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# OCTF NEWS



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### A Note From the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF) Executive Director Nicole Sillaman



As another fiscal year wraps up, I found myself reflecting on a recent Bluey episode that resonated with me – if you are a parent or caregiver to young children – you may have also been swept up in the viral sensation of “The Sign” episode. Let’s be honest – who doesn’t like receiving life advice from cartoon dogs!?

Within that episode, Bluey is told, “Everything will work out the way it’s supposed to.” As I continued to watch I began to think, just like Bluey, is this a good ending or a bad ending for this episode?

In this episode, Bluey is learning how to be resilient. Resiliency is one of the key protective factors our programs teach parents and families. When families are resilient, they are better able to bounce back from hardships and remain hopeful during challenging times.

Resiliency is a trait that can benefit everyone. It’s not just something to be taught during parent support classes. As we all continue to “do what’s right for kids,” we will be challenged to work together in new ways, find creative solutions to problems, and remain hopeful during stressful times. I believe “The Sign” is telling us that we all have the ability to help create a good ending for the families and communities we support when we continue to build upon our strong partnerships with each other, and with our families.

~ Nicole

## Board Member Highlight: Melinda Haggerty



Melinda Haggerty has been an OCTF Board member since 2021 and serves on the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Committee. She is currently the Senior Vice President, General Counsel at the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, where she oversees the Foundation's legal affairs and provides child welfare legal expertise in developing the Foundation's trainings and materials for legal audiences.

Prior to joining the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Melinda was the Director of Children's Initiatives at the Ohio Attorney General's Office. In her role, Melinda oversaw all policy and legislation related to the areas of human trafficking, child

welfare, and juvenile justice. Under her leadership, Ohio passed two major pieces of human trafficking legislation and child welfare legislation that focused on expediting permanency for and obtaining normalcy for children in Ohio's foster care system. Additionally, Melinda oversaw large grant awards to children's organizations, including Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates, Boys & Girls Clubs across the state, and Ohio Reach.

Ms. Haggerty's experience as a former foster youth, combined with her legal training, gives her unique insight into the systems that impact vulnerable youth. Melinda has trained extensively throughout Ohio on children's issues and was published in Ohio Lawyer's Magazine. Melinda volunteers as a member of the Ohio Reach Coalition, an Ohio organization that supports former foster youth on their higher education journey. In addition, Melinda was honored to be named the Ohio Adoption Planning Group's 2012 Adoption Advocate of the Year.

Melinda received her undergraduate degree from The Ohio State University and earned her juris doctorate from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law.

For more information about OCTF Board members, and to learn when meetings occur, please visit our website [here](#).

## OCTF Staffing Update



Maguire (Maggie) Sanders joined the Ohio Children's Trust Fund as a program manager in 2019, and most recently was promoted to a Financial Program Manager in 2024. At OCTF, Ms. Sanders works with both statewide and local partners to implement child abuse and neglect prevention programming.

Prior to coming to OCTF, Ms. Sanders worked within the early childhood education space, where she gained 5 years of teaching experience supporting children with various special needs. This experience gave her the privilege of working with students who spoke English as a Second

Language. Ms. Sanders also spent 5 years employed with Head Start in various roles. These years navigating the educational systems in Ohio taught Ms. Sanders many lessons that are still applicable today. The students and families served by Ms. Sanders during this time are still close to her heart to this day.

Ms. Sanders completed her Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology focusing on learning across the lifespan from The Ohio State University, as well as her Master of Education in Learning Design from Bowling Green State University.



# Regional Family Fun Events

At OCTF, elevating parent and family voice has been a critical element of our work over the past few years. This is evident in our strategic plan, where we have a priority area centered on “Promoting meaningful parent leadership in regional prevention councils.”

We recognize that parents are truly the best experts for their children. As we elevate effective parent partnerships in our work, we’ve learned that we need to create opportunities for stronger parent voice and to expand community resources and connections to supportive services.

To accomplish this, we recently launched family fun events throughout five of our eight regions. These family fun events, a first for OCTF, generated a lot of excitement among the regional coordinators and their councils, OCTF Board members and staff, and DCY staff. Each event offered families a chance to enjoy free activities that introduced them to the organizations and professionals in their communities funded by or working in partnership with OCTF/DCY.

Local service providers also offered parenting support, promoted family engagement and communication, and connected parents/caregivers to local resources.

These events were held outdoors, rain or shine, but Ohio weather was in full cooperation! Each event was highly resourced and eagerly welcomed hundreds of families who were excited to visit community resource tables and learn more about how to access and benefit from the diverse services available in their communities. The children were greeted by mascots, face painters, and groups of new friends eager to join them in the inflatables that were a feature at most of the events. OCTF and DCY couldn’t be happier about how this first round of family fun events went! We are looking forward to expanding our reach in the next state fiscal year.

If you have questions about the Family Fun Events that took place in June or would like to find out how to be involved in future events, please contact OCTF at [octf@octf.ohio.gov](mailto:octf@octf.ohio.gov).



As OCTF settles into DCY, we have continued our work to build a strong network of collaborative partners. Most recently, we invited the Ohio Family Support Network, a member of the National Family Support Network, to present at the Great Lakes Ohio Regional Prevention Council in April. The Ohio Family Support Network, based in Cuyahoga County, is working to increase local recognition of Family Strengthening and Support as a field of practice, and build the capacity of local providers in the field. The Ohio Family Support Network is also interested in connecting with other organizations throughout Ohio to advance their mission and eventually expand their footprint beyond Northeast Ohio.

If you are interested in connecting with similar organizations, we invite you to join in for virtual meetings of like-minded professionals across Ohio in which you can receive training and networking that will support your work for your community. To better help us connect with all of you, we've created a survey to gather pertinent information that will help us better identify our family support network, including family resource centers, across Ohio. Please take 10-15 minutes and complete this [survey](#).

For reference, per the National Family Support Network:

*Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are the most typical kind of Family Support and Strengthening programs. They are known by many different names across the country, including Family Centers, Family Success Centers, Family Support Centers, and Parent Child Centers. They may be community-based or school-based. They serve as welcoming hubs of community services and opportunities designed to strengthen families. Their activities and programs, typically provided at no or low cost to participants, are developed to reflect and be responsive to the specific needs, cultures, and interests of the communities and populations served.*





# Triple P Regional Meetings



The Ohio Children's Trust Fund, in collaboration with Nationwide Children's Hospital and Triple P America, hosted eight Regional Triple P Practitioner meetings in a variety of locations statewide. These meetings offered a day of skill-building and connection for Triple P practitioners in Ohio. Practitioners in attendance covered professional development topics such as exploration of Triple P's Core Components and Using Motivational Interviewing with Triple P programming.

Additionally, participants were able to network with other Triple P practitioners, learn about the services they provide, hear

updates on the Triple P Online regional coaching program, and learn about ongoing professional development opportunities..

Nearly 80 participants attended these Regional Triple P Practitioner meetings and noted the following highlights from the sessions:

- Learning Motivational Interviewing strategies such as affirmations and reflective listening to increase effectiveness of Triple P and building motivation within families.
- Marketing and community engagement tips.
- Getting to connect with other practitioners in person.
- Learning about Triple P resources and support available.
- Components of Triple P fidelity
- Flexible ways of implementing Triple P
- Benefits of "homework" and new ways of presenting homework to parents.



Given the success of this peer learning opportunity, OCTF will continue working with its partners to offer additional regional Triple P meetings in SFY 2025. Stay tuned for those dates!

# National April Child Abuse Prevention Month Wrap-Up



Strong Families.  
Healthy Children.  
**Bright Futures.**

At OCTF, part of our statewide prevention effort is to build public awareness about child abuse and neglect prevention and the programs and services that are available to families. For April National Child Abuse Prevention Month 2024, OCTF launched the new Ensure They Shine campaign, which highlights that children possess a unique ability to light up our lives and we can all be a part of nurturing their bright spirit with love and care.

The month started off with Prevent Child Abuse America #WearBlueDay on April 5th and Public Children's Services Association of Ohio #WearBlueDay on April 10th. Prevention partners from across the state showed their support by posting selfies and tagging OCTF on our social platforms.

During the month we continued to connect with our partners through four prevention webinar events. The webinars focused on a variety of prevention programming being offered in the state including Triple P Fear-Less which offers strategies for families parenting children experiencing anxiety. The events collectively were attended by 179 professionals and helped organizations connect with programming that could benefit the families they serve. All four webinars were recorded and can be viewed on OCTF's website at <https://octf.ohio.gov/webinars>.



This April, OCTF was also celebrating 40 Years of service to Ohioans! In 1984, in response to CAPTA (the federal Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act), Ohio undertook legislation to establish a children's trust fund. On April 24, 2024, the Ohio Senate recognized OCTF for those 40 years of service and the Senate and House presented resolutions for April National Child Abuse Prevention Month.