



PARTNERS  
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

Partnerships and collaboration enhance the quality of outcomes.

OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

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## Missed an issue?

No problem. All First Friday updates are posted on the OFC website under the Partners for Ohio's Families button. **Click here** to check them out!

## From OFC Deputy Director Dan Shook – 12/2/16



I've been deputy director for about a month now, and it's been a whirlwind! But I'd like to pause for a moment, take a deep breath and extend my sincere appreciation to the many stakeholders and OFC staff members who have reached out to me to offer their congratulations and personal encouragement. Every day I am reminded of the responsibility I carry in this position, the complexity of the issues faced by the families we serve, and the long-term importance of our work. This is not an easy business, and I thank each of you for your guidance and support.

Last month started with Ohio's federally conducted Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review. This was a significant undertaking that required a great deal of advance work. As always, I was impressed by how diligently both OFC staff and our county and private agency partners approached the task. Everyone's hard work was evident in the level of documentation and preparation that greeted our federal reviewers. As you'll see in this issue of First Friday, we can congratulate ourselves for some significant improvement, but still have work to do.

November was a great month for discussion. At the Partners for Ohio's Families Advisory Board meeting, we had some meaty conversation regarding adoption disruption, possible ways to prevent disruption, and the types of Ohio placements and services that could reduce the need to place youth out of state.

The Supreme Court of Ohio sponsored a roundtable for new judges which, for the first time, included each judge's child welfare agency. This was an opportunity for peer-to-peer conversation about best practices, and participants took advantage of the chance to learn from each other and discuss ways they might more positively impact outcomes for the families that come before them. Discussion topics ran the gamut, including the effects of continuances, the Child and Family Services Review, court order language, juvenile justice issues and the federal grant Ohio received to increase the scale and scope of family drug courts. It was encouraging to hear conversations familiar to me but from a court perspective. A second roundtable is being scheduled for early March; stay tuned.

The topic of screening was a big focus of PCSAO's metropolitan county meeting. Thanks to the Supreme Court of Ohio for allowing us to use its responder system, a fun tool for seeing how judgments

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may vary by jurisdiction. There was great conversation regarding the development and application of screening tools and guidelines. This is a continuing discussion.

I also was fortunate to attend an early Thanksgiving hosted by ACTION Ohio and various sponsors. At this and the other three dinners held across the state, current and former foster youth came together as family to break bread and celebrate their lifelong bond as foster “brothers and sisters.” Many thanks were given: for the serious and the silly,

for friends and opportunities, for caseworkers and foster parents, and for the ability to reunite with biological family after years of separation. I held that celebration in mind as I joined my own family for a traditional turkey dinner.

I wish each of you a happy holiday season filled with festivities in whatever form you most enjoy. Life isn’t all work! I hope each of you has the opportunity to connect with those who are most meaningful to you, and that we continue to make progress on sharing that gift with the children and families we serve.

### **Thanks to All Who Helped with the Title IV-E Review!**

The OFC Title IV-E Policy Unit – which includes Carole Fisher, Deanna Robb and Lisa Howard – has been extremely busy over the past year getting ready for Ohio’s secondary federal Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review, which was held Oct. 31 through Nov. 4. This review was much bigger than our summer 2015 preliminary review, which involved 80 cases. This time, 150 cases were randomly selected, all with Title IV-E reimbursement claims at some point between Oct. 1, 2015, and March 31, 2016.

Staff started getting ready for this task almost as soon as the preliminary review ended. In January, they hosted a webinar that provided a refresher on Title IV-E eligibility criteria and instruction on the 35-page, on-site review instrument used by the federal review team to verify compliance with each criterion in the cases selected for review.

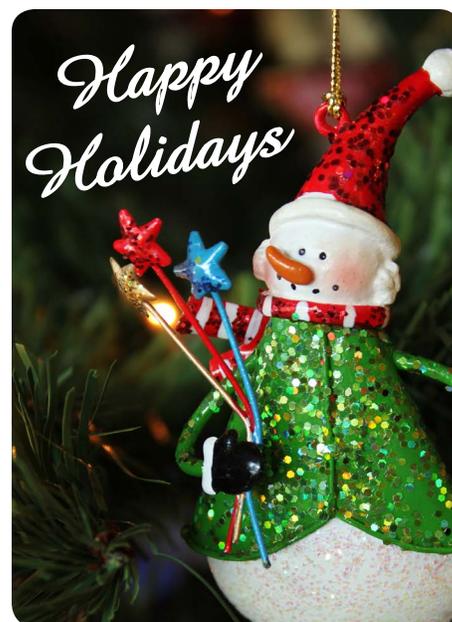
In July, the federal review team identified the 150-case sample, and OFC staff provided instructions to the Title IV-E specialists in counties with cases selected. The specialists confirmed that all requirements were met for each case and then submitted the case records and required documentation.

Finally, for one week in November, we hosted 15 representatives from the U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services (HHS). They worked in close collaboration with ODJFS staff, representatives from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Title IV-E experts from six county agencies.

Each case was evaluated using the federal review instrument through three levels of independent analysis: an initial review and two levels of quality assurance review. If an error was identified, the case was deemed ineligible, as was the Title IV-E claim. States are required to be in “substantial compliance” with Title IV-E eligibility. This means that no more than 10 percent of cases reviewed can be ineligible or the total ineligible dollars cannot exceed 10 percent of the sample. If both percentages exceed 10 percent, a state is out of compliance. The federal team is conducting its final analysis and is expected to issue a report by early 2017.

The review week required the collaboration, hard work and support of a wide range of state and local partners. The OFC IV-E Policy Unit gives a special shout out to county Title IV-E specialists and the state review team. This extends to all the work colleagues who helped fill in while team members donated their considerable time and talents to this task. We appreciate and thank the many partners who played such an important role in this complex and extensive review!



### **The Purpose of the Title IV-E Single Cost Report**

The Title IV-E Single Cost Report (JFS 02911) provides objective, verifiable documentation of a placement agency’s cost of doing business. In practical terms, agencies can pay as much as they want for the care of a child. However, the federal government will reimburse only up to the agency’s established cost of doing business. It calculates reimbursements at the applicable federal financial participation percentage, based either on the agency’s payment or on its reimbursement ceiling, whichever is less.

### **Title IV-E Cost Reports Due Dec. 31**

Title IV-E cost reports for state fiscal year 2016 (July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016) are due Dec. 31. Extension requests can be emailed to [Ryan.Meanor@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Ryan.Meanor@jfs.ohio.gov). Approved Title IV-E reimbursement ceilings will be effective from April 1, 2017, through March 31, 2018.

## Title IV-E Review: Early Impressions

Although HHS won't issue its report until early 2017, there seems to have been improvement in these areas:

- Including the correct names of children and parents and identifying their relationship; including specific information about the initial removal; and including the date of the child's removal in the court order. This information is critical to documenting that the child was removed from a "specified relative," as required for Title IV-E eligibility.
- Achieving removal and placement on the same day as the court's order for removal.

- Reducing the length of time to achieve adjudication; many were adjudicated within 60 days from the date of removal.
- Documenting foster home licensure and timely renewal in the case record.

Ohio may benefit from enhanced efforts to ensure that:

- Court orders include language documenting that the child welfare agency made reasonable efforts to prevent removal and that remaining in the home would be harmful to the child. Specific, detailed language is preferred; a check box indicating the court's

finding will likely be unacceptable.

- The court annually documents its finding that the agency has made reasonable efforts to finalize the child's permanency plan.
- Case records document satisfactory background checks, dates of hire, and dates of working independently with children for employees of residential placement providers.

It's clear that Ohio's public and private agencies and juvenile courts have made significant progress on many items. Thank you for your hard work; it's making a difference!

## Kudos to the Title IV-E Juvenile Courts

By entering into subgrant agreements with ODJFS and county commissioners, Ohio's juvenile courts can function as Title IV-E agencies with responsibility for the placement and care of children. This means they can seek reimbursement for the foster care and maintenance costs they incur for children who have been determined unruly or delinquent and placed in foster care.

Courts may be reimbursed for administrative and training costs related to children in foster care, as well as maintenance payments for youth who are at serious risk of removal from their homes. Reimbursement requires full compliance with Title IV-E requirements, including the requirement to ensure children's safety, permanency and well-being. This requires a philosophical shift, as delinquency typically is a matter of public safety.

The need to view delinquency within the context of the family has heightened as court staff have assumed responsibility for entering case information into SACWIS.

OFC's Bureau of Automated Systems has offered numerous webinars and hands-on learning labs for court staff. In addition, since Ohio's Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE) process has extended to Title IV-E courts, courts also are receiving support from the OFC's technical assistance specialists as they learn about new monitoring tools.

Ohio's 38 Title IV-E courts have full access to the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, the SACWIS Help Desk and the technical assistance specialists. They should be applauded for taking on this new workload and for their commitment to providing appropriate intervention services. OFC continues to explore other ways to support their efforts. If you have suggestions, questions or comments, email [Ricardo.Murph@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Ricardo.Murph@jfs.ohio.gov).

## November 2016 Global Emails

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

**11/1/2016** – Adoption Recognition and Recruitment Month

**11/8/ 2016** – Managed Care Enrollment

**11/8/2016** – Title IV-E Non-Reimbursable Placement Setting: Compass Family and Community Services' Daybreak Shelter Home Program

**11/14/2016** – JULY-SEPT 2016 FCL QUARTERLY COMPLIANCE REPORT

**11/29/16** Upcoming training sessions on community health and safety

## Bridges: From the Mailbox

Each month we share a few emails sent to the [fosterto21@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:fosterto21@jfs.ohio.gov) mailbox. This month we chose two questions raised during November's speaking events. Please continue to send us your opinions, ideas and concerns. Your thoughts help us with our planning!

**Q:** Will monthly face-to-face visits with the young adults involved in the Bridges program be required? If yes, by whom?

**A:** Yes, to meet federal requirements, the young adult will have to be seen at least monthly. This will be a case management function. ODJFS is considering contracting out selected case management functions, and monthly visitation is likely to be one of those activities best performed at the local level. Regular and open two-way interaction between the case manager and the young adult will be essential to helping youth achieve short- and long-term goals.

While the specific criteria are yet to be defined, it's clear that the case manager's ability to build a mutually respectful and supportive relationship will be vital. Language that better conveys this relationship – mentor? – will be important. What are your suggestions and thoughts?

**Q:** If a young adult meets the eligibility requirements for Bridges but is not Title IV-eligible, can they still be a part of the program?

**A:** IV-E eligibility will not dictate whether a young adult can enroll in the program. If a young adult volunteers for the Bridges program and meets at least one program criteria, he or she can participate in the program. Any housing and case management costs that are not Title IV-E reimbursable will be the responsibility of the state. For more information about program criteria, please view the Foster to 21 page at [jfs.ohio.gov/ocf](http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf).

## Principle of the Month

Partnerships and collaboration enhance the quality of outcomes.

## What Is Bridges?

You've known it as Ohio Fostering Connections, House Bill 50 and Foster to 21, but Ohio's program to extend Title IV-E benefits to young adults up to age 21 finally has a permanent name: Bridges. The term conveys the transformational passage from one point to another. There's still lots of branding work to be done, so keep an eye out for more information, but if you hear the word "Bridges," think "exciting new possibilities for former foster youth!"

## Rule Review Update

The following Ohio Administrative Code rules have been posted [ohiorulereview.org](http://ohiorulereview.org), for the times specified below.

From Nov. 18 through Dec. 18, 2016:

- 5101:2-40-04 Kinship permanency incentive (KPI) program
- 5101:2-42-19 Requirements for the provision of independent living services to youth in custody.
- 5101:2-53-01 Definitions related to the Indian Child Welfare Act.
- 5101:2-53-03 Determination of Indian status, tribal eligibility and membership
- 5101:2-53-05 Voluntary placement for temporary custody of Indian child
- 5101:2-53-06 Emergency removal and involuntary custody of Indian children.
- 5101:2-53-07 Permanent surrender or parental consent to adoptive placement of Indian children.
- 5101:2-53-08 Placement preference of Indian children
- 5101:2-53-09 Procedures for the transfer of Indian children to a tribal Title IV-E agency or an Indian tribe with a Title IV-E agreement
- JFS 01501 Application for Kinship Permanency Incentive

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 1,069 hits in November.