IV-E courts, OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice asked each agency to identify a CQI point of contact. This individual (or individuals) will receive periodic CQI updates and information about upcoming CQI-related activities, such as webinars or regional meetings.

The point of contact can choose to be included on a list of CQI contacts

that will be posted on OFC's website. Have a question about how another agency is tackling a particular challenge? The CQI contact list will give you a starting place for making new connections.

The more inclusive the network, the stronger it will be. If you haven't yet joined, just identify one or two individuals and send their email address, phone number and the full name of your agency to Colleen Tucker-Buck at Colleen.Tucker@jfs.ohio.gov. If they prefer not to be included on the website list, that's fine. Just let us know! Email Colleen with any questions.

Roe v. Staples: Mission Accomplished

Ohio received good news from U.S. District Judge Timothy Black on June 27: The state completed all requirements of a consent decree issued in 1986.

The decree stemmed from the Roe v. Staples lawsuit brought against ODJFS and Hamilton County in 1983. At the time, child welfare practice in Ohio was much different than it is today. It was standard practice to remove children from their homes without providing preventive services. The concept of placing children in the least restrictive placement settings was new. Children were moved from one placement to another without notifying their parents. Visitation wasn't a priority, and after-care services were not required.

The consent decree started changing all that. Specifically, it required the state to do the following: (1) Monitor county performance to ensure compliance with federal law, and (2) complete an assessment to quantify the number and types of services needed by families and children.

Ohio has been conducting the monitoring activities – more commonly known as the Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE) reviews – for decades. The needs assessment was more difficult. Because of the large amounts of data needed for the analysis, the assessment could not be conducted until SACWIS was fully implemented.

Save the Date for CQI

Don't miss the final CQI reporting tools webinar! Mark your calendars for 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Aug. 19. State and county agency presenters will examine the CFSR reports in ROM, as well as available supplemental CFSR reports. There will be lots of suggestions for how you can use these reports to monitor your progress on the statewide data indicators. Register [here](#).

After SACWIS was implemented, the following tasks had to be completed: OFC staff had to analyze risk-assessment and service data and even examine notes social workers wrote on cases. They had to combine child welfare data with Medicaid claims data. They also had to conduct a comprehensive literature search on effective services and then calculate the costs of delivering those services to those who need them.

Finally, on Jan. 29, the assessment was finalized and submitted for review. The good news from Judge Black was gratifying for all involved. To read the assessment, visit jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/Reports-Plans-and-Presentations.stm.

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.

Principle of the Month

Partners are given voice in a decision-making process.