

DCY UPDATE

JUNE IS NATIONAL REUNIFICATION MONTH

Background

Each year in June, we recognize National Reunification Month. The National theme for this year is, “Let’s Celebrate Unified Families in June!” It is a time to celebrate primary and resource families working together for children and youth to unite after a period of separation.

National Reunification Month

In 2023, over 4,000 Ohio children were reunified with a parent, guardian, or custodian. While there are cases when it is necessary for children to be separated from their parents—such as when their safety is at risk—the ultimate goal of foster care is to work towards mending and strengthening the familial ties. Foster caregivers play a critical part in supporting the reunification process. From building positive relationships with primary families early on to listening to the child’s wants and needs, caregivers can help improve the likelihood of successful reunification. When we have the child as our priority and a willingness to work together for their benefit, we can reduce the trauma of placement and separation. Every child’s journey deserves a partnered relationship between their primary family and resource family.

It is important to remember:

- Every child and youth deserves to have everyone they love in their life.
- Every child and youth deserves a voice in their safety.
- Every child and youth deserves to be physically and emotionally safe.
- Every child and youth has rights, and it matters if those rights are violated.

DCY, in partnership with Specialized Alternatives for Youth and Families (SAFY) and three children service agencies, are supporting parents in achieving reunification. Partnering with Ohio Parents (POP) is one program that offers support to parents in the children services system working to reunite with their children. POP is a voluntary support available to parents involved with children services in Fairfield, Franklin, and Knox Counties. Support offered through POP involves a Parent Partner who has already had the experience of navigating children services to reunite with their children. A Parent Partner is matched with a parent that is involved with children services working toward their path to reunification. Through this mentoring relationship, Parent Partners use their experience, strength, hope, and inspiration to empower other parents to find their voice, build skills, and develop the confidence and competence to advocate for themselves and their children. Parent Partners have shared two stories of family reunification to celebrate.

Christina

Christina's journey to reunify with her four daughters serves as a powerful testament to the transformative impact of dedicated support and unwavering determination. Despite facing the heart-wrenching separation from her children due to challenging circumstances, Christina never wavered in her commitment to turn life around and create a loving home for her family.

With the guidance and assistance of her parent partner, Christina embarked on a remarkable journey of growth and progress. Together, they worked to secure a new home, increase her work hours, and furnish her living space, all while Christina remained resolute in her recovery from addiction. Despite the immense challenges she faced, including the temptation of relapse, Christina's steadfast dedication to her sobriety and her children propelled her forward on the path to reunification.

Within a mere 90 days of her children being removed from her care, Christina's unwavering efforts and the invaluable support of her parent partner culminated in a joyous reunion on October 26, 2023. This swift reunification stands as a testament to the power of proactive intervention and partnership to ensure positive outcomes for families in crisis.

Following the reunification, Christina remained committed to her ongoing growth and development as a parent. Through continued engagement with the parent partner program, Christina set and pursued goals aimed at enhancing her parenting skills, fostering self-reliance, and embracing her role as the best possible mother to her daughters.

Christina's inspiring journey serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience and strength that can emerge from adversity when met with support, determination, and a shared commitment to family well-being. Christina has not only reunited with her children but has also embarked on a journey of healing, growth, and empowerment that will continue to shape her family's future for years to come.

Nevaeh

Nevaeh was very quiet and reserved at the beginning of her journey with the Partnering with Ohio Parents Program in July 2023. Nevaeh started working on her case plan activities but was still skeptical about using her parent voice. Once she had support from her parent partner, everything fell into place. Nevaeh found employment and secured housing during the home trial period. Feeling empowered to advocate for herself, her son reunified with her right before Christmas 2023. What a wonderful gift!

Parent Partner: Nicole Hornbeck

You can learn more at fosterandadopt.ohio.gov about interacting with primary families and how you can support reunification or click [here](#).