

# Ohio Family and Children First

An Overview of  
O.R.C. 121.37

# OFCF Overview

- Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) is a partnership of government agencies and community organizations committed to improving the well-being of children and their families.
- OFCF started as an initiative of the Office of the Governor in 1991 building upon the previous cluster legislation.
- The Ohio General Assembly codified OFCF in 1993.

# Cabinet Council Membership

## ORC 121.37 (A)(1)

121.37 establishes a Cabinet Council whose membership is comprised of the directors of the Ohio Departments of:

- Aging
- Alcohol & Drug Addiction Services
- Budget & Management
- Developmental Disabilities
- Education

# Cabinet Council Membership Continued...

The directors of the Ohio Departments of:

- Health
- Job & Family Services
- Mental Health
- Youth Services
- Rehabilitation and Correction
- Rehabilitation Services Commission

# Governor's Designees & Chair of the Cabinet Council

- The OFCF Cabinet Council is chaired by the Governor or a designee.

# ORC 121.37 (A)(2)

The OFCF Cabinet Council was created to streamline and coordinate government services for families needing help for their children.

# Roles & Responsibilities

## ORC 121.37 (A)(3)(a-c)

- (a) Review service & treatment plans for children when requested
- (b) Assistance as the council determines necessary to meet the needs of children referred by county FCF Councils.
- (c) Monitoring & supervision of a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency system for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities or delays and their families, as established pursuant to federal grants received & administered by the department of health for early intervention services under the IDEA of 2004.

# Cabinet Council Responsibilities

## ORC 121.37 (A)(4)(a)

The Cabinet Council shall develop and implement the following:

(a) An interagency process to select the indicators that will be used to measure progress towards increasing child well-being in the state and to update the indicators on an annual basis. The indicators shall focus on:



# Child Well Being

- Expectant Parents and Newborns Thrive
- Infants and Toddlers Thrive
- Children Are Ready for School
- Children and Youth Succeed in School
- Youth Choose Healthy Behaviors
- Youth Successfully Transition into Adulthood

# Cabinet Council Responsibilities

## ORC 121.37 (A)(4)(b)

The State Cabinet Council shall develop and implement an interagency system to offer guidance and monitor progress toward increasing child well-being in the state and in each county.

# Cabinet Council Responsibilities

## ORC 121.37 (A)(4)(c)

The Cabinet Council shall develop and implement an annual plan that identifies state-level agency efforts taken to ensure progress towards increasing child well-being in the state.

On an annual basis, the cabinet council will submit to the Governor and the General Assembly a report on the status of efforts to increase child well-being in the state. This report shall be made available to any other person on request.

# Local FCF Councils

## ORC 121.37 (B)(1)

ORC 121.37 (B)(1) outlines that:

- The board of county commissioners shall establish a county family and children first council.
- The board of county commissioners may invite any local public or private agency or group that funds, advocates, or provides services to children and families to have a representative become a permanent member or temporary member of its county council.
- Each county council must include the following individuals:

# Local Council Membership –

## ORC. 121.37 (B)(1)(a-n)

- (a) At least three individuals who are not employed by an agency represented on the council and whose families are or have received services from an agency represented on the council or another county's council. Where possible, the number of members representing families shall be equal to 20% of the council's membership.
- (b) The director of the board of alcohol, drug addiction and mental health services (if separate agencies, need both directors). If the ADAMH board covers more than one county, the director may designate a person to participate on the county's council.

# Local Council Membership Continued...

- (c) The health commissioner or a designee of the board of health of each city & general health district.
- (d) The director of the county department of job and family services
- (e) The executive director of the public children services agency
- (f) The superintendent of the county board of developmental disabilities

# Local Council Membership Continued...

- (g) The superintendent of the city, exempted village, or local school district with the largest number of pupils residing in the county
- (h) A school superintendent representing all other school districts

# Local Council Membership Continued...

- (i) A representative of the municipal corporation with the largest population in the county
- (j) The president of the board of county commissioners, or an individual designated by the board
- (k) A representative of the regional offices of the department of youth services



# Local Council Membership Continued...

- (l) A representative of the county's Head Start agencies, as defined in section 3301.32 of the Ohio Revised Code
- (m) A representative of the county's early intervention collaborative
- (n) A representative of a local nonprofit entity that funds, advocates, or provides services to children and families.

# Juvenile Court Participation

## ORC. 121.37 (B)(1)

The county's juvenile court judge senior in service or another judge of the juvenile court designated by the administrative judge or, where there is no administrative judge, by the judge senior in service shall serve as the judicial advisor to the county family and children first council. The judge may advise the county council on the court's utilization of resources, services, or programs provided by the entities represented by the members of the county council and how those resources, services, or programs assist the court in its administration of justice. Service of a judge as a judicial advisor pursuant to this section is a judicial function".

# Purpose of local FCF Councils

## 121.37 (B)(2)

The purpose of the county council is to streamline and coordinate existing government services for families seeking services for their children. In seeking to fulfill its purpose, a county council shall provide for the following:

# Local Roles & Responsibilities as defined in ORC 121.37 (B)(2)(a-e)

- a) Referrals to the cabinet council of those children for whom the county council cannot provide adequate services;
- b) Development and implementation of 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.

This may include a request for exemption from any rules or interagency agreements of a state agency participating on the council if an exemption is necessary for the council to implement an alternative program or approach for service delivery to families and children – section (B)(4)(b).

## Local Roles & Responsibilities as defined in ORC 121.37 (B)(2)(a-e) continued....

- c) Participation in the development of a countywide, comprehensive, coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency system for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities or delays and their families, as established pursuant to federal grants received and administered by the department of health for early intervention services under the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004”;

## Local Roles & Responsibilities as defined in ORC 121.37 (B)(2)(a-e) continued....

- d) Maintenance of an accountability system to monitor the county council's progress in achieving results for families and children;
- e) Establishment of a mechanism to ensure ongoing input from a broad representation of families who are receiving services within the county system.

# Local Roles & Responsibilities in ORC

## 121.37 (B)(3)(a-c)

- a) A county council shall develop and implement an interagency process to establish local indicators and monitor the county's progress toward increasing child well-being in the county.
- b) A county council shall develop and implement an interagency process to identify local priorities to increase child well-being. The local priorities shall focus on expectant parents and newborns thriving; infants and toddlers thriving; children being ready for school; children and youth succeeding in school; youth choosing healthy behaviors; and youth successfully transitioning into adulthood and take into account the indicators established by the cabinet council under division (A)(4)(a) of this section.

# Local Roles & Responsibilities in ORC

## 121.37 (B)(3)(a-c) continued....

- (c) A county council shall develop and implement  
An annual plan that identifies the county's  
interagency efforts to increase child well-being  
in the county.

On an annual basis, the county council shall submit a report on the status of efforts by the county to increase child well-being in the county to the county's board of county commissioners and the cabinet council. This report shall be made available to any other person on request.



# Additional Roles & Responsibilities as defined in ORC 121.37 (B)(4)(a)

Except as provided in division (B)(4)(b), a county council shall comply with the policies, procedures, and activities prescribed by the rules or interagency agreements of a state department participating on the cabinet council whenever the county council performs a function subject to those rules or agreements.

# Administrative Agent

## ORC 121.37 (B)(5)(a)

Each county council shall designate an administrative agent for the county council from among the following public entities:

- Board of Alcohol, Drug Addiction, & Mental Health Services
- Board of County Commissioners
- Board of Health
- Dept. of Job & Family Services
- County agency responsible for the administration of children's services
- Board of DD
- Board of Education or ESC
- Juvenile Court

# Administrative Agent Continued..

## ORC 121.37 (B)(5)(a)

Any of the foregoing public entities, other than the board of county commissioners, may decline to serve as the council's administrative agent.

# Administrative Agent Duties

## ORC 121.37 (B)(5)(a)

- The administrative agent shall serve as the council's appointing authority for any employees of the council.
- The council shall file an annual budget with its administrative agent, with copies filed with the county auditor and board of county commissioners.
- The administrative agent shall ensure that all expenditures are handled in accordance with policies, procedures, and activities prescribed by state departments in rules or interagency agreements that are applicable to the council's functions.

# Administrative Agent Duties Continued....

## ORC 121.37 (B)(5)(a)

The administrative agent of a county council shall send notice of a member's absence if a member listed in division (B)(1) of this section has been absent from either three consecutive meetings of the county council or a county council subcommittee, or from one-quarter of such meetings in a calendar year, whichever is less.

# Administrative Agent Duties Continued....

## ORC 121.37 (B)(5)(a)

The notice shall be sent to the board of county commissioners that establishes the county council and, for the members listed in divisions (B)(1)(b), (c), (e), and (m) of this section, to the governing board overseeing the respective entity; for the member listed in division (B)(1)(f) of this section, to the county board of mental retardation and developmental disabilities that employs the superintendent; for a member listed in the division (B)(1)(h) or (i) of this section, to the school board that employs the superintendent; for the member listed in division (B)(1)(j) of this section, to the mayor of the municipal corporation; for the member listed in division (B)(1)(l) of this section, to the director of youth services; and for the member listed in division (B)(1)(o), to that member's board of trustees.”

# Administrative Agent

## ORC 121.37 (B)(5)(a)

If the council designates the board of county commissioners as its administrative agent, the board may, by resolution, delegate any of its powers and duties as administrative agent to an executive committee the board establishes. Executive committee membership should at least include individuals listed in section (B)(1)(b-h). The executive must include at least one family county council representative who does not have a family member employed by an agency represented on the council.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)

Each county shall develop a county service coordination mechanism. The county service coordination mechanism shall serve as the guiding document for coordination of services in the county. For children who also receive services under the help me grow program, the service coordination mechanism shall be consistent with rules adopted by the department of health under section 3701.61 of the Revised Code. All family service coordination plans shall be developed in accordance with the county service coordination mechanism.



# Service Coordination Mechanism Development ORC 121.37 (C)

The mechanism shall be developed and approved with the participation of the county entities representing child welfare, MRDD, alcohol/drug, health, mental health, juvenile judges, education, FCFC, and CCG, and that includes the following:

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(1)

A procedure for an agency, including juvenile court, or a family voluntarily seeking service coordination, to refer the child and family to the council for service coordination in accordance with the county service coordination mechanism.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(2)

A procedure ensuring that a family and all appropriate staff from involved agencies, including a representative from the appropriate school district, are notified of and invited to participate in all family service coordination plan meetings.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(3)

A procedure that permits a family to initiate a meeting to develop or review the family's service coordination plan and allows the family to invite a family advocate, mentor, or support person of the family's choice to participate in any such meeting.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(4)

A procedure for ensuring that a family service coordination plan meeting is conducted for each child who receives service coordination under the mechanism and for whom an emergency out-of-home placement has been made or for whom a non-emergency out-of-home placement is being considered. The meeting shall be conducted within ten days of a an emergency out-of-home placement. The meeting shall be conducted before a non-emergency out-of-home placement.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(5)

A procedure for monitoring the progress and tracking the outcomes of each service coordination plan requested in the county including monitoring and tracking children in out-of-home placements to assure continued progress, appropriateness of placement, and continuity of care after discharge from placement with appropriate arrangements for housing, treatment, and education.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(6)

A procedure for protecting the confidentiality of all personal family information disclosed during service coordination meetings or contained in the comprehensive family service coordination plan.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(7)

A procedure for assessing the needs and strengths of any child or family that has been referred to the council for service coordination, including a child whose parent or custodian is voluntarily seeking services, and for ensuring that parents and custodians are afforded the opportunity to participate.



# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(8)

A procedure for development of a family service coordination plan described in division D of this section.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C)(9)

A local dispute resolution process to serve as the process that must be used first to resolve disputes among the agencies represented on the county council concerning the provision of services to children...The local dispute resolution process shall comply with section 121.38 of the Revised Code.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C) (9) continued.....

The local dispute resolution process shall be used to resolve disputes between a child's parents or custodians and the county council regarding service coordination. County council shall inform the parents or custodians of their right to use the dispute resolution process. Parents or custodians shall use existing local agency grievance procedures to address disputes not involving service coordination. The dispute resolution is in addition to and does not replace other rights or procedures that parents or custodians may have under other sections of the Revised Code.

# Service Coordination Mechanism

## ORC 121.37 (C) (9) continued.....

Nothing in division (C)(4) of this section shall be interpreted as overriding or affecting decisions of a juvenile court regarding an out-of-home placement, long-term placement, or emergency out-of-home placement.

# Comprehensive Family Service Coordination Plan ORC 121.37 (D)(1)

Each County shall develop a comprehensive family service coordination plan that:

Designates service responsibilities among the various state and local agencies that provide services to children and their families, including children who are abused, neglected, dependent, unruly, or delinquent children and under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court and children whose parents or custodians are voluntarily seeking services;

# Comprehensive Family Service Coordination Plan ORC 121.37 (D)(2)

Designates an individual, approved by the family, to track the progress of the family service coordination plan, schedule reviews as necessary, and facilitate the family service coordination plan meeting process;

# Comprehensive Family Service Coordination Plan ORC 121.37 (D)(3)

Ensures that assistance and services to be provided as responsive to the strengths and needs of the family, as well as the family's culture, race, and ethnic group, by allowing the family to offer information and suggestions and participate in decisions. Identified assistance and services shall be provided in the least restrictive environment possible;

# Comprehensive Family Service Coordination Plan ORC 121.37 (D)(4)

Includes a process for dealing with a child who is alleged to be an unruly child. The process shall include methods to divert the child from the juvenile court system;



# Comprehensive Family Service Coordination Plan ORC 121.37 (D)(5)

Includes timelines for completion of goals specified in the plan with regular reviews scheduled to monitor progress toward those goals;

# Comprehensive Family Service Coordination Plan ORC 121.37 (D)(6)

Includes a plan for dealing with short-term crisis situations and safety concerns.