



Ohio Family & Children First Coordinators Association

2008 Annual Report

Promoting healthy children, strong families and thriving communities in Ohio through:

- **Building community capacity**
- **Coordinating systems and services**
- **Engaging and empowering families**
- **Shared accountability**

www.ofcfca.org



Dear Constituents,

The Ohio Family and Children First Coordinators Association is proud to present its 2008 Annual Report for your review and information. Throughout the State of Ohio, Family Councils are making a very positive difference in their communities by bringing diverse sectors of the community together in a strategic manner to address the needs of children and families.

Since 1993, the State of Ohio has promoted the establishment of Family & Children First Councils in all of its eighty-eight counties. Local Councils work diligently to address the needs of children and families by working together to address:

- **Service Coordination:** Develop cross system service coordination strategies and services for children with complex, multi-system needs.
- **Community Planning:** Mobilize community needs assessment, strategic planning, and evaluation efforts related to child/family outcomes.
- **Early Childhood:** Working in collaboration with other early childhood programs and initiatives to develop an effective, efficient and well coordinated system of early care and learning county-wide.
- **Family Involvement:** Promoting the inclusion of families in all aspects of the county's community assessment, planning, policy-making and program implementation efforts.
- **Program Development and Management:** Manage state-directed child/family related programming such as *Help Me Grow* and *Ohio Children's Trust Fund*, as well as other locally directed efforts.

In 2007, OFCF Coordinators took the steps to become a formally organized association known as the Ohio Family & Children First Coordinators Association. The current committee structure includes:

1) Professional Development, 2) Outcome Measurement and Accountability, and 3) State and Local Communications. An Executive Leadership Group has also been formed to support the Association's efforts. Our Association operates on a volunteer basis and is very fortunate to have a strong base of very experienced coordinators who willingly share their time and talents.

This past year has been one of growth and development as we work to put together a structure that meets the needs of our membership, as well as supports the work Councils are doing at the local level. Our accomplishments include:

- Meeting with each of the individual Cabinet Council Directors
- Establishing our website: www.ofcfca.org
- Becoming an affiliate member of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio and presenting at their statewide conferences
- Mobilizing a state-wide training effort for *Strengthening Families*, a family education curriculum for families who have children ages 10-14 years.
- Conducting membership surveys to assist with planning

We greatly appreciate all of the support and encouragement offered to us over the past year and look forward to another year of continued service to Ohio's children and families.

Sincerely,

Carol Lichtenwalter, President
Ohio Family & Children First Coordinators Association
Director, Stark County Family Council

Family and Children First Council Responsibilities

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 121.37 authorizes the establishment of the Family and Children First Cabinet Council, County Councils or Regional Councils. Much more detailed information on the responsibilities of each of these groups may be obtained through review of the ORC.

The local boards of county commissioners are authorized to establish the county or regional Family and Children First Councils. Local public or private agencies or groups that fund, advocate or provide services to children and families are appointed as members of county Family and Children First Councils. Membership also includes family representatives who have received services from an agency on the Council.

The Councils are formed for the purpose of streamlining and coordinating existing government services for families seeking services for their children.

This purpose is carried out through a variety of activities, including:

- Referring children who require additional resources
- Developing and implementing a process to evaluate and prioritize services, fill service gaps where possible, and invent new service approaches
- Participate in development of a countywide, comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency system for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities or delays and their families
- Maintain an accountability system to monitor the county council's progress
- Establish a mechanism to receive input from those receiving services

Local Councils also develop and implement:

- An interagency process to establish local indicators and monitor the county's progress toward increasing child well-being
- An interagency process to identify local priorities to increase child well-being
- An annual plan and follow up reporting that identify the county's interagency efforts to increase child well-being
- A county service coordination mechanism
- A local service dispute resolution process
- A family service coordination plan

To simplify the complex roles of Councils, these duties can be understood within the framework of the following Ohio Family and Children First Core Functions:

- **Building Community Capacity**
Mobilizing child and family serving partners to address the needs of children and families through planning and implementing feasible and effective programs and services.
- **Coordinating Systems & Services**
Providing a mechanism to facilitate the coordination and alignment of resources, policies, and services with and for children and families with complex, multi-system needs.

- **Engaging & Empowering Families**
Recruiting and supporting families to be active, contributing members on Family and Children First Councils, advocating on behalf of children and families.
- **Shared Accountability**
Monitoring, evaluating, and communicating progress toward the goals established through the Council's planning and implementation efforts.



Councils implement and oversee a variety of local and state initiated programs.

Selected state programs may include:

- Access to Better Care (ABC) (thru ODMH)
- Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice (thru ODYS)
- Family and System Team (FAST) (thru ODMH, ODADAS, ODJFS, ODYS)
- Help Me Grow (thru ODH, ODJFS)
- Ohio Children's Trust Fund (thru ODJFS)
- Partnerships for Success (thru ODYS)

The work of local Family and Children First Council's follow various successful planning processes. Each county's strength is its ability to organize, collaborate, and build county capacity to provide activities and services that make a positive difference in the lives of families and children.

Ohio Family and Children First County FCFC H.B. 289 - Community Planning for Child Well-Being

Purpose of the HB 289 Plan

Statute enacted in 1993 mandates county FCFCs to develop and implement a process that annually evaluates and prioritizes services, fills service gaps where possible, and invents new approaches to achieve better results for families and children. H.B. 289 was enacted August 17, 2006 to increase the accountability of the Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) Cabinet Council and county Family and Children First Councils (FCFCs). H.B. 289 expands the existing statute by requiring the planning process to focus on increasing child well-being, culminating in a written plan. It requires county FCFCs to identify local interagency efforts and establish a process to identify local priorities to increase child well-being. The local priorities must focus on one or more of the six Commitments to Child Well-Being which are:

- Expectant Parents and Newborns Thrive (suggested target ages: 0-1)
- Infants and Toddlers Thrives (suggested target ages: 1-3)
- Children are Ready for School (suggested target ages: 4-5)
- Children and Youth Succeed in School (suggested target ages: 6-12)
- Children and Youth Engage in Healthy Behaviors (suggested target ages: 13-18)
- Youth Successfully Transition into Adulthood (suggested target ages: 18-24)

The county FCFC must monitor progress toward meeting the local priorities through identified indicators associated with child well-being and provide an annual report to its board of County Commissioners and the OFCF Cabinet Council.

The comprehensive planning process rotates on a four-year cycle to allow sufficient time to track movement of the intermediate and short-term indicators in and demonstrate change in the intended direction. Each county FCFC was required to submit its initial plan by July 2, 2007.

During SFY 2007 - 2011, the county FCFC must monitor its original plan, annually report its progress toward achieving specified outcomes, and review and update the plan. HB 289 planning is a fluid process designed to provide flexibility in addressing multiple focus areas, drilling down further to increase specificity, and aligning initiatives. The county FCFC may revise its original plan to address new data and/or local priorities, but will need to document the revisions annually utilizing the HB 289 Update & Report. The four year planning cycle will then culminate in the development of the next comprehensive HB 289 plan to be submitted in July 2011.

Each county FCFC has the flexibility to choose a planning process that works best for their organization and community. The Ohio Family and Children First office partners with the Department of Youth Services and Ohio State University's Center for Learning Excellence to offer a planning model and resource known as Partnerships for Success (PFS). To date, forty-four counties throughout Ohio have participated in the PFS process.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Local Family and Children First Councils (FCFC) have the following core responsibilities in the development of a quality system of care for infants and toddlers in their communities in the following ways:

Help Me Grow (HMG) is a program for Ohio's expectant parents, newborns, infants and toddlers that provides health and developmental services so children start school healthy and ready to learn. Help Me Grow provides the building blocks for success for Ohio's families through: 1) Newborn Home Visiting, 2) Service Coordination, 3) Developmental Evaluation and screening, 4) Family Support 5) Child development education and training

The local county Council is serves the Help Me Grow program in the following ways:

- ✓ Each local FCFC in accordance with Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Help Me Grow Policies
- ✓ designates an Administrative Agent to receive funding for the purposes of implementing HMG services;
- ✓ assures that local HMG programs adhere to all rules and regulations outlined in state and federal policy (including: personnel qualifications; intake and referral processes; consent and confidentiality;
- ✓ assures timely determination of eligibility and individual plan development;
- ✓ maintains a system for records development, retention and access.
- ✓ collecting, managing and reporting of data for HMG;
- ✓ implementing procedures to assure continuous improvement of the HMG system in the county
- ✓ completion of all phases of the ODH monitoring process development of a complaint resolution process for all families receiving HMG services
- ✓ Families receiving ongoing HMG services through each local FCFC have the opportunity to (1) interact with other families who have received ongoing services from the HMG system and who may share similar experiences and concerns, (2) receive family support services from a Family Support Specialist, and (3) learn skills to enhance their child's development and expand their family's capacity to utilize resources and make decisions.

Early Childhood Coordinating Committee (ECCC) – In addition, each local FCFC is responsible to participate in the development of a countywide, comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency system for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities or delays and their families. They are required to establish an (ECCC) to assist the FCFC in the design, coordination and implementation of the HMG system, as well as expand public, professional and community awareness of the HMG System.

Other Local Initiatives – Many local FCFCs build upon the work done through the ECCC to mobilize and coordinate other programs and strategies to address local needs related to early childhood.

OHIO CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND (OCTF)

In 1984, Ohio created the OCTF as a dedicated public funding mechanism for primary and secondary child abuse and neglect prevention. Funding that results from a surcharge on state issued certificates and filings generate funds that flow to counties to mobilize programming and services to prevent child abuse and neglect. Most FCFCs serve as the Local Advisory for the OCTF funds. They mobilize the identification of needs and local priorities, manage a local allocation process and monitor program quality and outcomes. Each county's plan is unique to the needs of that community.



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES TRAINING INITIATIVE

The Ohio Family & Children First Coordinators Association was very pleased to have an opportunity to help expand the Strengthening Families Program for families with children between the ages of 10 and 14 (SF 10-14). SF 10-14 is an evidence-based curriculum designed to build family strengths, strengthen parenting skills, and prevent teen substance abuse and other problem behaviors. The program is listed as a Model Program by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and as an Exemplary Program by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention. Survey data indicated that there was a great deal of interest, throughout Ohio, in starting and expanding the program. With funding from the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS), and staff support from the Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH), OFCFCA conducted training throughout the state. Trainings were conducted in Athens, Clark, Huron, Stark, and Union counties.

It was initially thought that OFCFCA was in a unique position to implement this initiative and this thought was confirmed. The objectives of the grant were to train 35 individuals to be program facilitators and to train three individuals to be “trained trainers”. Both of these goals were exceeded. Between January and June 2008, 83 people were trained as program facilitators and five people were trained as trainers. Because OFCFCA has members in each Ohio County, it was possible to quickly assess interest and identify centrally located training sites. In addition, given that individuals at a number of different types of organizations (e.g., schools, Juvenile Courts, mental health agencies etc.) would be interested in the training opportunity OFCFCA members (i.e., FCFC Coordinators) were in an excellent position to identify such organizations and individuals within their respective counties. Individuals trained did indeed come from a wide range of human, educational, and social service organizations. Finally, organizing and coordinating multiple trainings across the state can be logistically challenging. Local FCFC coordinators, who volunteered to host trainings, assisted in many ways (e.g., identifying available and appropriate training sites, developing lists of local hotels and lunch options, distributing local notices of the training opportunity, handling registrations, and serving as an on-site “go-to-person”). There was no difficulty in getting volunteers. In fact, on several occasions, coordinators stepped forward and offered to host the training event even when it was known that no one from their particular county would be attending.

OFCFCA looks forward to working on similar projects with our state partners.

For additional information about the SF 10-14 Training Initiative, please contact Sue Giga (GCFCC) Director) at 937-562-5600 or sgiga@co.greene.oh.us.

OFCFCA would like to thank the Greene County FCFC and the Greene County Board of Commissioners for serving as the fiscal agent for the Strengthening Families Training Initiative Grant.



**Ohio Family &
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Association**

STATE AND LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS WORKGROUP CHARTER

*ESTABLISH AN OFCFCA INFRASTRUCTURE
TO ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN A POSITIVE,
EFFECTIVE STATE/COUNTY RELATIONSHIP THAT
SHAPES AND INFLUENCES BOTH PROCESS AND
POLICIES ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES
AND COMMUNITIES*

Background: The nature of the Ohio Family and Children First Coordinators Association is constantly evolving to meet the needs of its members. Intersystem coordinators and F&CF Coordinators have been meeting bi-monthly to facilitate dialogue and share information between state and local partners for fifteen years. This forum has been used to promote open communication among state and local partners. These meetings have been used to problem solve, receive programmatic updates, work with state partners to develop strategies, capitalize on opportunities for collaboration, and generally support each other through challenging budget periods. A key focus of the effort has been one of trust building. While we have done this sometimes better than other times, it has been a continuous focus of the group. White papers have been completed. Legislative alerts have been shared and dialogue among all partners has been on-going.

Parameters: There are limits within the scope of process change allowable as defined by legal restrictions, budget, etc. There is a need to assure linkages with other work groups & the executive workgroup to maintain a consistent message on behalf of the association with our state partners.

What the Workgroup Has the Authority to Do: Make formal recommendations on behalf of the OFCFCA. Testify before legislative committees for matters that impact the work of councils, children and families. Survey, identify and recommend strategies and opportunities to state partners on behalf of the association.

State and Local Communications Workgroup

Accomplishments

- Infrastructure
- Coordinators only list serve
- Legislative Events
- Public Testimonies
- Identifying existing, new and future partner associations
- Engagement

Proposed SFY08 Workgroup Objectives (red entries denote executive committee recommendation):

Recommended priorities for SFY 08		
SFY 08 Objective	Persons Responsible	STATUS
Develop common and consistent messages focusing on key issues Angela Sausser Short recommended focus on common challenges faced by coordinators/councils	Executive Workgroup	On-going
Develop meaningful and functional 2-way relationships with state departments by informing and educating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize tasks through executive committee Inform members and collect input related to messaging Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank you notes to Cabinet Council members for participation in roundtable discussions Jessica Porterfield will complete this task by 8/31 Carol meet with Angela Sausser Short to review expectations and parameters relative to partnership between OFCF and OFCFA Regular contact with Cabinet Council Getting Carol on Cabinet Council agenda Sending summary of roundtable discussions to Cabinet Council through Angela Sausser Short - Carol L. will ensure the development of the product ASAP Secure Cabinet Council feedback on roundtable discussions		Complete Complete On-going On-going Complete On-going
Recommended priorities for SFY 08		
SFY 08 Objective	Persons Responsible	Due Date
Website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop proposal including content for immediate posting, cost, development resources 	Chad Hibbs	complete

Promote association membership on state workgroups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate list and recruit • Update/report to membership 	Kathy Kelly	complete
Investigate possibility of working across systems and with OFCF to hold statewide child/family conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnaround Ohio • Best practices/outcomes • Staff development Recommend that minimally planning should occur in SFY 08	None identified	None identified
Establish subgroup to take the lead on informal communications (e.g. thank you notes and letter writing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include parameters in workgroup charter 	Executive Workgroup	On-going
Recommended as secondary priorities for SFY 08		
SFY 08 Objective	Persons Responsible	Due Date
Improve quality of state meeting content - strategic	Executive Committee	On-going
Strengthen relationships with legislators by informing and educating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each coordinator asked to make personal contact • Regional legislative event Develop mechanism to inform members	Regional Reps.	On-going
Have effective communication tools for association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Templates/samples Develop strategies/marketing plan for current tools (with other groups)	Executive Workgroup	On-going
Investigate hosting a state meeting to which local stakeholders are invited	None identified	None identified

Workgroup Membership: Co-Chairs: Kathy McLeish, Muskingum County (E) and Kathy Kelly, Holmes (NE)
Jerry Russell – Noble County (E)
Chad Hibbs – Guernsey County (E)
Cathy Glassford – Sandusky County (NE)
Carol Lichtenwalter – Stark County (NE)
Cindy Davis- Washington County (E)
Rebecca Wheelersburg- Scioto County (S)

Updated: 7-29-08



**Ohio Family &
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OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY WORKGROUP CHARTER

Workgroup Purpose:

To identify and promote methods that provide evidence of the success and challenges of health and human service programs for families and children and the role of OFCFA in this work.

Background: (Strategic importance, what has been happening and its importance)

- The use of data to strengthen and clarify the role of FCFC in each county
- Use of information to substantiate the importance of this role
- Legislative resource tools are needed
- Relevant data and trends that is important to decision-makers
- Set up to be consistent with HB 289 by collecting county success stories for inclusion to give local voice and input in the HB 289 process

Parameters: (Limits on scope of process change allowable as defined by team sponsor-legal restrictions, budget, and assuring linkages with other work groups, etc.)

- Highlight positives
- Identify challenges
- Focus on achievement
- Information should create a focus
- Highlight areas of legislative importance
- Develop measures, which support the work of all team areas of focus
- Maintain client confidentiality
- Confirm data with those affected
- Gain endorsements/approvals from Leadership/Planning Team
- Seek methods to increase impact of products

What the Workgroup Has the Authority to do: (Make recommendations to the Leadership Workgroup, benchmark achievements, conduct surveys, hold and report out information to large group meetings, etc.)

- Hold team meetings and interface with other teams
- Collect data/information
- Conduct surveys/research
- Suggest & recommend strategies, tools, indicators
- Develop draft reports for Leadership Workgroup

Expected Product (s): (Include completion dates for all work products)

- County Outcome Data
- Provide a list of common activities
- Sample baseline/benchmark data for common activities
- Define measurable data that express the quality of life for children and families
- Sample baseline/benchmark quality of life data
- Provide regular updates to Leadership Workgroup
- Annual Report / Outcome Directory

Outcomes/Accountability Workgroup

Accomplishments:

- Outcomes Directory – 75 Counties
 - Turnaround Ohio incorporated in Outcomes Directory
 - Connections to HB 289
- Refined communications plan
- Preliminary discussion about products

Proposed SFY08 Workgroup Objectives (red entries denote executive committee recommendation):

SFY 08 Objective	Persons Responsible	Due Date
Meet with Angela Sausser Short to impact following priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up on child well-being indicators • Reporting format for HB 289 • Timing of reports • Accountability following both ways between state and locals Tom Kelley will set up first meeting with Angela Sausser Short	Tom Kelley Sandra LaPrise	Ongoing
Statutory relief of audit requirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposal and present to association • Proposal should include lessons learned from attempt two years ago, implications, and recommended path (legislators or cabinet council) Per Angela Sausser Short Auditor's office is a good place to start 	Various	Ongoing

Workgroup Co-Chairs

Tom Kelley	Montgomery (SW)	kelleyt@mcoho.org
Rachilla Basista	Mahoning (NE)	mcoe_rwb@access-k12.org
Sandra LaPrise	Madison (SW)	slaprise@co.madison.oh.us

East & Northeast Subcommittee:

Rachilla Basista, Co-Chair	Mahoning (NE)	mcoe-rwb@access-k12.org
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Northwest, South & Southwest Subcommittee:

Tom Kelley, Co-Chair	Montgomery (SW)	kelleyt@mcoho.org
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**Ohio Family &
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKGROUP CHARTER

Workgroup Purpose:

The purpose of the workgroup is to determine the professional development needs of Family and Children First Coordinators/Directors, and annually plan and implement professional development opportunities. Within the scope of this endeavor, the workgroup will address Ohio Revised Code 121.37, (4)(b)(ii), to identify and promote recommended practices consistent with the role of an effective FCF Council Executive Director.

Background: ORC 121.37 (4)(b)(ii) was placed into statute in 1996. In that legislation, was provision for FCF Councils to hire an Executive Director to assist each county in administering the powers and duties of the FCF Council Executive Committee. Since that time, the nature of the position of Family and Children First Council Coordinators and Directors in Ohio has evolved, and continues to experience changes and demands which require increased knowledge, skill sets, and expertise. It has been determined that this workgroup would identify the various needs across the state and determine effective ways to assist coordinators/directors in developing professionally at the community and state levels, as well as strengthen our ability to interact in a professional capacity across the board. By upgrading the capacity of coordinators as professionals, the demands of families and communities will be better met across the state.

Parameters: The Family and Children First Coordinators of Ohio Professional Development Workgroup will:

- Facilitate the identification and determination of professional development needs specific to the FCFCC positions.
- work in conjunction and cooperatively with the other FCFCC workgroups, including the Outcomes/Structure/Accountability Workgroup, the State/Local Communications Workgroup, and the FCFCC Leadership/Planning team
- Create a budget as needed, however it is anticipated that FCFCC Coordinators will bear the responsibility of funding their expenses to attend, travel, or participate in professional development
- Submit written reports to be submitted to the members at the bi-monthly meetings and to the Leadership workgroup
- Seek grants or other funding sources for professional development activities
- Share expertise and job-specific skills to other coordinators at little or no cost.

What The Workgroup Has The Authority To Do: The Workgroup has the authority to survey, identify, and recommend strategies and opportunities for professional development for coordinators around Ohio.

Expected Products:

Written reports and next steps to be presented to Bi-monthly to the Leadership Workgroup	On-going
Identify skill development areas	On-going
Develop a survey to narrow task/skill development areas	Done
Development of skill-set recommendations	Done by PfS Academy & Friends 9-07
Tool or Process (i.e. DACUM or The Profile) to assess skill-sets and professional development modules	Determined by skill-set recommendations
Develop an annual plan for facilitation and coordination of professional development opportunities	Annual Conference, 2008

SFY 08 Objective	Persons Responsible	Due Date
Master calendar including important dates and professional development opportunities in Ohio – update regularly and tie to association website	Melissa Rupp Tina Mohring Amy Sealts Sarah Jeffries Jennifer Hughes	Winter 2007/08
Update FY07 Survey and work with PfS Academy to further analyze results – Need to identify additional evaluation questions	Pat Kohut Jewel Bartels Sharon George	8/31/07
Work to increase professional development opportunities via video conferencing and/or webcasts (regionalize?)	Trish Marilyn	Fall 2008 w/CLEX
Host another FCFC 101 and post materials on website	Marilyn, Melissa, Sarah, Amy, Tina	Fall 2007 Winter 2008
OFCFCA people involved in the development/delivery of information specific to FCF Coordinators	Trish, Marilyn	Fall 2008 w/CLEX
Further information determined by Coordinators' Survey, 2007	Trish w/ Bob Stoughton	Spring, 2008

Identify array of trainings or sets of trainings specific to FCF coordinators, and then helping people identify trainings that would help round out their areas of challenges.	Workgroup	Ongoing
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Workgroup Co-Chairs: Trish Frazzini, Wyandot County and Marilyn Demma, Clark County

Workgroup Membership: (Include contact Information)

Jewel Bartels – Preble County	jewel@preblecountyhealth.org.
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Ohio Family and Children First Council

County Regions





OFCFCA
**Promoting healthy children, strong families,
and thriving communities county by county.**



COUNTY: RICHLAND

MISSION STATEMENT / LOCAL FOCUS:

The purpose of the Richland County Youth and Family Council is to provide leadership to assure an effective system of collaborative, coordinated and efficient community services which assist each family and child to meet their individual needs and responsibilities.

OPERATING STRUCTURE:

The mandated members are joined by five agency chief executive officers elected annually from the Family Council Network (60 member list). The Council acts to administer, govern and achieve objectives set forth by the same.

LOCAL FCFC CORE RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Community Capacity Building/Planning:** strategies and outcomes
Cooperative endeavors have resulted in establishment of endeavors to fill gaps and enhance services. The most recent effort includes a cooperative venture to establish a Multi-Systemic Therapy Program in the county. The county leveraged Medicaid funding with the pooling of local dollars. Locally established outcomes for the program exceeded those established by the national oversight center and these outcomes have been met on an annual basis. The project assists in keeping children in their homes, in their local schools and out of institutionalized placements. In 2007 there were 88.9% of the participating children that were maintained in their homes (exceeding the target of 85%). In 2007 there were 83.3% of the children enrolled in the program who were enrolled in school or working (just missing the target of 90%). In 2007 there were 77.8% of the enrolled children who successfully remained free of adjudications (exceeding the target of 68%).
- **Service Coordination:** strategies and outcomes
Service coordination is accomplished through a variety of mechanisms. The predominate vehicle is known as the Care Management Committee. Evolving from the Interdepartmental Cluster of years past the Committee most recently assumed the responsibility for oversight of the ABC/FAST implementation. Case managers within the system are assisted by the process with their intersystem families assuring coordination and achievement of desired outcomes. Total number placed out of county in 2003 = 11 and in 2005 = 7. Median number of days waiting for adoption in 2003 = 200 and in 2005 = 75. Median number of days in out of home care in 2003 = 355 and in 2005 = 183. Total number of placement days in 2003 = 48,184 and in 2005 = 34,120. Total number of children in custody during the year in 2003 = 264 and in 2005 = 191.
- **Family Empowerment:** strategies and outcomes
Support Specialists are available to families and Service Coordinators in the County. This offers families opportunities to participate in strength based assessment establishing a families assets, needs and priorities. Supports and services designed to enhance the capacity of the family to meet their needs are likewise identified and engaged. Although this approach is a part of the system wide culture, two specific services are note worthy including the Help Me Grow Family Support Specialist and the non-categorical assessment and initial service coordination provided by the systems jointly funded Gateway entity.
- **Early Childhood System of Care:** strategies and outcomes
A major focus of the Council is the development of a comprehensive system for the provision of Early Childhood services. This is accomplished through implementation of Help Me Grow involving ten vendors, emphasis on prenatal, targeting services to census tract with greatest risk

and implementation of an outcome tracking system known as Pathways. Significant outcomes have been achieved with data beginning to show a reduction of low-birth-weight babies for the county. Consistently Help Me Grow targets are met and exceeded on an annual basis. In most years the available resources are supplemented by additional local TANF funds.

OTHER LOCAL INITIATIVES: strategies and outcomes

The Council has initiated an electronic hub with the intent of assisting in elimination of case management duplication and the tracking of outcomes. The initial implementation of the hub links the ten Help Me Grow vendor agencies. The hub was expanded as the county initiated services relative to their administration of the TANF Demonstration Grant. Exploration continue regarding more broad based utilization of the hub.

FUNDING:

Grant administrative funds are supplemented by local funds for Council administration and activities. Other than paying for a modest administrative staff and operations the Council continues to financially support its original project, Gateway, a non-categorical central point of intake and initial service coordination service. Episodically, funding strategies are devised to secure match for grants and/or to incubate new endeavors. The policy of the Council discourages long term funding reliance on the Council and encourages incorporation of funding mechanism for incubated endeavors into the established system.

STAFFING:

The Council believes it exist to enhance the system, therefore policy prevents the hiring of staff. Rather than hire staff, the Council contracts with county agencies for all activities and staffing. A part-time Executive Director (.5 FTE) is supported through a contract with the City of Mansfield with an Administrative Assistance (1 FTE). The Mansfield City Schools has served as the Administrative Agent for the Council for the past fifteen years.

CHALLENGES:

Families within our community are especially stressed by the current economic conditions of our times. Increasing cost of living, coupled with uncertainties related to employment appear to be root casues of this stress. In addition the economics of the time are stressing agencies providing supportive services to our community. At a recent meeting of the Council's Executive Leadership Team each member was able to share information of significant reduction in revenue to their entity as a result of the state or federal budget.

FUTURE PLANS:

The Council's Executive Leadership Team is currently examining ways to pool resources so as to address the ever growing challenges of families as a result of the current economic conditions of our community. These considerations are in part being guided by the tri-annual needs assessment cooperatively conducted by United Way and the Council.

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