

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 4, 2018

Bret Crow, Bret.Crow@jfs.ohio.gov or
Angela Terez, Angela.Terez@jfs.ohio.gov
(614) 466-6650

ODJFS Hosting Regional Child Welfare Listening Sessions

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Starting this week, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will begin hosting listening sessions across the state to gather input from local child welfare professionals in advance of sweeping changes to federal law. Among other things, the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) will allow states to use Title IV-E funds for prevention services, which are designed to keep children in their homes instead of in foster care. It also aims to reduce the amount of time children spend in group or congregate care settings.

“Ohio has long been a national leader in supporting innovative practices that prevent the need for children to be placed in foster care,” said ODJFS Director Cynthia Dungey. “FFPSA offers us a pathway to build on this successful history and further move our system in a direction that supports and strengthens families while also keeping children safe. This is a tremendous opportunity to rethink the way we offer child welfare services in Ohio, and we’re excited to engage our local partners in this transformation.”

ODJFS is hosting the Regional Exploration and Design Sessions in partnership with Casey Family Programs, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, the Ohio Children’s Alliance and the Ohio Family Care Association. Sessions are being held Oct. 4-11 in Columbus, Cincinnati, Bowling Green, Chagrin Falls and Athens. Leaders from child welfare agencies across the state are attending, along with their judicial, behavioral health and community service partners. Attendees will hear an overview of FFPSA and have the opportunity to voice their questions, hopes and concerns.

“Having the right people at the table is critical,” Dungey said. “FFPSA is much more than a change in how federal funding is aligned. We have an opportunity to use it as a tool to advance a strategic vision for our child welfare system. It will take a collaborative effort among all of us to develop a plan that will work for Ohio’s families and children.”

After the sessions conclude, Ohio’s FFPSA Leadership Committee will meet to create a statewide implementation plan, which must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The committee includes volunteers from child welfare agencies across Ohio and other system partners. Once approved, any changes in practice must take effect no later than Oct. 1, 2021.

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.



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