



## Giving Families a Voice: Family Support Specialists Help with Advocacy and More

The Family Support Specialist (FSS) Program began on July 1, 2024. The program provides an opportunity for families who have children involved with multiple child-serving systems to work with a family mentor who has lived experience. The Family Support Specialists guide and support families to obtain needed information and resources while also encouraging the family to have a voice in their child's services and supports. The goal of the program is for families to feel better equipped to advocate for their youth and family moving forward.

The four grantee agencies provide the program across 33 counties. In the program's first year, 260 youth and families were served. The youth served have needs across a broad array of systems including educational needs, behavioral health needs, developmental delays, and involvement with juvenile court. Family Support Specialists are making a positive impact every day on families with multi-system youth. With the help of the FSS Program, 93% of multi-system youth served have been able to remain in their own home while having their needs met by their family, community, and local service providers.

### *Success Story:*

This newly single father was overwhelmed. His own struggles and his child's developmental delays made parenting hard. After being referred by their FCFC WrapAround Coordinator, a Family Support Specialist (FSS) was assigned to provide consistent, hands-on support. The FSS became a partner to the family, attending WrapAround and school meetings with the father. By taking detailed notes and helping to manage goals and tasks, the FSS provided needed support which empowered the father to stay on track. The family has consistently demonstrated engagement with services. The youth now has a DD waiver and the appropriate supports are in place, providing long-term stability and care.

*Father: "It is a relief to have access to support and a friendly ear to be a better parent. I am so thankful for this program."*

*FSS: "It has been great working with this family to get their to-do lists managed and help provide notes after meetings that can be overwhelming."*

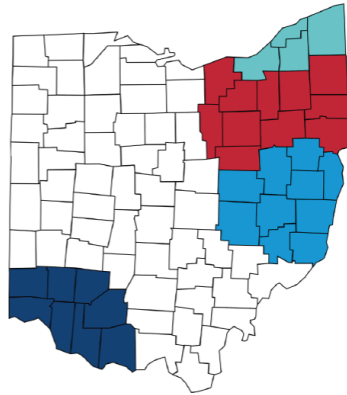
## FSS GRANTEE AGENCIES AND REGIONS

**NAMI Lake County (Great Lakes Region) – Lake\***, Ashtabula, Geauga and Cuyahoga

**Stark County Educational Service Center (Northeast Region) – Stark\***, Lorain, Ashland, Medina, Summit, Portage, Trumbull, Mahoning, Wayne, Holmes and Columbiana

**Jefferson County Educational Service Center (Eastern Region) – Jefferson\***, Coshocton, Tuscarawas, Carroll, Muskingum, Guernsey, Belmont, Harrison, Noble and Monroe

**Butler County Educational Service Center (Southwest Region) – Butler\***, Warren, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, Brown, Highland and Adams



\*Bold represents lead county.

\*Bold represents lead county.

For questions about FSS within a served regions, please reach out to the contacts below:

Ashlee Himes, NAMI Lake County  
Great Lakes Region  
[ashlee@namilake.org](mailto:ashlee@namilake.org)  
(440) 639-1200 Ext 102

Missy Fletcher, Stark Family and Children First Council  
Northeast Region  
[Melissa.fletcher@apps.sparcc.org](mailto:Melissa.fletcher@apps.sparcc.org)  
(330) 704-9050

Nicole McDonald, Jefferson Educational  
Service Center  
Eastern Region  
[nmcdonald@jcesc.org](mailto:nmcdonald@jcesc.org)  
(740) 283-3347 ext. 113

Elizabeth Samayoa, Butler County Family and Children First  
Council  
Southwest Region  
[Elizabeth.samayoa@bcesc.org](mailto:Elizabeth.samayoa@bcesc.org)  
(513) 887-4303

For statewide questions about FSS please reach out to Melissa Palmer DCY Project Manager at [Melissa.Palmer@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov](mailto:Melissa.Palmer@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov)