

# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In October 1997, Ohio implemented ProtectOhio, a Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration project. As one of a score of Title IV-E Waiver programs in the country, ProtectOhio experiments with the flexible use of federal IV-E dollars; funds normally allowed to be spent only for foster care can be used for a range of child welfare purposes. The underlying premise of the Title IV-E Waiver is that the opportunity to use federal child welfare funds flexibly will change purchasing decisions and service utilization patterns in ways that are favorable to children and families. ProtectOhio is one of five states experimenting with capped IV-E allocations.<sup>1</sup> As in the other states, Ohio’s primary goals are to reduce the number of children coming into care, decrease the length of stay in care, decrease the number of placements experienced by children already in care, and increase the number of children reunited with their families or placed in other permanent situations.

The first ProtectOhio Waiver demonstration program operated for five years, from October 1, 1997 through September 30, 2002. A “bridge period” of two years followed, while the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) negotiated with the federal Children’s Bureau to obtain a five-year extension. The extension was granted in January 2005, retroactive to October 1, 2004, and scheduled to end September 30, 2009. The new waiver featured a major shift in focus: participating county child welfare agencies – called Public Child Serving Agencies, or PCSAs – would focus on two or more specific interventions, each choosing from: family team meetings, supervised visitation, kinship supports, enhanced mental health/substance abuse services, and managed care.

In February 2009, ODJFS formally requested another five-year extension; in March, the Children’s Bureau granted a short-term extension through July 2010, to allow for full consideration of the extension in the context of the final evaluation report. This report constitutes the Comprehensive Final Evaluation Report, and offers extensive implementation findings and outcome results.

### 1.1 OVERVIEW OF PROTECTOHIO WAIVER AND EVALUATION DESIGN

Children’s services in Ohio are county-administered. When the waiver began in 1997, 14 local public child-serving agencies (PCSAs) opted to participate in ProtectOhio, each county having its own ideas about how best to utilize the flexibility – and how to handle the risk – of limited Title IV-E funds. Their involvement signaled a desire to explore innovative approaches to meeting the needs of children and families in their communities and a commitment to systemic change in the management of child welfare services, as the vehicle for improving child and family outcomes. When ProtectOhio was extended, additional Ohio counties had the option of joining the waiver; four more did so in October 2005, bringing the demonstration group to 18 counties.

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<sup>1</sup> The other four are Indiana, Oregon, California and Florida.

Since 1997, in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the federal demonstration project, Ohio has contracted with a research team led by Human Services Research Institute (HSRI), to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the ProtectOhio demonstration. Essential to the evaluation is the examination of a group of comparison counties, chosen for their similarities to the demonstration counties. During the first waiver, 14 comparison PCSAs served as the comparison group; in the second waiver, three more comparison sites were added. Table 1.1 below lists the PCSAs participating in the second waiver evaluation.

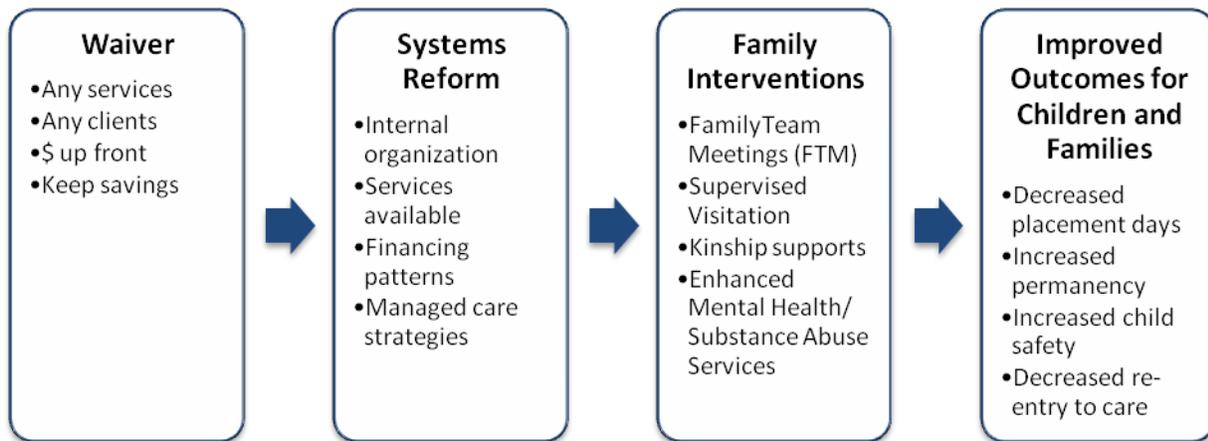
<b>Table 1.1: ProtectOhio Evaluation Counties</b>					
<b>Demonstration Counties</b>			<b>Comparison Counties</b>		
Ashtabula	Franklin	Medina	Allen	Hocking	Scioto
Belmont	Greene	Muskingum	Butler	Mahoning	Summit
Clark	Hamilton	Portage	Clermont	Miami	Trumbull
Coshocton	Hardin	Richland	Columbiana	Montgomery	Warren
Crawford	Highland	Stark	Guernsey	Morrow	Wood
Fairfield	Lorain	Vinton	Hancock	Perry	--

The evaluation team includes HSRI, Westat, and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Responsibility for the major evaluation studies is shared as follows:

- HSRI leads the Process Implementation Study, which consists of five distinct research studies addressing structural or service delivery changes targeted by some or all of the demonstration PCSAs. In three of the studies, HSRI also examines the intervention effects on child-level outcomes.
- Chapin Hall leads the Fiscal Outcomes Study, continuing the approach used during the first five-year evaluation which focused on changes in child welfare spending patterns. An evaluation consultant, Larry Wallerstein, works closely with Chapin Hall to gather and analyze county data.
- Westat and Chapin Hall share responsibility for the Participant Outcomes Study, comprised of two distinct outcome analyses. Westat conducts the Placement Outcomes Analysis (POA), focused on children in placement; Chapin Hall leads the trajectory analysis, examining how child safety is affected by changes in the pathways children follow through the child welfare system.

The central evaluation hypothesis is that children and families served by PCSAs which have flexible use of Title IV-E funds (henceforward the demonstration sites) experience better outcomes than the comparison group, and better outcomes than children in the demonstration sites prior to the waiver. All children served by the PCSA are part of the evaluation. Figure 1.1 presents the logic model for the waiver and its evaluation.

**Figure 1.1: ProtectOhio Waiver Logic Model**



The two key evaluation questions are:

- (1) In what ways have the demonstration sites varied in their implementation of waiver activities since January 2005, compared to each other and to the group of comparison sites? Answers come from both the Process Implementation study and the Fiscal Outcomes study.
- (2) In what ways do outcomes differ among the demonstration sites and between the demonstration and comparison groups? Answers come from five studies: the Trajectory Analysis, the Placement Outcomes Analysis, and analyses of three of the waiver strategies – FTM, Supervised Visitation, and Kinship Supports.

Table 1.2 below contains the full list of outcomes being addressed in the evaluation, reflecting both the stipulations of Ohio’s federal Terms & Conditions for ProtectOhio and the ongoing concerns of local stakeholders.

<b>Table 1.2: Outcomes Focus for ProtectOhio Evaluation</b>	
<b>Research Topic/Outcome</b>	<b>Section Where Addressed in this Report</b>
Change in number of children entering care	Chapter 8
Change in length of stay in care	Chapter 9
Change in number of children reunified with families or placed in other permanent situations	Chapter 9
Change in rates of re-entry into care	Chapter 9
Family Team Meetings: differences in implementation and impact on child and family outcomes	Chapter 3
Visitation between parents and children in out-of-home placement: differences in implementation and impact on reunification	Chapter 4
Kinship services and supports: differences in implementation (especially use of guardianship) and impact on child and family outcomes	Chapter 5
Adoption services and supports: differences in implementation and impact on child and family outcomes	Chapter 2, Section 4.3
Enhanced mental health and substance abuse services: differences in implementation and impact on services received by child and families	Chapter 6
Selected managed care strategies: differences in implementation and impact on county operations and on child and family outcomes	Addressed in Interim Evaluation Report (2007)
Relationship between PCSA and court system	Chapter 2, Section 5
Children with substantiated CAN report: changes in number who go to placement and who experience recidivism after exit from care	Chapter 8
Changes in expenditures on placement/non-placement	Chapter 7

Because the evaluation has been in place for twelve years, the team members have considerable familiarity with the participating counties and have access to longitudinal data spanning three periods of time: pre-waiver (1996-1997), first waiver (1997-2002), and second waiver (2005-2009). In general, our analyses will not only compare the group of demonstration counties to the group of comparison counties but will also compare different time periods.

## **1.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Evaluation activities for the second waiver period began in February 2005. Because of the extended Bridge period, demonstration counties needed time and support to resume full participation in ProtectOhio.<sup>2</sup> Although they had continued to receive capitated Title IV-E funding throughout the Bridge

<sup>2</sup> Technically, the Bridge period was October 1, 2002 through September 30, 2004 but, in actual practice, it was longer -- the Waiver renewal was approved January 2005, retroactive to the beginning of FFY05, October 2004.

period, they proceeded carefully, taking fewer financial and programmatic risks, lest the waiver not be extended and the PCSA would suddenly have to resume standard Title IV-E reimbursement. With the extension in place, the demonstration counties began to refocus their attention to strategies for reducing the need for paid placements. The evaluation team rapidly built on discussions held with the demonstration counties during the Bridge period, formulating a detailed Evaluation Plan to embrace the new ProtectOhio focus on specific intervention strategies. Because of our well-established relationship with ODJFS and the demonstration counties, we have participated more actively in meetings of representatives of the demonstration county PCSAs and ODJFS (known as the ProtectOhio Consortium) as well as various committees, and have represented the ProtectOhio experience to national gatherings. We offer below brief descriptions of the main project management activities.

### **1.2.1 Key Meetings**

*Evaluation Team:* Reflecting the collaborative nature of all the evaluation tasks, various staff from HSRI, Westat, and Chapin Hall have met frequently, by phone and in person, to discuss research issues pertinent to one or more of the studies. In addition, periodic conference calls and group meetings have been held as needed to assess overall evaluation progress and to discuss upcoming reports. In August 2005, the entire team gathered together to discuss overall plans for the five-year evaluation and to prepare for the 28-county data audit which was discussed in the Interim Evaluation Report; the full team met again in February 2010 to discuss findings for the Preliminary Final Report, and a final time in April 2010 to discuss findings for this Comprehensive Final Evaluation Report.

*Consortium:* One or more members of the evaluation team have participated in each bi-monthly Consortium meeting, providing updates on evaluation activities and research findings. In addition, HSRI and Westat staff actively planned and participated in a two-day Consortium planning retreat in January 2006; and HSRI staff led a special training event related to the Family Team Meeting (FTM) strategy for all interested Consortium county staff, in September of 2009.

It is important to recognize the central role which the Consortium has played in the evolution of Ohio child welfare practice under the waiver. Representatives of the demonstration counties have attended the bi-monthly meetings of the Consortium for the past twelve years, beginning even before the evaluation contract was awarded in April of 1998. In a survey of the Consortium counties conducted in 2008, these PCSA representatives were asked to describe their involvement with the ProtectOhio Consortium group. Half of the managers (nine) reported significant involvement and a third (six) reported moderate involvement. The counties described the following benefits of Consortium involvement:

- information sharing, especially with regard to learning about other counties' creative approaches;
- networking with colleagues;
- troubleshooting common challenges, especially with regard to the SACWIS transition; and
- maintaining active commitment to and enthusiasm for ProtectOhio goals.

*Annual Child Welfare Waiver Conferences:* Members of the evaluation team have participated in each of the yearly meetings of the Child Welfare Demonstration Projects. At the 2006 meeting, we presented a session on the new Ohio waiver and evaluation; in 2007, we offered two sessions, one on

findings related to FTM and the other on the Kinship Supports strategy; in 2008, we participated with other states in a session on sustaining Ohio's waiver reforms; and in 2010 we will present three sessions: one on FTM as an innovative practice, one on overall evaluation findings, and a third on fiscal outcomes.

### **1.2.2 Data Management**

A critical task for the evaluation team is obtaining, organizing and understanding data from a variety of sources. Although FACSIS administrative data files were our primary data source from 1997 (waiver start) until mid-second waiver, the evaluation team continued to encounter problems and raise questions during the second waiver that were not an issue during the first evaluation period. In anticipation of such continuing challenges, and in direct response to Ohio's transition to SACWIS<sup>3</sup> during the second waiver, we have worked closely with the Data Committee, a subcommittee of the Consortium. The committee consists of data-savvy staff from most of the demonstration counties. The group meets every few months, as the need arises; the members have assisted us by reviewing data collection plans and tools, clarifying how FACSIS and SACWIS data elements are used, and directly providing us with some local data. This active collaboration has been crucial to the evaluation team's ability to understand data dynamics in Ohio throughout the waiver period.

Two particular data-related activities merit further explanation: Ohio's conversion from FACSIS to SACWIS and the creation of Caseload Dynamics Reports.

#### ***1.2.2.1 Ohio's SACWIS Conversion***

During 2006-2008, Ohio counties converted from their previous child welfare administrative data systems to SACWIS. Although some of the challenges encountered by the evaluation team in using FACSIS data were eliminated by the SACWIS conversion, other major challenges were introduced.<sup>4</sup> This section discusses the SACWIS conversion challenges, some of which have not yet been satisfactorily resolved. The evaluation team continues to address the conversion challenges.

The counties began using SACWIS in waves over a period of more than 2 years. Table 1.3 indicates the specific dates when each county "went live" with SACWIS (excluding the financial portion of the system). It is important to note that only 16 counties are currently "financially live" and the financial module itself is still under development. This means local agencies may be dependent upon at least two electronic systems to track and record the full scope of child welfare information. The continuation of the financial roll out is currently underway and is expected to reach completion in Spring 2012.

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<sup>3</sup> State Automated Child Welfare Information System, mandated by the federal Children's Bureau.

<sup>4</sup> Challenges with FACSIS included the wide use of county-defined events that were not monitored or used by the state; inconsistencies across counties in how and when they recorded the opening of ongoing cases; and the assignment of different identification numbers to families served by different counties, resulting in some duplicate cases in the data.

**Table 1.3: Dates of SACWIS Implementation by Demonstration and Comparison County**

Demonstration County	Date of SACWIS Implementation	Comparison County	Date of SACWIS Implementation
Ashtabula	3/26/2007	Allen	8/6/2007
Belmont	9/10/2007	Butler	3/5/2007
Clark	4/2/2007	Clermont	6/30/2008
Coshocton	9/10/2007	Columbiana	1/29/2007
Crawford	8/6/2007	Guernsey	9/10/2007
Fairfield	9/24/2007	Hancock	7/7/2008
Franklin	7/16/2007	Hocking	6/25/2007
Greene	7/7/2008	Mahoning	4/2/2007
Hamilton	5/5/2008	Miami	8/13/2007
Hardin	6/25/2007	Montgomery	4/23/2007
Highland	1/28/2008	Morrow	4/2/2007
Lorain	9/24/2007	Perry	9/10/2007
Medina	8/20/2007	Scioto	3/26/2007
Muskingum	8/7/2006	Summit	11/10/2008
Portage	3/26/2007	Trumbull	9/17/2007
Richland	6/23/2008	Warren	4/7/2008
Stark	6/30/2008	Wood	7/9/2007
Vinton	6/25/2007	-	-

When Westat began receiving SACWIS data, the study team began developing mapping schemes between SACWIS and FACSIS data and conducting tests to determine whether analyses based on SACWIS data matched prior analyses based on FACSIS data, which would indicate that the conversion had successfully and accurately transferred all needed information into SACWIS. However, in comparing SACWIS and prior FACSIS data, the team found large discrepancies in numbers of cases and other case, placement, and outcome characteristics. It is important to note that metropolitan agencies utilized their own separate legacy systems while smaller agencies utilized FACSIS. This required a lengthy process of tracking down where the differences lay and deciding how best to correct any discrepancies or re-program the analyses. This process showed that the challenges presented by the SACWIS conversion were difficult, as SACWIS is not an event-driven system and reliance upon prior FACSIS event codes and applicable dates could not be mapped one for one. In addition, some counties utilized unique ID systems that required adjustments in the conversion process. For example, in some instances, improper ID

matching within a county’s originating legacy systems resulted in the loss of historical information. This section further describes these challenges and how we addressed them.

*Case openings:* Perhaps the most far-reaching conversion problem was the loss of the FACSIS “172” event, which indicated that a case was opened to ongoing services on a specific date. There was no equivalent variable in SACWIS. The date of this event, and the documentation that a case was indeed transferred to ongoing, was crucial in many analyses, from the strategy studies to the trajectory analysis. The study team attempted many different approaches to construct a reasonable equivalent to the FACSIS 172, and finally developed a method that pulls in dates from four different SACWIS data tables and uses the earliest date if more than one was available.<sup>5</sup> This resulted in less missing data than the other approaches explored, but still about 25% of the cases in the SACWIS data set did not have a case opening date and could not be used in the analyses. Furthermore, for two of the strategy studies, FTM and Supervised Visitation, use of the case start proxy date resulted in exclusion of a large portion of the cases that received the intervention. Therefore, the study team chose to use the date when the investigation of maltreatment was completed and an allegation disposition was determined. Only those cases with a disposition finding of indicated or substantiated were used in the outcomes analyses. The study team found that this was the most reliable proxy for an official ‘case open’ date. The challenges and limitations of using the allegation disposition date in these strategy studies are discussed further in the FTM and Supervised Visitation chapters, Chapter 3 and 4 respectively.

*Local legacy systems:* Some of the larger counties had local legacy systems that were not correctly or fully converted to SACWIS. In Montgomery and Summit Counties, for example, both the legacy system client identification numbers and the FACSIS identification numbers were supposed to be brought into SACWIS. However, in the conversion process the legacy identification number was written into the record in both places, effectively losing all the FACSIS identification numbers. The result was that cases in SACWIS could not be found in FACSIS even when their placement history pre-dated the SACWIS conversion. ODJFS staff provided a cross reference of IDs within SACWIS/FACSIS to address this issue.

*Historical data:* In some cases, incorrect conversion mapping resulted in the loss of historical data. For example, in Montgomery County all incidents reported prior to 2002 were mapped into SACWIS as screened out. Thus there is no way to tell which cases actually were screened in. State and county resources were insufficient to remedy this problem.

*Integration of identification numbers:* In FACSIS, persons who received services in more than one county had more than one identification number in the system, since each county often assigned its own number to the family. In SACWIS, each person is assigned one identification number even if served by more than one county. Although this improves the state’s ability to follow and respond to families, it led to discrepancies between the FACSIS and SACWIS data that had to be investigated and reconciled.

*Primary and secondary case responsibility:* In SACWIS, counties can be assigned primary responsibility or secondary responsibility for cases. Families also move from county to county. Initially data for families who moved or who were receiving services from multiple counties were not included in

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<sup>5</sup> These dates were the “beginning date” in the case category table, the “official date” in the legal base table, the “created date” in the case plan participant table, and the “created date” in the family assessment table.

the file specifications Westat provided to ODJFS. As a result, the ODJFS reran the file to provide the more comprehensive data set.

*Expungement rules:* Although not specifically connected with the SACWIS conversion, another data issue that arose around the same time as the conversion problems was the implementation of expungement rules. The original FACSIS analysis files, created in 2002, contained information on cases that later were expunged from the data system and thus were not in the SACWIS files – for example, information on child victims was required to be expunged once an individual reached age 21.

### **1.2.2.2 Caseload Dynamics Reports**

Since the first waiver period, the evaluation team has produced caseload dynamics reports to help counties understand changes in their caseloads that were relevant to the waiver. By the second waiver period, counties had begun to produce their own reports on many of the caseload trends. With the implementation of SACWIS, counties, particularly smaller counties without research staff, have again lost access to report capacities. Recently, ODJFS has offered counties access to report-writing resources, but many still do not yet have staff resources to tap into them. The current caseload dynamics reports cover fewer topics than in the first waiver, and reflect an iterative process by which the evaluation team both recommended topics and incorporated suggestions from the data committee. Table 1.4 lists the caseload dynamics reports currently being developed by the evaluation team for the counties. Reports listed in Table 1.4 appear in Appendix A.

Because they present raw data that have not been risk-adjusted, these reports are not intended, nor should they be used, to reflect waiver effects. They are best used as a point of reference for discussion of changes in caseloads over time within a county. Tracking these changes can help explain some of the intervention strategies described in Chapters 2-6. Reports are organized by size groupings that provide points of reference for counties.

**Table 1.4: List of Caseload Dynamics Reports**

<b>Report</b>	<b>Name of Report</b>	<b>Description of Report</b>
1	Number of Child Abuse/ Neglect Incidents by Year	Number of incidents (not number of children in incidents) during the year
2	Number of Children in a Child Abuse/Neglect Incident by Year	Unduplicated count of children as victims in at least one child abuse/neglect incident during the year
3	Number of Children with a Substantiated/Indicated Child Abuse/Neglect Allegation by Year	Unduplicated count of all children with a substantiated or indicated abuse/neglect allegation during the year. NOTE: During the late 1990's, some counties began using the FRAM. Some of those counties continued to record both substantiation/indication and case resolution. Others chose one or the other. Only three counties – Montgomery, Summit, and Trumbull – never switched to the FRAM approach. Thus, care should be taken with interpretation of these data.
4	Number of Children under Protective Supervision by Year	Unduplicated count of all children under court-ordered protective supervision during the year
5	Number of Placement Exits to Relatives by Year	Unduplicated count of children exiting to relative custody during the year
6	Number of Children in Placement with Relatives and Non-Relatives as of January 1 Each Year	Snapshot of all children in unlicensed relative homes or unlicensed non-relative homes, as of January 1 each year

### **1.2.3 Institutional Review Board Process**

Westat’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed issues related to the protection of human subjects for the entire study, beginning in July 2005 when the IRB exempted Westat’s Placement Outcomes Analysis (POA) study because that study involved only administrative data and posed no risk to human subjects. In February 2006, the Westat IRB reviewed and approved HSRI’s submission for the entire evaluation, and in December 2006 the IRB granted expedited approval of HSRI site visits. As required by the IRB, throughout the life of the study the evaluation team annually submitted documentation for the IRB review concerning protection of human subjects.

### **1.2.4 Reporting**

Since the beginning of the second ProtectOhio waiver, the evaluation team has prepared seven reports: the evaluation plan (April 2005), four progress reports (June of 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009), and the Interim Evaluation Report (June 2007), the Preliminary Final Report (March 2010), and this Comprehensive Final Evaluation Report, which expands on and supersedes the Preliminary Final Report in a variety of areas (due May 31, 2010).

### **1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT**

The next ten chapters of this Comprehensive Final Evaluation Report present the activities and findings for each of the major studies comprising the evaluation, offering an overview of each study and its constituent parts, a description of the research methodology, initial findings, and outcome analysis results.

- Chapters 2-6 describe findings from the five separate investigations comprising the Process Implementation Study. All of these studies offer results at the county level, comparing practices used in the demonstration counties to those in comparison counties; in Chapters 3-5, case-level findings and child outcomes are also presented.
- Chapter 7 contains the Fiscal Outcomes Study, showing final results regarding changes in spending patterns over the second waiver period, in demonstration counties compared to comparison counties.
- Chapter 8, the Trajectory Analysis, and Chapter 9, the Placement Outcomes Analysis, constitute the Participant Outcomes Study.
- Chapter 10 contains case studies of Belmont and Portage Counties, describing experiences throughout the first and second waiver periods.
- Chapter 11 briefly recaps the findings in the foregoing chapters, offers a synthesis of the impact of the ProtectOhio Waiver, and suggests some next steps.