



PARTNERS  
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

**OFC policies and supports should be strength-based and recognize the uniqueness of each community and agency.**

## OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

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### Principle of the Month

OFC policies and supports should be strength-based and recognize the uniqueness of each community and agency.

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### From OFC Deputy Director Carla Carpenter – 1/4/19

My family has a New Year's Eve tradition where we all gather together and play games and make homemade pizza. It's not a fancy, black-tie affair, but it's our way to ring in the new year. During this holiday season, I was thinking about the importance of traditions and what they mean to families. Traditions are typically rooted in a significant event and are created as a way for people to reflect on something that has a special meaning. When we observe a tradition, we remember our roots and pave a way for wonderful things to come. No matter what the tradition, these are all treasures, waiting to be discovered. As the new year unfolds, it's time to peel back last year's news and reveal the beauty and hope that 2019 will bring.

In keeping with past years' traditions, the January 2019 issue of *First Friday* features reflections from our partners describing their accomplishments from the previous year and their hopes for the upcoming year. It's an opportunity to share and celebrate our positive experiences, and we always welcome the chance to hear from our readers and community partners.

We're also excited to announce the debut of our new foster care and adoption recruitment campaign and website on Jan. 7. The theme – "It Takes 100% Heart to Foster and Adopt in Ohio" – reflects OFC's work with multiple partners and feedback

from the Foster Care Advisory Group. Thanks to all our partners who contributed their time and expertise to this effort! There is room to grow this project, and we would like to add future sections specific to kinship families, as well. You can read more about it on page 6.

The Family First Leadership Advisory Committee has been meeting monthly to help plan Ohio's implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act. To honor our commitment to transparency and inclusiveness, we've created a **Family First web page** to house information about the act and documentation from the committee meetings. We've also created an email box for questions and feedback: [FamilyFirst@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:FamilyFirst@jfs.ohio.gov). Future issues of *First Friday* will feature regular updates.

Welcome to 2019!



## New Year Reflections

As we kick off 2019, we decided to highlight the voices of our partners and OFC staff by asking them to answer a few questions:

- What accomplishment were you most proud of in 2018?
- What words of encouragement do you have to share for a child, young adult, caregiver or parent?
- What words of encouragement do you have to share for your agency staff?
- What partnerships do you hope to build upon or create in 2019?

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. We hope your work and words are an inspiration to others.

### What accomplishment were you most proud of in 2018?

I am very proud of the collaborative work underway that successfully launched the Bridges program. Over 500 young adults have benefited from the support services, mentoring and assistance. It is an honor to work with ODJFS, our association's "Collaborative," and our network agencies to manage the Bridges grant and deliver services to young adults. The program is not yet a year old, but it has already improved the lives of many.

–Mark Mecum, Executive Director,  
Ohio Children's Alliance

I am proud that the Title IV-E Unit works diligently to partner with others and provide quality information and training to enhance knowledge and skills.

–Trish Wilson,  
OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

We had a tremendous year working together with our partners in the Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services, making important changes in processes. I

believe this to be a huge success and want to give the credit to them for taking on the initiative. We are also looking forward to embarking on a statewide fiscal training program in the future. In my years of working for ODJFS, I have never experienced such a coming together of qualified people to work for the best of all, especially the savings and distribution of funds, the coming together on understanding the federal reports and the processes, the knowledge of our needs and the needs of our stakeholders, and ways to bring funding to people of Ohio as a fiscal partner.

–Charlotte Gerhardstein,  
OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

I am most proud of my staff for reviewing and approving tens of thousands of background checks while maintaining their current workload.

–Monica Kress,  
OFC Bureau of  
Foster Care Licensing

I am excited that my niece and nephew (here in Ohio) have decided to adopt a three-sibling group to join their two children on Christmas Day 2018. I am [also] excited that my wife began volunteering with our local county children services crisis center this year.

–Ricardo Murph,  
OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

In 2018, the Title IV-E Adoption Subsidy Negotiations Roundtable created the framework for what is to come in 2019 with Title IV-E AA in Ohio. Some roundtable participants assisted with the five-year review on the Title IV-E AA rules. These rules bring some significant and important changes that will go into effect in 2019. Some participants volunteered to be part of a development group for a best practice guide to be shared throughout Ohio. This will be a

significant resource for all Ohio users to best understand Title IV-E AA. What was started in 2018 was a stepping stone to the work we will do in 2019.

–Lisa Howard, Lucy Gobble  
and Deanna Robb,  
OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

Completing a comprehensive budget request for the 20/21 biennium that provides funding to state and county agencies to assist families and children in Ohio working within Ohio's child welfare system.

–Alicia Allen, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

2018 has been a difficult as well as inspiring year for families. The Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA) looked once again on how to assist the families who are related to the child welfare system and their agencies to have their voices heard in the development of policies and practices in the counties, agencies and throughout the state. One task we accomplished was to create a new logo that would speak to that vision.

–Dot Erickson-Anderson, Ohio  
Family Care Association



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Mark Mecum, Ohio Children's Alliance

The Adult Protective Services section created a series of guides in response to changes to the Ohio Revised Code which significantly expanded the list of professionals mandated to report suspected elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. The guides will help to train and educate all mandated reporters on their duties and responsibilities in reporting elder maltreatment and are available to the public free of charge through the ODJFS Forms Central website.

Implementation of the requirements of the federal Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) has been one focus of the Child Protective Services Section in 2018, with the development of toolkits and delivery of training throughout the state. These training and educational sessions have involved multi-system collaboration with participation by PCSAs, medical providers, treatment agencies, mental health providers and substance abuse treatment providers. All the toolkits are accessible on the **SACWIS Knowledge Base**.

Given the ever-increasing need for placement options for children in

out-of-home care, the Substitute Care and Permanency Services Section has worked with the input of public and private agency partners, along with collaboration with website design vendor to develop and launch an innovative website and media campaign to support recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families. The public awareness and media campaign titled "It Takes 100% Heart to Foster and Adopt in Ohio" will help interested individuals better understand the distinct roles of fostering and adopting and serve as a resource center for current foster and adoptive parents to turn to when they need guidance and information.

–Christine Dobrovich, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of Child and Adult  
Protective Services

The Bureau of Automated Systems is proud of all of the input and effort its staff and partners put into developing the following new functionality in 2018:

- Bridges
- NEICE
- Plan of Safe Care
- Kinship Home Assessment
- Foster Parent Training Stipend
- Integrated Eligibility Interface
- Oracle Upgrade
- Cognos Upgrade
- Medicaid Interface
- Financial Workload Enhancements
- Create/Manage ICPC/ICAMA Medicaid Span
- Rule Violation
- Pre-adoptive Staffing and Adoption Matching Conference

–Kevin Bullock, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of  
Automated Systems

I am most proud of the implementation of Bridges. As the first state-administered child welfare program in Ohio, there have been ups and downs, but after enrolling more than 570 young adults in less than 11 months, OFC staff are still just as dedicated to ensuring these young adults have every opportunity to build lifelong permanent connections while receiving the supports and services every adult deserves.

–Colleen Tucker, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of Foster Care  
Licensing and former  
Bridges Program Manager

### **What words of encouragement do you have to share for a child, young adult, caregiver or parent?**

The most inspiring people I have the opportunity to work with are the young adults that our organizations serve. One of the bright young adults enrolled in Bridges expressed this feedback during a recent focus group. He said: "It's not about the money. I can always work. The thing I need most is that love and support from someone." Focusing on how we can deliver love and support is a critical strategy to connecting with young people. Whether you are a foster parent, social worker or mentor, we all have the capability of achieving this.

–Mark Mecum, Executive Director,  
Ohio Children's Alliance

To the young adult: Seek the counsel of someone older than you and soak up their wisdom as they share their life experiences; set aside pride and allow others to offer their insights and guidance. And remember this... one mistake doesn't define your course in life; it's what you do going forward that establishes your path. And, finally, strive to find the good in others; forgive and encourage those around you.

–Ryan Meanor, OFC Bureau  
of Fiscal Operations

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David E. Boyer, Muskingum County Adult and Child Protective Services

To the kids out there...get off your phone sometimes. Unplug. Go for a walk or hike & go play. Smell the air, trees, grass around you. Enjoy being a kid!

–Monica Kress, OFC  
Bureau of Foster Care Licensing

Over the past year, I have had the chance to participate in meetings with HOPE and Succeed parent partners. I continue to be amazed with the work they are doing to encourage and support other parents with lived experience. The humility and dignity they model in everything they do continues to inspire me as a working parent in my daily work.

–Lakeisha Hilton,  
OFC Assistant Deputy Director

1. Believe in yourself!
2. Let your light shine!
3. Showing up is ½ the battle (never give up)
4. Write down your goals
5. Keep moving

–Joanna Valentine,  
OFC Program Administrator

To all the dedicated adults who have taken on parental roles, parenting is hard and can be exhausting. Take a minute, inhale, exhale and try not to be so hard on yourselves. Ask for help when you need it.

–Colleen Tucker, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of Foster Care  
Licensing

**What words of encouragement do you have to share for your agency staff?**

For 23 years and counting, I have had the distinct pleasure and honor of working alongside some of the truly best people that inhabit planet earth. I marvel each and every day at their accomplishments and their willingness to constantly and consistently give 100% of their time, talent and treasure in order that the most needy adults and children amongst us are safe and protected. They persevere and thrive through the harshest of barriers. They fight the good fight 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. The reward for a job well done is often being

assigned two or more cases to, once again, perform your magic.

These great and giving people humble and inspire me to always go further and dig deeper in order that we always accomplish our noble goals and meet the mandates of our mission. Failure is not an option. Though this work always occurs in an environment that is fraught with peril and can only be described as an emotional meatgrinder, they handle this immense pressure with grace, compassion, love and professionalism.

To the great staff at Muskingum County Adult and Child Protective Services and the exceptional staff members throughout all 88 counties who do this work of angels, a heartfelt “thank you” and keep doing a “WOW”!

–David E. Boyer,  
Executive Director,  
Muskingum County Adult and  
Child Protective Services

Ohio’s 15,000+ foster children rely on advocates. If we don’t advocate for better public policies, funding and services to help them succeed, who will?

–Mark Mecum, Executive Director,  
Ohio Children’s Alliance

Happy holidays and here’s to a terrific new year! 2018 was the year of new directions and change, from new landmark legislation to incredible progress on both statewide and local initiatives, committees and taskforces. I believe the opportunities for 2019 will be anchored in making sure our values for the safety, permanence and improved well-being of children permeate all our interactions, both internally and externally. From my perspective, we are ready, we are eager, and we are going to be very successful thanks to our collective staffs, partners and leaders.

–Scott Ferris, Executive Director,  
Lorain County Public Children  
Services Agency

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We have been provided the opportunity to change the way we engage families and children. This could potentially reduce the number of children in out-of-home care and increase the number of children who can either remain safely in their own homes or in the care of related or non-related loved ones. We should not squander this gift!

–Alicia Allen, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

The work of being a family related to child welfare is a complex one, yet filled with hope for both the future of our own family and the other families that we walk together with in this journey. Building community, living in open communication, and healing for both our children and our families is the journey we are committed to pursuing.

–Dot Erickson-Anderson,  
Ohio Family Care Association

### What partnerships do you hope to build upon or create in 2019?

Our goal in 2019 is to widen the team of partners we work with to achieve our mission. That will include partnering with metropolitan health collaboratives to advance innovation in our member organizations, partnering with family advocacy groups to advance the quality of foster caregiving, and partnering with housing developers to build housing units designed for young adults aging out of foster care.

–Mark Mecum, Executive Director,  
Ohio Children's Alliance

The Title IV-E Unit hopes to build upon our partnerships with county agencies, Title IV-E courts, private agencies and placement facilities working to provide quality services to children and families.

–Trish Wilson,  
OFC Bureau of  
Fiscal Operations

This is such an exciting time in child welfare! Passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act provides an opportunity to develop and support the array of services needed to keep families safely together and ensure children in out-of-home care receive effective treatment and adequate post-discharge supports.

A unique thing about Ohio is the strength of our public-private partnerships and our shared commitment to addressing challenges. Whenever faced with implementing a new federal mandate, I've always been able to go to my partners. At those times, the requirements were never viewed as a "child welfare problem" but as a joint responsibility to improve unmet needs in the state.

Development and implementation of FFPSA strategies will no doubt be daunting tasks. This time will also, no doubt, be a period of great creativity and innovation shared by all of us together.

–Sue Williams, Chief,  
OFC Bureau of Multi-Systems  
Services and Supports

With a call going out to...

- Increase the number of foster parents licensed in the state;
- Increase the number of children cared for in kinship care;
- Families who could respond with a vision to add children to their family via adoption; and
- The reality of substance abuse as a placement issue for children,

...the role to have their voices heard across the line of adoptive, foster, kinship and primary families becomes a priority as we move forward into 2019.

In 2019 we strive to increase the number of families who serve on local advisory councils with their agencies, keep active advisory councils for the state to hear the issues that are affecting families in the changes coming to Ohio, answer questions and concerns for families who have not found a satisfactory

solution to their query, and keep the communication open across the different family groups in unity with their agencies.

–Dot Erickson-Anderson,  
Ohio Family Care Association

At the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF), the majority of our work occurs "upstream," through the funding and delivery of programs and services aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect before it occurs. In 2019, we will continue our mission to prevent child abuse and neglect through investing in strong communities, healthy families and safe children. We are very excited to kick off 2019 by launching our **new website!** The new website provides information and resources for both parents and professionals, highlights the work being done in each of Ohio's eight Regional Prevention Councils, outlines OCTF funding opportunities and tips for successful grant proposals, provides an overview of current statewide initiatives – and more!

–Lindsay Williams,  
Executive Director, "Ohio  
Children's Trust Fund

### Rule Review Update

Currently, no rules are posted at [ohiorulereview.org](http://ohiorulereview.org), but 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 220 page views in December.

### Missed an issue of First Friday?

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!

## New Foster/Adoption Website Launches Jan. 7

OFC is excited to announce the Jan. 7 launch of our public awareness campaign and website for foster care and adoption. Over the next month, you'll see advertisements and messaging over several social media platforms spreading the word that "It Takes 100% Heart to Foster and Adopt in Ohio."

Our goal is to build interest and urgency in foster care and adoption, and to connect prospective caregivers with resources and information so they can learn what to expect and make an informed decision. We know that the best recruiter for any agency is a happy foster parent, so we'll also use the website to reach out to current foster and adoptive parents with resources

to help them on their journey. If they made the commitment to making a difference in a child's life, then we're committed to helping them along the way.

Please join us in sharing this exciting news by visiting **FosterAndAdopt.jfs.ohio.gov** and sharing it on Facebook and Twitter. You also can follow us on Facebook at **facebook.com/ItTakesHeartOH** or Twitter at **twitter.com/ItTakesHeartOH**.

If you have suggestions for information or resources that could be added to the website, please send your ideas to **ItTakesHeartOhio@jfs.ohio.gov**.



## FFPSA Update

OFC is committed to providing up-to-date information about the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which will bring dramatic changes to the nation's child welfare system.

The Family First Leadership Advisory Committee is now meeting monthly. Members include leaders from public and private child serving agencies, state departments, partner

agencies, parents, foster care alumni and caregivers. During its December meeting, the committee established a charter, reviewed qualified residential treatment program requirements, discussed creating subcommittees, and made a list of potential tasks. The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 17.

To share information and resources about the committee's work, OFC's

website now has a "Family First" page, **jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/Family-First.stm**. We'll update it frequently with helpful resources, including PowerPoints, meeting minutes, agendas and federal guidance. We'll also publish regular updates in *First Friday*.

If you have any questions about the website or the committee's work, please email **FamilyFirst@jfs.ohio.gov**.



## Coming Soon: Citizen Review Panel Surveys

The federal CAPTA legislation requires states to create citizen review panels that meet quarterly and report annually on efforts to improve child welfare practice. In the course of their work, the panels also can help others better understand the local agency perspective on a variety of important issues.

With those goals in mind, Ohio's **Safety Panel** and **Permanency Panel** will soon distribute short surveys to gather information about the challenges county agencies face

with workforce turnover and with providing services to families affected by drug addiction. In addition, the **Well-Being Panel** has invited PCSAO and some PCSA directors to its February meeting to learn more about local funding challenges.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about the panels, please email Project Manager Sarah Parmenter at [parmenter.10@osu.edu](mailto:parmenter.10@osu.edu).

## Global Emails

The following emails were sent in December to PCSA directors and/or private agency directors:

**12/11/2018** – Permanency Docket Individual County Quarterly Reports

**12/18/2018** – Ohio Database for Adult Protective Services (ODAPS) 1.0 Training

**12/19/2018** – Ohio's Public Facing Child Welfare Data Dashboard

**12/20/2018** – SSIP Southeast Regional Meeting Invitation and Agenda

**12/20/2018** – SSIP Northeast Regional Meeting Invitation and Agenda

**12/20/2018** – Family First Prevention Services Act Information

**12/26/2018** – Revised IRS Publication 1075