



*Safe Children. Stable Homes. Strong Communities.*

## CHILDREN SERVICES TRANSFORMATION

### Progress Updates

*November 2022*



**MIKE DEWINE**  
GOVERNOR OF OHIO



**JON HUSTED**  
LT. GOVERNOR OF OHIO

[www.Governor.Ohio.gov](http://www.Governor.Ohio.gov)

## Introduction

In the fall of 2019, Governor Mike DeWine established the Children Services Transformation (CST) Advisory Council to improve outcomes for Ohio's children and families. The Advisory Council was a multi-disciplinary group of subject matter experts and individuals with lived experience in the foster care system including foster youth, and biological, kinship, foster, and adoptive families.

Members were tasked with:

- Traveling the state to better understand local barriers and best practices.
- Promoting a shared state and county vision for agency purpose and practice.
- Reviewing data, trends, and policies regarding the foster care system.
- Providing recommendations and strategies to strengthen all areas of the system, including kinship, foster care, adoption, workforce, and prevention.

The Advisory Council issued 37 recommendations divided into the following action areas: Prevention, Workforce, Practice, Kinship, Foster Care, Adoption, and Juvenile Justice.

After the recommendations were issued, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) began the work to implement the recommendations. In February 2021, the Office of Families and Children (OFC) assumed responsibility for the project management and day-to-day implementation of the Advisory Council's recommendations. The status and updates on implementation progress for each recommendation are included below.

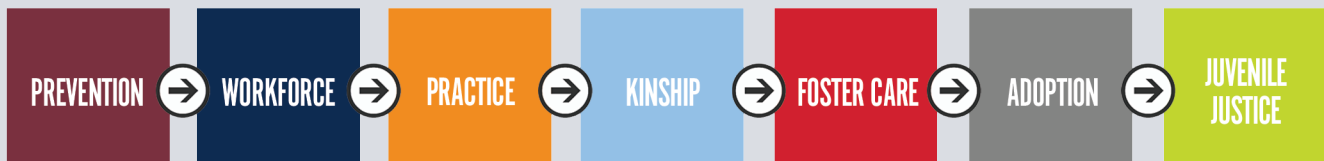
The Administration is committed to implementing these recommendations this biennium and beyond.

Each recommendation below includes one of three implementation statuses. Fully implemented recommendations indicate all pieces of the work to implement the recommendation are complete. Partially implemented recommendations indicate that pieces of the work to implement the recommendation are complete, but work items remain in process or are not yet completed. In process, recommendations indicate the work to implement the recommendation has begun.

*As of November 2022, here is an overall snapshot of progress:*

**Fully Implemented 16** | **Partially Implemented 13** | **In Process 8** | **Total 37**

### Core Action Areas







## 1 Invest in services, training, and supports for parents.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

The Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF) was awarded a five-year \$3.74 million federal grant to support cross-agency collaboration and the development of a comprehensive child and family well-being system designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. State and local partners will come together to develop a shared cross-agency vision for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Community-based prevention strategies will be piloted through three county demonstration sites.

Ohio launched the statewide Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) Online website, [triplep-parenting.com](http://triplep-parenting.com), on May 24, 2022. From this website, parents can access free codes to participate in Triple P Online (TPOL). The TPOL program is an expansion of existing Triple P programs available throughout the state which include primary care; parent discussion groups; and one-on-one, in-person parent education sessions.

## 2 Integrate and expand parent partner work in Ohio.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

Ohio is adapting the Iowa Parent Partner Approach model to expand and integrate parent partner work. This model will be piloted with three Public Children Services Agencies (PCSA) (Fairfield, Franklin, and Knox Counties). The initiative is being partially funded by a five-year grant through the National Quality

Improvement Center for Family Centered Reunification.

A parent partner is a parent who has lived experience with the children services system. A parent partner is paired with a parent currently engaged with children services, to offer support and help navigate the children services system. ODJFS is contracting with Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth (SAFY) to hire and manage the parent partners with lived experience. Seven parent partners have been hired thus far and referrals to the program will begin at the end of November 2022.

The Iowa Parent Partner Approach model provides support to a parent involved in the children services system whose child(ren) has been removed from their custody. Participation in the model is correlated with shorter stays for children in the child welfare system, increased likelihood of reunification, and reduced likelihood of returning to out of home care.

## 3 Elevate prenatal-to-three prevention and early intervention efforts.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

The OCTF's Early Childhood Safety Initiative (ECSI) Program is now available in fifty-four counties. The OCTF's ECSI program provides one-time, brief parent education sessions paired with the provision of concrete safety-related support items to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligible families who have no open or substantiated case of child abuse or neglect. Efforts are ongoing to leverage cross-agency collaboration to enhance prenatal-to-three prevention and early intervention programming and services.

## 4 Establish a statewide, multisystem data exchange to support at-risk families.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

Several projects have been identified for this recommendation. A description of completed or near completed projects is below, while several others are planned as a modular approach to establishing a statewide, multisystem data exchange.

■ **Statewide Student Identifier System (SSID):** ODJFS has completed a connection for data exchange between Ohio's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Ohio SACWIS) and the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) SSID. Through this exchange, ODJFS obtains the SSID for children involved with children services. The SSID is a unique identifier assigned to all public school children in Ohio. Matching the SSID greatly enhances the ability of ODJFS to ensure data validity for each child when interfacing with other

data systems. This allows PCSAs to obtain the needed information to provide more timely and tailored services to children and families.

- **Ohio SACWIS Data on the Innovate Ohio Platform (IOP):** The IOP allows state agencies to become more customer-centric and data-driven. The addition of Ohio SACWIS data to the IOP in January 2022 allows ODJFS to establish more responsive and closely monitored access to Ohio SACWIS data while keeping the data on premises.
- **Ohio Amended House Bill 110 of the 134th General Assembly (H.B. 110 (134th General Assembly):** H.B. 110 (134th General Assembly) created a Task Force on Streamlining County Level Information Access (taskforce) within ODJFS. This task force's final recommendations, scheduled to be released in the Fall of 2022, will include data sharing and access provision for the County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS) agencies including the program areas of children services, family assistance, child support, and workforce.



## 5 Establish a consistent onboarding system.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

A variety of stakeholders identified the need for a consistent, statewide onboarding program for new caseworkers and supervisors. To meet this need, a statewide, online, on-demand platform and onboarding curriculum was created for new PCSA caseworkers and supervisors.

The onboarding training does not replace the requirement for caseworkers and supervisors to attend

the core curriculum, and counties will not be required to implement the onboarding training; however, it is an available resource to supplement each PCSA's training process. This PCSA Onboarding provides the user with a high-level overview of foundational concepts and requirements through a virtual platform, which includes interactive quizzes and assessments.

Additionally, a new tool called AVE nueS (Accenture Virtual Experience Solution) is now available. Leveraging virtual reality technology, AVE nueS provides an immersive experience that places applicants into the shoes of a children services caseworker through the utilization of a headset. By placing PCSA applicants and caseworkers into a no-risk, realistic experience of working with families, they can receive a better understanding of the work and be prepared for working in the field.

## 6 Review and evaluate the University Partnership Program.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

The Ohio Child Welfare's University Partnership Program (UPP) was established in 2002 to provide Ohio's PCSAs with educated, trained, and experienced caseworkers. It is a unique and beneficial partnership among ODJFS, twelve of Ohio's public university schools of social work, the Ohio University Consortium for Child and Adult Services (OUCCAS), the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO), and Ohio's PCSAs. The goal of UPP is to increase the recruitment of quality candidates, better retain existing staff, and reduce training costs for new caseworkers.

Each year the UPP is evaluated by the state training coordinator for Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP). The latest UPP evaluation report cited the need for two enhancements: 1) an integrated data system combining human resources data for UPP and non-UPP employees and 2) statewide system automation.

To address both concerns, a new learning management system (LMS) will be used that will combine UPP and non-UPP employee data together. Additionally, the LMS will be designed and configured to interface with Ohio SACWIS, allowing for automation of human resource data and reducing duplication.

The UPP continues to analyze data with a density mapping approach by looking at placement and employment of UPP per region to help identify parts of the state to recruit more colleges. The UPP expanded from eight to twelve schools in the Summer and Fall of 2022. Bringing on more universities and increasing student enrollment numbers for existing universities with regional branches will expand the UPP's reach across the state.

## 7 Create a tiered program for caseworkers to help expand career pathways in children services.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

The workforce needs facing Ohio's PCSAs have intensified since this recommendation was defined. As a result, the scope of this recommendation is expanding to address recruitment and retention challenges.

In June 2022, ODJFS announced a \$15 million grant program to help PCSAs recruit and retain frontline caseworkers and supervisors. PCSAO is administering the funds that are available to PCSAs by allocation for a flexible menu of interventions through June 30, 2023.

OFC in partnership with the Office of Workforce Development (OWD) and Wood County Job and Family Services (WCJFS) is piloting a new process of recruiting college seniors with related human service degrees. WCJFS is working with multiple counties and Northwest Ohio area universities to recruit students interested in pursuing a career in children services. These students will complete required training and gain practical children services experience in their final year of college.

## 8 Reduce organizational and state level red tape.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

OFC has implemented several strategies, across programs, targeting the reduction of organizational and state level red tape. OFC is gathering information to hold listening sessions with key stakeholders to further identify bureaucratic barriers and strategies to reduce them.

Revisions to Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules, tools, and programming have begun and will continue with the collaboration among OFC, PCSAs, PCSAO, Private Child Placing Agencies (PCPAs), Private Non-custodial Agencies (PNAs), Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OHIO YAB), Ohio Independent Living Association (OHILA), Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA), Ohio Children's Alliance (OCA), OCWTP Steering Committee, IV-E Juvenile Courts, and Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to look for areas of red tape that can be removed, reduced, or modified that will result in efficiencies for caseworkers that will allow them to spend more time with kids/families.

OFC will be conducting a deep review of the children services' systems, Ohio SACWIS functionality, and components to identify both short and long-term opportunities to increase the system's efficacy, streamline processes for agencies, ways to modernize our systems, and ultimately enhance the user experience. To ensure these recommendations will reduce the burden on the public and private children services workforce and recommend global system improvements, the office will be partnering with the PCSAO, OCA, and public and private agency stakeholders. OFC is currently in the initial planning phases and hopes to begin a deep review in the coming months.

## 9 Explore and identify technological solutions and support for caseworkers

**Status:** In Process

### Progress:

OFC is in the beginning phase of an analysis project which will review the children services automated systems and make recommendations on how processes can be streamlined, reduce duplication, and provide technical solutions to assist caseworkers and PCSAs.

OFC continues to pursue the development of an online reporting and notification portal for mandated reporters to make referrals to PCSAs. The portal will be designed to guide mandated reporters in conducting a required referral to a PCSA, in compliance with Ohio law. The portal will interface with Ohio SACWIS to streamline referral submissions from mandated reporters to PCSAs for timely receipt and completion of a screening decision.

OFC is exploring dashboards and alerts to assist agencies in knowing when performance falls below a threshold, as well as assisting agencies to monitor their work and performance more easily.





## 10 Create regional best practice hubs to drive training, technical assistance, coaching, communication, innovation, and collaboration.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

OFC has continued partnering with the twelve Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Service Delivery Areas to support the creation of regional Children Services Hubs (hubs) throughout the state. The goal of the hubs is to support state and regional priorities as they relate to the needs of children and families. The hubs' work during this first year has been focused on the need to increase the number of adoptive and resource homes available statewide. The hubs have been partnering with local PCSAs, regional training centers, and OCA to fully understand local strengths and needs as they relate to the recruitment and retention of adoptive parents and resource caregivers. An initial survey was developed by the hubs and stakeholders were asked to provide feedback regarding the current recruitment and retention practices of adoptive parents and resource caregivers. The data was analyzed for each service delivery area and a Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis was completed for each region, followed by the development of an Implementation Plan. Currently, the hubs are utilizing the Implementation Plans to begin work on outreach and recruitment efforts in their specified service delivery areas.

## 11 Strengthen consistent screening decision-making.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

The Ohio Child Protective Services Screening Guidelines have been revised to improve the consistency of critical screening decisions through established statewide standards. The screening guidelines provide guidance to PCSA staff processing and screening referrals of child abuse, neglect, or dependency. The screening guidelines were reviewed and updated by a workgroup comprised of ODJFS and PCSA representatives, with collaboration among the Governor's Human Trafficking Task Force and the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to ensure guidance supports partners and medical research. The revisions include improved instruction for engaging a referent, improved details of screening examples, and enhanced questions. The guidelines assist children services professionals in conducting intake duties, completing screening decisions, and pathway assignment.

## 12 Institute a statewide children services ombudsman.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

The children and families served by PCSAs and private provider agencies, as well as the public, must have a high level of confidence the system will act in a child and family's best interests and will respond to the child and family's needs in a timely and professional manner.

Governor DeWine signed Amended House Bill 4 (H.B. 4) of the 134th General Assembly into law on February 28, 2022, creating the Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office, which opened on May 31, 2022. The office investigates and resolves concerns made by or on behalf of children and families involved with PCSAs, Title IV-E agencies, or private provider agencies that administer or oversee foster care or placement services for the children services system. The office ensures the independent and impartial review of youth, family, and community complaints or concerns. The office will provide an annual report to the governor, speaker of the House of Representatives, president of the Senate, minority leadership of the House of Representatives and Senate, the ODJFS director, and representatives of the OHIO YAB. Additional information on the office including how to file a complaint can be found at [youthandfamilyombudsmen.ohio.gov](https://youthandfamilyombudsmen.ohio.gov).



requirements for the juvenile courts to review efforts and placement at every court hearing. A court may determine a child's current caregiver as having a kinship relationship with the child if the court finds the child has been in the home at least twelve consecutive months, the foster family has expressed interest in providing permanency, and removal from the home would be detrimental to the child's emotional well-being.

As a result of these changes, OAC rule 5101:2-39-01 has been updated to include language to support locating and informing relatives and kin of their options to support the child being removed from the home. In addition to becoming a placement provider for the youth, the relative could opt to be a support by providing babysitting, companionship, emotional support, mentorship, respite care, and/or transportation for the youth.

To support agencies in their efforts, Ohio has invested in technology tools, training, and system enhancements. Each PCSA now has free access to Accurint, a paid advanced search engine tool, to assist in ongoing efforts to intensively search for relatives and kin. The Connect Our Kids Family Connections tool is also available to all agencies. The Family Connections tool is technology that pulls in data from searches, including via Accurint, to create a genogram for youth that agencies can use to follow up with individuals who may be able to support youth in care. Regional family search and engagement training titled SEEK (Search, Engage, Explore, Kinnect) was developed and is being offered to PCSAs as of January 2022.

ODJFS is collaborating with a variety of partners on a couple of additional family search and engagement projects. ODJFS, the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF), the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and PCSAs are meeting to improve engagement in case planning efforts and identification of relatives and kin with parents who are incarcerated. OFC, OCF, PCSAs, and Kinnect have formed a work team being led by OCF to update the Best Practice Guide for Engaging Fathers toolkit. The toolkit contains suggestions for ways agencies can include fathers earlier and more effectively in each case, to ensure the best outcomes for children.

## 13 Integrate targeted kinship caregiver training through the OCWTP.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

All kinship families in Ohio need access to trauma-informed training. The Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator Program (OhioKAN) is developing ongoing training for kinship and adoptive families that will be offered across the state, is trauma-informed, and is based on the needs families have identified. OhioKAN is utilizing focus groups with caregivers and OhioKAN data to understand what training topics are most needed. Training will be held in-person and online, both live and self-paced. Some trainings have already been provided virtually to caregivers with a positive response. OhioKAN is collaborating with OUCCAS and ODJFS to implement this recommendation.

## 14 Establish statutory requirements and tools for family-finding and due diligence.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

The FY2022-2023 state operating budget included changes to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) aimed at improving family search and engagement efforts. The revisions require custodial agencies to make ongoing, intensive efforts to identify, notify, and engage appropriate and willing kinship caregivers for children in temporary custody and planned permanent living arrangements (PPLA). The ORC changes also include

## 15 Identify collaborative strategies for family-finding in other systems.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

As mentioned above, Ohio partnered with Kinnect to create and deliver their SEEK training to PCSAs and to develop guidance documents. In this training, participants increase their understanding of core values, foundations of family search and engagement, and integrating family finding across agencies. Learners discuss the “why” behind kin-first decision-making, how to identify and overcome barriers to connecting children with their kin, and trends in practice. Participants learn diligent searching techniques, meaningful engagement strategies, as well as skillsets for connecting and supporting kinship families through interactive curriculum and activities. These guidance and training documents include technology use, social media use, searching tips, genogram building, and platform supports for Connect Our Kids, Accurint, Genopro, and Facebook. The training resource documents were compiled and provided to PCSA directors and state children services contacts.

## 16 Establish a federal Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP).

**Status:** In Process

### Progress:

The passing of H.B. 110 (134th General Assembly) paved the way for Ohio to create both a federal and state KGAP program that promotes permanency for children who cannot return to their parent(s) and adoption is not an option. KGAP provides a monthly payment and Medicaid to kin families who obtain legal custody of a kin child involved in the children services system. A workgroup including OFC, the Office of Family Assistance, and partners from the Ohio Department of Medicaid has been meeting regularly to ensure KGAP will be implemented by January 2023. An overview of the programs, including eligibility requirements, flow and benefits has been shared with a variety of external partners and stakeholders. The new OAC rules and forms on each program are proceeding through the Ohio rule making process.

## 17 Incorporate the terminology “resource parents” to define kinship and foster families involved in the children services system.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

H.B. 110 (134th General Assembly) included definitions of resource family and resource caregivers, to better define those who are providing care to youth. This new terminology elevates the role of both foster and kinship families as resources not only to the child but to the child’s family and the professionals involved.



## 18 Establish a Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

An updated Foster Youth Bill of Rights has been established and codifies a clear set of rights youth in foster care may expect of the children services system. Revisions to the Foster Youth Rights Handbook have been completed, and the Foster Youth Bill of Rights Poster was provided to every PCSA and private placement agency to advertise the handbook and Bill of Rights. A youth-friendly version was also created, which includes information on how to contact the Youth Ombudsman. The updated poster was mailed to all congregate care locations, PCSAs, foster care licensing agencies, and juvenile courts to display. A smaller version was also sent to all middle and high schools in Ohio as well as all public library branches in early Fall of 2022.



## 19 Establish a Resource Family Bill of Rights.

Status: Fully Implemented

### Progress:

The Resource Family Bill of Rights has been established and codifies a clear set of rights resource families may expect of the children services system. A Resource Family Rights Brochure was created to advertise the new bill of rights to families. In January 2022, each resource caregiver received a copy of the brochure. In addition, each PCSA, Title IV-E court, and foster care agency received 100 copies of the brochure. The brochure was updated in June 2022 to include information on how families can contact the Family Ombudsman. The updated brochure was mailed out to all resource families, and, once again, 100 copies were sent to each PCSA, Title IV-E court, and foster care agency.

## 20 Strengthen required normalcy standards for youth in foster care.

Status: Partially Implemented

### Progress:

ODJFS partnered with Foster Care to Success to expand their current scope of work to include assisting Ohio Education and Training Voucher (ETV) participants experiencing transportation barriers with purchasing reliable vehicles. This effort supports self-sufficiency of young adults who are emancipated from foster care to maintain their education and training participation. Thirty-seven young adults benefited from this opportunity and received support in purchasing vehicles.

ODJFS is collaborating with other state agencies to reduce the barriers youth in foster care experience related to driver education and obtaining a driver's license. A Request for Grant Agreement was released for a new statewide program, Road to Success, to reduce barriers to youth in foster care accessing driver education and support obtaining their driver's license. The program is set to launch in a development phase in SFY23 with a goal to provide reimbursement for driving related expenses such as driver education, fees to obtain a driver's license, and liability insurance.

Opportunities to strengthen normalcy among all youth in foster care have continued. Both the foster youth and resource family bill of rights include rights related to normalcy. Youth have the right to engage in a range of developmentally appropriate experiences necessary for healthy emotional and social development. Resource caregivers who have been trained have the right to act as the reasonable and prudent parent

in making decisions for children placed in their care to participate in normal childhood activities that still maintain their health and safety.

## 21 Strengthen relationships between birth families and foster parents.

Status: Fully Implemented

### Progress:

Strengthening relationships between the parent and the resource family is vital in reducing the trauma and anxiety experienced by the child, the parent, the resource family, and the caseworker. A workgroup made up of internal and external partners, including feedback and input from the OHIO YAB, met bi-weekly to develop a best practice guide and training to provide guidance to agencies on how to build stronger ties between primary and resource families. The C.A.R.E. (Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts) Guide describes Ohio's four key steps in promoting a co-parenting approach. These four key steps, along with best practice strategies, a Pocket Guide for resource families, tools, and resources were all designed to assist the caseworker and the resource families in these efforts. The intent and focus of this work are to create a cultural shift in the importance of placing agencies and resource families including the parent in events, daily routines with the child, and activities surrounding the family case plan in order to promote and encourage successful reunification. A full training series was offered this summer when the best practice guide was rolled out.

## 22 Develop trauma-informed training for all involved in the system, including resource families, caseworkers, agency staff, courts, service providers, mandated reporters (such as teachers and counselors), kinship caregivers, and parents.

Status: Fully Implemented

### Progress:

Having a shared understanding of trauma and how it relates to children and families is vital across the multiple systems that serve children, youth, and their families. ODJFS in collaboration with the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) through the Ohio Professional Registry along with state agencies including the ODE, Department of Youth Services (DYS), Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is working to increase access to trauma-related training opportunities. Additionally, trauma-related training is being made available through

OCCAS, the Judicial College of the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), and the Tristate Trauma Network of SE Ohio. A Trauma Informed Care Certificate has been developed and is based upon completion of training that meets the Trauma Informed Competencies as determined by the ODJFS and the OhioMHAS Trauma-Informed Care Team. Agencies and families are able to access a listing of appropriate trauma trainings on the OFC website by clicking the Trauma-Informed Care tab. This webpage also provides resources and valuable information about trauma, adversity, and resilience to family members, providers, statewide agencies, counties, public and private organizations, healthcare workers and others who provide support and services to Ohioans.

## 23 Establish a statewide technology resource that can be easily accessed to find information, benefits, and resources for youth and resource families.

Status: In Process

### Progress:

Youth and families need access to up-to-date information on resources in a user-friendly format. OhioKAN is developing a resource hub for youth and young adults. As lived experience voice is vital to ensure success, youth, young adults, and professionals are being engaged to provide feedback on the needs to be addressed by the website, its functionality, and its design. The hub will be maintained by OhioKAN staff to ensure resources are regularly updated, removed, or added as needed. OhioKAN will also be working to create an app to connect youth and young adults to resources. The website and app will be publicly available for anyone to access.

## 24 Elevate foster youth and caregiver recognition and appreciation.

Status: Fully Implemented

### Progress:

ODJFS identified events to recognize and support foster youth and resource families throughout the year and will continue with these or similar activities on an ongoing basis.

Ohio kicked off National Foster Care Month with a signed proclamation by Governor DeWine. OFC's First Friday Publication highlighted national foster care month and included testimonials submitted by foster and kin caregivers on their recent experiences. The Governor's Office also provided 10,000 tickets to the 2022 Ohio State Fair to young adults participating in Bridges,

resource families, and members of their household, including youth in their care.

ODJFS engaged in a partnership with the Ohio Governor's Imagination Library and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) by inviting resource caregivers of younger youth in foster care to attend the opening of a Storybook Trail during foster care month. ODNR launched the Storybook Trails program in 2019 to promote the importance of literacy, a healthy lifestyle, and connecting with nature. In May 2022, five new trails opened and the youth of resource families in attendance received a free copy of the highlighted storybook.

ODJFS recognized foster youth at graduation time, offering a \$250 cash or gift card reward for this milestone achievement. With fifty-three agencies participating, ODJFS recognized 391 graduates in May 2022. Each of these foster youth received a graduation card signed by ODJFS Director Damschroder and Governor DeWine to recognize their achievement.

Finally, in celebration of Kinship Care Awareness Month, ODJFS worked in partnership with the Ohio YMCAs to offer resource families free or discounted annual family memberships to their local YMCA to show appreciation and recognize the support they provide for the young people in their care. Bridges participants are also eligible to receive annual memberships.

## 25 Establish requirements for concurrent planning.

Status: In Process

### Progress:

The passing of H.B. 110 (134th General Assembly) established a change in law requiring, on or after January 1, 2023, a case plan for a child in temporary custody must include a concurrent permanency plan for the child unless it is documented such a plan would not be in the best interest of the child. The concurrent plan will describe the services the agency will provide to achieve permanency for the child if the primary permanency plan to return the child to the child's home is unsuccessful. The concurrent planning project is on schedule for its deadline completion date.





## 26 Ensure that permanency education and youth voice are incorporated into a Foster Youth Bill of Rights and the Foster Youth Rights Handbook.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

The Foster Youth Rights Handbook has been updated to reflect the new Foster Youth Bill of Rights, to provide information for youth on their permanency options, and to inform youth on how to contact the Youth Ombudsman. OFC worked closely with partners at OHIO YAB and OHILA including youth and youth alumni to ensure youth voice was incorporated into the handbook. Each youth in foster care aged 12 and older received their own copy of the handbook in the mail.

## 27 Expand child-centered recruitment efforts.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

### Progress:

ODJFS partnered with both the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA) and Kinnect to expand two child-centered permanency programs and increase legal and relational permanency for youth. Funding made available as a result of H.B. 110 (134th General Assembly) supports the expansion of the DTFA's Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) program statewide so every youth in need of a recruiter will have access to one. The program expanded to seventy-eight recruiters in SFY22 with a plan to fully expand to 112 recruiters in SFY23. Youth-Centered Permanency Round Tables (YCPRT) are professional case consultations that

provide support to the caseworkers while taking a comprehensive look at the youth's situation, seeking to bust barriers to attaining legal and relational permanency. Recognizing the workforce crisis that is facing PCSAs, Kinnect designed a pilot that will allow counties to implement YCPRT with a statewide facilitator handling the coordination and facilitation of the meetings.

## 28 Promote permanency planning by limiting the PPLA option.

**Status:** In Process

### Progress:

As Ohio works to promote prevention and permanency through the children services transformation efforts, impacts on the number and types of youth entering this legal status will be monitored to help assess the need to further limit the status.

A review of youth in PPLA legal status has been conducted to inform future program improvements to support family connections. This information is being utilized to inform future OAC rule and assessment tools revisions, family search, and engagement initiatives, and guidance specific to PPLA cases.

## 29 Ensure the successful implementation of the Statewide Foster Care and Adoption Assessor Registry.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

### Progress:

The wait to become certified as an adoptive or resource family can take months. One identified barrier to this process is a lack of trained, available assessors. This barrier must be removed for children in need of permanency by building the workforce which processes adoptive and resource family applications while also building the pool of families available regionally across the state who can meet the needs of Ohio's children. This work began in January of 2021 and currently includes three parts:

- Create and maintain a statewide assessor registry that is available to agencies statewide. The creation of this list provides agencies, that license adoptive and resource families, access to search for available assessors regionally who are available to contract with them to process adoptive and resource family applications. In addition, having this registry in Ohio SACWIS will allow automation of a process that now requires a paper form. The Assessor Registry has been created in Ohio SACWIS and is in the final stages required for its completion and availability.

- Expand the workforce through an increase in the pool of available assessors regionally across the state who can contract with public and private agencies at their request to complete foster/adoptive home studies and kinship home assessments. OFC in partnership with Adopt America Network (AAN) created the Adoption and Resource Home Assessor Program (ARHAP). ODJFS will be covering the cost of the assessors for up to 700 kinship assessments and 800 homestudies in SFY23. The statewide rollout of the program began in July 2022.

- Increase the recruitment of adoptive and resource families to meet the needs of children in PCSA and Title IV-E court custody regionally across the state. This work supports the development and launch of a resource and adoptive home marketing and recruitment campaign. OCA is working closely with the Children Services Hubs in the recruitment of qualified caregivers on behalf of PCSAs.



### 30 Strengthen and standardize adoption subsidy negotiation processes.

**Status:** In Process

#### Progress:

As a result of conversations with some PCSAs and the implementation of KGAP internal brainstorming regarding potential improvements to the adoption negotiation process has started. ODJFS has already committed to increasing the state share of federal adoption assistance by providing the match for subsidies up to \$350. This change will take effect on new subsidy agreements on/after January 1, 2023. A workgroup is being established to formally move this work forward.

### 31 Evaluate the option of having the Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS) administered by the OhioKAN.

**Status:** Fully Implemented

#### Progress:

To ensure consistency and equity of the program across the state, ODJFS transitioned the PASSS program to the state level with assistance from the OhioKAN program. Families are able to access the application for PASSS through OhioKAN either online or by calling an OhioKAN navigator. Navigators began accepting applications for SFY23 in May of 2022. For more information go to [ohioKAN.jfs.ohio.gov/passs](https://ohioKAN.jfs.ohio.gov/passs).

### 32 Collaborate with the Supreme Court of Ohio's (SCO) Advisory Committee on Children and Families to identify strategies to achieve greater accountability and increased communication with guardian ad litem (GAL) programs to ensure better outcomes for children and families with children services court cases.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

#### Progress:

Amendments to Superintendence Rule 48 became effective January 1, 2021. Amendments include increased preservice training and continuing education hours, stronger language describing duties and responsibilities, and court oversight responsibilities. Training on the amendments has been completed and the SCO GAL webpage was updated to reflect the changes. A GAL toolkit has been created and should be published in the Winter of 2022/2023. A subsequent training on the toolkit will be held after the toolkit is published.



### **33 Review and evaluate court-appointed special advocate and guardian ad litem programs to identify opportunities for recruitment and expansion.**

**Status:** Partially Implemented

#### **Progress:**

The Ohio CASA evaluation is in progress. A contract with the Government Resource Center (GRC) was secured to design and lead the evaluation. CASA programs in Butler, Clinton, Summit, Franklin, and Seneca counties have agreed to participate. Sites were selected on the basis of geographic and population diversity, with emphasis on programs with strong data collection and characteristics to aid in the reduction of outside impacting factors.

### **34 Support continued strategic collaborative efforts between the ODJFS and the SCO Advisory Committee on Children and Families to create an implementation plan for multidisciplinary legal representation for parents.**

**Status:** Fully Implemented

#### **Progress:**

To improve outcomes of traditional court proceedings, Ohio is piloting the multidisciplinary legal representation model. The pilot project links parents with a legal team including an attorney, social worker, and a parent advocate – a peer mentor who has navigated the children services and juvenile court systems. In January 2021, Summit County Juvenile Court became the first Ohio site to pilot the model. In October 2021, the SCO, ODJFS, and the OCTF awarded \$850,000 to five additional sites to expand the pilot. New pilot sites include Clark and Wayne County Juvenile Courts, Stark County Family Court, and Cuyahoga and Erie Public Defender Offices. All sites are accepting cases. The project is being formally evaluated.

### **35 Strengthen guidance for all involved systems and parties in children services court cases to reinforce the established 12-month requirement for reunification and permanency, with possible six-month extensions when justified by family-specific needs.**

**Status:** Partially Implemented

#### **Progress:**

Several strategies have been identified to strengthen guidance, utilize data, and improve permanency outcomes. To gain a better understanding of the court's role in delays and permanency, a data consultant was hired to conduct a study to assess court hearing quality and the link between quality and outcomes. The assessment noted several recommendations for improvement including, but not limited to, parent and youth engagement in the court process, quality legal representation, reasonable efforts, and notice.

Based on the results and recommendations from the hearing study, a toolkit was created to assist juvenile courts in enhancing the engagement of parties and to ensure the judicial officers are provided all the information they need to make the best decisions. This report contains specifics entered by local PCSA caseworkers regarding a child and family, their case plans, and steps the caseworker takes to ensure reasonable efforts toward reunification are being made. A guidance document for PCSAs regarding extensions, refiled proceedings, continuances, and appeals is being drafted by OFC and will be finalized in the Fall of 2022. Additionally, in October 2022, the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) provided an Ohio Specific Child Welfare Virtual Training series for courts and PCSAs that highlighted permanency timelines and the negative impact that unjustified extensions have on children and families.

For ongoing support and improvement, a quality hearing self-assessment tool for courts was created. This includes a corresponding toolkit and training module.

Finally, revisions were made to the Permanency Docket Quarterly (PDQ) report to make it more accessible. The PDQ provides state level, county specific children services, and court performance data. The reports are distributed quarterly to local courts and PCSAs to facilitate conversations and strategies that lead to improved outcomes.

## **36 Review PCSA legal representation structures throughout the state.**

**Status:** In Process

### **Progress:**

ODJFS in partnership with SCO and PCSAO brought together a group of stakeholders for a few facilitated rapid feedback and evaluation sessions. The group includes prosecutors, judges, magistrates, commissioners, PCSA directors and attorneys, and state partners. The primary objectives of the sessions include understanding the landscape of legal representation models used across the state and identifying best practices, strategies, and opportunities for strengthened county partnerships.

## **37 Support the SCO Advisory Committee on Children and Families' recommendation to implement a Child in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS) court framework to replace Ohio's current abuse, neglect, and dependency court system.**

**Status:** In Process

### **Progress:**

The CHIPS recommendation proposes to change the adjudicatory framework from Abuse Neglect Dependency (AND) to a CHIPS model. It does not change the children services child abuse and neglect referral/allegation framework. The model is child-centered and family-focused, increases engagement, focuses on needs instead of blame, and removes the stigma associated with the current AND framework.

In August 2021, the CHIPS proposal was submitted to the Legislative Services Commission (LSC) for drafting. In April 2022, final changes to the proposed legislation were provided and reviewed. It is anticipated the legislation will be introduced in 2023.



## Update on Equity Efforts



In the Children Services Transformation Final Report publication, there was a call for Ohio to commit to formally addressing the inequities and disparate outcomes, experienced by children and families of color. ODJFS began to address this critical area of need in 2020 via support from the Columbus Foundation and a partnership with ChiByDesign to begin to better understand how racism and inequities are experienced in Ohio's children services system. In March of 2021, ODJFS highlighted findings from the research project focused on race equity in children services, "How Racism in Ohio Children Services System impacts the Lives of Individuals Involved."

Since the release of the report, ODJFS has remained diligent in its efforts to address racial inequities. The partnership with ChiByDesign has continued, and the current focus is on interviewing those with lived experience in Ohio's children services system. The interviews are aimed at gaining a critical perspective of what families of color experience once involved in the children services system and will also help to identify why families of color are experiencing disparate outcomes. The information gathered from the interviews will be used to determine the next steps for actionable change at the state level. Additionally, ODJFS has hired an Outreach

and Engagement Project Manager to address diversity, equity and inclusion and will be responsible for ensuring the necessary steps are taken to improve disparate outcomes in Ohio.

### Next Steps

This report summarizes the work accomplished over the past twenty months to advance the Advisory Council's goal of ensuring a future in which all Ohio children have a safe and healthy place to live, with adults who love and support them. The above updates also detail the work that is ongoing as we enter 2023. ODJFS will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to ensure all recommendations are fully implemented. Additionally, as each recommendation is fully implemented, it is critical to have a matrix structure in place to monitor progress and adjust as needed. Internal efforts are currently in process to develop data-driven outcome measures for each recommendation in order to monitor the success of the implementation individually and as a whole to improve child safety, well-being, and permanency.

*Safe Children.  
Stable Homes.  
Strong Communities.*



# CHILDREN SERVICES TRANSFORMATION

## Progress Updates

November 2022



**MIKE DEWINE**  
GOVERNOR OF OHIO



**JON HUSTED**  
LT. GOVERNOR OF OHIO

[www.Governor.Ohio.gov](http://www.Governor.Ohio.gov)