For this edition of First Friday, I would like to focus on one word: community. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey found a majority of Americans reported knowing only some of their neighbors, with even fewer saying they knew most of them. No matter where you live, urban or rural or somewhere in between, the research noted that people are interacting less and less with one another, even the people they know.

Our goal as children services professionals should be to create a sense of connection between ourselves, our partners and the families we serve. We should cultivate a neighborly spirit in which we get to know one another and feel comfortable engaging in thoughtful, productive conversations despite our differences. If you look, you can find places where members of a community have banded together to foster community spirit. For one bright and shining example, see page 3 to learn how Lucas County Children Services has literally made it a more beautiful day in their neighborhood.

This month we celebrate both Child Welfare Workforce Development Month and Child Welfare Worker Appreciation Week (Sept. 9-13). Both of these occasions are excellent times to recognize, honor and support the front-line staff who foster a sense of community with the families they serve each and every day. You are our most important resource, and I hope you know how much we respect and honor your work, and how much we are here to support you in your challenges.

To our children services workforce, I thank each and every one of you for your dedication, innovation and hard work. For more resources and inspiration as we celebrate Child Welfare Workforce Development Month, please visit ncwwi.org/CWworkforce.
Preliminary Medication Audit Findings Issued

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has issued preliminary findings in its audit of Ohio agencies’ use of SACWIS for monitoring medications prescribed to Ohio children in foster care.

Of a random sample of 100 cases in which children were prescribed psychotropic or opioid medications during 2017, no issues were found in 30 of the cases. The findings noted non-compliances due to agencies not following their own and state policy requiring that caseworkers enter prescriptions and related information in SACWIS. In many cases, medication was not indicated as a psychotropic medication.

Discussions with the OIG are continuing. Agencies not in compliance will be required to complete corrective action plans. In addition, ODJFS will submit a response and include a corrective action plan explaining how it has addressed the issues cited. This plan will then be included in the OIG’s final report.

Incident Date Added to Intake Screen

Did you know that an incident date field has been added to the SACWIS intake screen to help identify an accurate number of children who experience maltreatment in foster care?

Children often disclose prior abuse or neglect after they come into care, so our previous method of capturing the report date was skewing the data we report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To improve data accuracy, we added the incident date to capture the actual or estimated date of the abuse. For example, if a child in foster care reports past abuse by a parent, caregiver or anyone else, the intake worker/screener can enter the estimated date the abuse occurred so that it is recorded as happening before the child came into foster care.

For more information, please refer to the SACWIS knowledge base article here.

Clark, Knox Chosen for Multisystem Youth Assistance

In April, several local teams attended regional multisystem youth training sessions hosted by the Supreme Court of Ohio’s Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency. In May, those teams were invited to apply for scholarships to receive intense technical assistance and consultation from the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK), whose executive director, John Tuell, facilitated the sessions.

In July, the scholarship recipients were announced: Clark and Knox counties.

RFK will use a four-phase framework at both sites to help improve outcomes for youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The use of a framework and not a model will allow for customized solutions that can potentially be sustained long-term. The framework will address the following:

- Readiness, Leadership, Collaborative Governance and Mobilization
- Analytical Examination, including:
  - Data Collection, Management and Performance Measurement
  - Screening, Assessment and Structured Decision-Making
  - Fiscal and Workforce Resource Inventory
  - Legal and Policy Analysis
- Practice and Policy Findings and Recommendations
- Development of an Action Strategy
- Implementation and Evaluation

This project is funded by a federal grant and is being led by the Supreme Court of Ohio in partnership with ODJFS.
Mural Brightens LCCS Play Yard

By Julie Malkin and Kevin Milliken,
Lucas County Children Services

How do you transform a drab and institutional-looking play yard with aging toys and equipment, and turn it into a brighter, more family-friendly outdoor space? Start with buckets of color. Mix in some creative genius. Add a new community partnership—and, voila!

Since 1992, Lucas County Children Services has operated in a building that was originally built as a bank. The 1940s-era building featured a shady courtyard that the agency walled in to serve as a playground for parents and children to have outdoor supervised visits. The concrete walls, plus bars and fencing on the wall of an adjacent parking garage, made for a dreary environment for children to play.

LCCS began investigating ways to brighten up and, ultimately, renovate the space. While replacing the slide and other play equipment could not happen until a fundraising goal could be met, adding a little color was definitely within reach! The agency quickly raised the necessary seed money through a Facebook fundraiser and began investigating its options.

LCCS soon connected with a local arts group that was looking for potential public mural projects for a Bowling Green State University (BGSU) summer art class. The group was already well-known in the community for a series of murals painted on buildings in Toledo's Old South End. LCCS staff contacted the organization's art director, who just happened to also be an LCCS foster/adoptive parent.

Soon, 20 BGSU students joined the artists at LCCS to meet with agency leadership to develop a vision for the project. Those discussions soon went from dream to drawing board to reality. The BGSU students immersed themselves in the project, mentoring some LCCS foster teens along the way.

After the walls were cleaned and primed, the students spent a night projecting and sketching images on the concrete panels. The next day, colorful, detailed, whimsical images of fun, friendship and family began to emerge, one color at a time. The theme was soon revealed: someone blowing bubbles that floated across the 80-foot-long mural, revealing illustrations of trees, a sliding board, kites and sunny skies. Staff and families alike watched the images emerge from the brushes and buckets of paint.

In just five days, drab gray walls were transformed into a series of playful images to capture the imagination. A public ribbon cutting was held to thank and recognize all involved. Local media covered the painting process, as well as the public unveiling.

The mural project is just the first step of what is hoped will be a complete renovation of the outdoor play area. It is a great example to donors and foundations of what can be accomplished when community members get together to work behalf of our children.

To transform its play yard, LCCS enlisted the help of a Bowling Green State University summer art class.

Before | After
OFC Welcomes 2 New Staff

OFC recently welcomed two new staff members: Gina Speaks-Eshler, the new Bureau Chief of Systems and Practice Advancement, and Veronica Burroughs, Kinship and Adoption Navigator Program Project Manager.

Gina most recently was deputy director of the Clinton County Department of Job and Family Services. She has been a Child Protection Unit caseworker, supervisor and administrator. She also has been involved in many state-level groups, including Partners for Ohio Families, the Differential Response Leadership Council, the Ohio Rules Committee and the OH-START Steering Committee.

Veronica’s most recent work was with the Supreme Court of Ohio as the Court Improvement Program Analyst in the Children and Families Section. In this role, she managed the federal Court Improvement Program grant, which works with juvenile courts to improve the handling of child welfare court proceedings and enhance collaboration with local agencies. Prior to that, she worked with private child serving agencies, and she also teaches courses in social work and policy at Columbus State Community College.

Welcome, Gina and Veronica!

Ohio Certification and Licensing Management (OCALM) System Update

Since we announced in the March First Friday that work was underway on a new foster care licensing information system, staff have been working hard to develop a system that will meet the needs of both local agencies and OFC licensing staff.

Many thanks to all who have offered their input on this system. On June 11, a focus group was held with a sample of agencies from across the state. Participants included agencies that provide residential care, crisis care, foster care and/or private adoption services. We couldn’t be more grateful to them for taking the time to provide valuable feedback.

Overall, the consensus was that the new system will be a vast improvement over our current system, which was designed in 2009. Many also offered to test the functionality when it is available.

The new system will give current and prospective ODJFS-certified private and public agencies the ability to log into the system directly to upload and complete required documents. Users will be able to update documents online, as well, without the need to resubmit a paper form, and will be able to use a real-time chat feature for one-on-one assistance.

The initial certification functionality is slated to go live in October, followed soon after by the ability for agencies to submit amendments and recertifications. Full statewide rollout is planned for 2020.

Rule Review Update

The following Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules were posted to the Ohio’s Families and Children Rule Review Website at ohiorulereview.org, during the months of July and August 2019:

For 30 days from July 15 through August 14, 2019:
Chapter 5101:2-5 Child Services Agency Licensing Rules (July 15-Aug. 14)
- 5101:2-5-18, “Waivers and variances”

For 30 days from July 16 through August 15, 2019:
Chapter 5101:2-33 Administrative Requirements (July 16-Aug. 15)
- 5101:2-33-07, “Delegation of responsibilities and contracting for the performance of specified agency duties”
- 5101:2-33-20, “PCSA complaint review and report disposition appeal policy”
- 5101:2-33-21, “Confidentiality and dissemination of child welfare information”
- 5101:2-33-23, “Case records for children services”
- 5101:2-33-26, “The county child abuse and neglect memorandum of understanding”
- 5101:2-33-28, “Joint planning and sharing of information among the PCSA and CDJFS”

Please continue to visit the site periodically for new postings. We welcome your input and hope you use this opportunity to share your experiences and suggestions. The website received 952 page views in July.

Congratulations to Anna Wyss-Zilles!

Anna Wyss-Zilles, former chief of OFC’s Bureau for Systems and Practice Advancement since March of 2017, retired at the end of August after 30 years of service with ODJFS.

Anna started as a foster care licensing/certification specialist and later served as a technical assistance specialist and eventually a manager in the Akron and Toledo offices. Over the years, she has been integral to OFC’s technical assistance and performance improvement activities. We will miss her and wish her all the best in her retirement!
Global Emails for July and August
The following emails were sent in July to PCSA directors and/or private agency directors.

7/5/2019 – Webinar Invitation for Rule Changes Related to Federal Foster Care Licensing Model Standards
7/12/2019 – Citizen Review Panel Reports
7/26/2019 – Child and Family Services Review, Program Improvement Plan Approval
7/29/2019 – Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)
7/30/2019 – Head Start-Early Head Start Eligibility – Homeless and Foster Care Children
8/6/2019 – Action Change Transmittal # 269 – Kinship Caregiver Program – Interim Guidance
8/13/2019 – Adoption Assessor Survey
8/16/2019 – Notification of ProtectOHIO, Federal Title IV-E Waiver Program Expiration Date and State Child Protection Allocation Distribution
8/26/2019 – OhioKAN Town Hall Meetings
8/29/2019 – Dual Status Training for Caseworkers

Welcome, New Agencies
The following agencies have achieved certification since March 1, 2019. For a comprehensive roster of all ODJFS-certified agencies, click on the “Foster Agency Licensing” button on OFC’s website (jfs.ohio.gov/ocf) and then “Agency Masterlist.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Certification Date</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victory House LLC</td>
<td>Dayton</td>
<td>March 5, 2019</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching Above Hopelessness and Brokenness Ministries, Inc.</td>
<td>Fairlawn</td>
<td>March 7, 2019</td>
<td>CRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nu Beginnings</td>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>March 21, 2019</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against All Odds 126, Inc.</td>
<td>Dayton</td>
<td>April 4, 2019</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nika’s Group Home LLC</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>August 8, 2019</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malone’s Nursing Consultants, LLC</td>
<td>West Carrollton</td>
<td>August 14, 2019</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closed Agencies
These agencies have closed since March 2019:
- The Audrey House (effective March 29, 2019)
- Mommas Place (effective April 28, 2019)
- Access for Youth, Inc. (effective May 20, 2019)
- DOY Services, Inc. (effective July 22, 2019)

New Administrator Registration is Open
Mark your calendars for a statewide New Agency Administrator Training:

New Agency Administrator Training
Date: October 9, 2019
Time: 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Location: 4020 E. Fifth Ave. (Air Center), Columbus
Register: Email Felicia. Saunders@jfs.ohio.gov
Questions: (614) 752-0049

Staff from OFC’s Bureau of Foster Care Licensing will explain more about the licensure process to anyone serving prospective and certified agencies in the capacity of board chairpersons, administrators and/or rule compliance officers. If you’re interested in attending, register now, as space is limited to 90 participants.

Family First Update
In July and August, the Family First Prevention Services Act Leadership Advisory Committee voted on 16 key recommendations from the Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) subcommittee. The QRTP workgroups continue to inform the subcommittee on trauma-informed treatment models, agency readiness, accreditation, licensing and contracting, court oversight, and level-of-care assessment.

The Model Licensing Standards Workgroup hosted two webinars in July. The OhioKAN Stakeholder group is planning to host five town hall meetings statewide. For more information, visit kinnectohio.org/ohiokan.

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sept. 17 at 4020 E. Fifth Ave., Columbus. For more information, visit jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/Family-First.stm or email FamilyFirst@jfs.ohio.gov. For meeting dates, see the OFC Calendar.