

Ohio Family and Children First

History of the Office of Family and Children First (OFCF)

Ohio has a long history of coordinating services and systems to address the needs of youth and families. In the mid-eighties stakeholders around the state identified a significant problem in meeting the needs of youth and their families, who were involved in multiple systems.

In 1987, Governor Celeste brought child serving agencies together to form the Interdepartmental Cluster Services For Youth (ICSFY), often referred to as “Cluster”. Counties were mandated to form ICSFYs. Much of the focus was on youth with very intense needs requiring out-of-home placements.

The teams typically consisted of child service personnel from the different agencies and systems involved with the child. The team would formulate a treatment plan for the child and determine how the services would be funded. State Intersystem Cluster Funding was created to assist counties in providing services/placements for youth for which funding was not otherwise available.

In the early 1990s Governor Voinovich created county FCFCs to expand the work of Cluster and become the catalyst for bringing communities together to coordinate and streamline services for families and youth. County FCFCs were established in ORC 121.37 in 1993, along with a blueprint of how the coordination of services and systems should operate at the state and local level, including the service coordination mechanism.

In 2006, during the Taft Administration, ORC 121.37 was changed to include high risk youth participating in the Service Coordination Mechanism (SCM) and to divert them from the juvenile court system. Other changes focused on family voice and choice and family engagement and empowerment.

In 2010, during the Strickland Administration, county FCFCs were required to update their county Service Coordination Mechanism to reflect current practice and ensure compliance with the ORC. The state’s Family Centered Services and Supports (FCSS) Initiative was connected to county FCFC service coordination and offered funding for non-clinical services and supports, including service coordination, for families and their youth.

Under the Kasich Administration in 2018, county FCFCs were required to revise their local Service Coordination Mechanism and to further clarify their System of Care. Specific clarifications included: target populations, levels of intervention, data collection and monitoring and how data is used to inform decision making at the macro level. For the first time ever, distinctions between county FCFC Service Coordination and High Fidelity Wraparound were made in Ohio’s SCM Guidance Document.

In 2019, Governor DeWine created the Office of Children’s Initiatives to coordinate and align the state’s children’s programming, advance policy, and innovation in programming

for youth, and to provide support services for all youth and their families. This initiative was connected to county FCFC service coordination and offered funding for non-clinical services and supports, including service coordination, for families and their youth.

Current Structure and Purpose of OFCF

OFCF's vision is for *every child and family to thrive and succeed within healthy communities.*

OFCF is a partnership of state and local governments, communities, and families.

OFCF's mission is to *enhance the well-being of Ohio's children and families by building community capacity, coordinating systems and services, and engaging families.*

OFCF Cabinet Council and county FCFCs have operationalized the statute in a variety of ways. The OFCF Cabinet Council is composed of the following Ohio Departments: Aging, Children and Youth, Developmental Disabilities, Education, Health, Job and Family Services, Medicaid, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, Rehabilitation and Correction, Youth Services, and the Office of Budget and Management.

ORC 121.37 outlines the core functions for OFCF Cabinet Council and county FCFCs, which includes four mandated core functions: coordinating systems and services, building community capacity, shared accountability, and engaging and empowering families.

Governor's Children's Initiative

Governor DeWine's Children's Initiative included passage of HB 161 in 2019 to accomplish several policy goals and to provide funding to support these policies, particularly around Multi-System Youth (MSY). The main goals are to prevent custody relinquishment for families solely for the purpose of obtaining treatment, ensure county systems have the resources and planning processes in place to prevent youth from entering residential care, when possible, and ensure these youth transition successfully from a residential treatment setting to a community treatment setting.¹

Ohio's Family and Children First Cabinet Council was tasked with developing a [MSY Action Plan](#). They established a committee and six working groups to conduct research and develop recommendations for a final report, which was completed in January 2020.

The Center for Innovative Practices (CIP) has assisted in implementing several recommendations that resulted from this report, particularly in the areas of HFWA and modernization of county FCFCs.

¹ Rule 5101:9-6-24 | Multi-system youth (MSY) funding. Ohio Administrative Code/5101:9/Chapter 5101:9-6 | Allocations, <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-5101:9-6-24>

Modernization of county FCFCs includes helping counties adopt and become proficient in the use of HFWA as their planning process for MSY youth and providing training and technical assistance to counties to build capacity and develop the infrastructure needed to support new initiatives.

This Service Coordinator Handbook is the result of efforts to modernize county FCFCs.

Service Coordination Function

Service Coordination Mechanism

In Ohio, county FCFCs use service coordination to help plan and organize services for families and youth. Each county is required to develop a Service Coordination Mechanism (SCM). The SCM must be consistent with requirements of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 121.37 (C)(D) and 121.38.

The county SCM is the guiding document for coordination of services when a youth with complex, multi-system needs is referred to the county FCFC. All persons or entities providing service coordination on behalf of the county FCFC, whether county FCFC employees or contracted providers, must follow the processes, policies, practices, and procedures as they are outlined and described in the county FCFC Service Coordination Mechanism.

All counties provide Service Coordination and many counties also provide High-Fidelity Wraparound (HFWA). Service coordination and HFWA are collaborative, coordinated, cross-system team-based planning processes implemented to address the needs of youth and families where those needs are multiple and complex.

How To Develop a County SCM

The [Service Coordination Mechanism Guidance \(SCM\)](#) offers suggestions and provides tools for developing the county Service Coordination Mechanism. The mechanism must be developed and approved by the county Council and OFCF. Additional community partners such as local mental health agencies, schools, Children's Hospitals, Metropolitan Housing, and others have ongoing involvement in the development of the SCM. This is a living document and it is best practice to review the SCM annually.

Service Coordination Planning Process

The purpose of Service Coordination and High-Fidelity Wraparound through the county FCFC is to provide a venue for families and youth with multiple, complex needs to develop a creative, strengths-based family centered plan that meets the needs of the family and youth. These processes are for youth needing more extensive collaboration with multi-system providers.

The county FCFC Service Coordination process is an integral component of a local system of care, which is family driven, youth guided, culturally competent and community based. It is a process of service planning and system collaboration that coordinates individualized services and supports to families who have needs across multiple systems.

The System of Care: Family-Centered Services and Supports Funding

[Family-Centered Services and Support \(FCSS\) funds](#) may be used by youth with multi-system needs, who are receiving service coordination through the county FCFC. FCSS funds are designed to meet the unique non-clinical needs of youth and families identified on the individualized family service coordination plan. For more information about the FCSS funds, see [System of Care: FCSS Guidance](#)

County FCFC Service Coordination Flow Chart



- Referral for Service Coordination received by county Family and Children First Council (FCFC).
- FCFC Director or Service Coordinator reviews referral for eligibility as stated in county Service Coordination Mechanism.
- Family is determined eligible and a coordinator/facilitator is assigned or the family is placed on a wait list (if applicable) and is connected to alternative services and supports **OR** ineligible and is connected to alternative services and supports.

- Coordinator meets with family to complete the following:
 - Gather family's story
 - Assess for needs and strengths
 - New or updated initial assessments (such as the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment)
 - Essential forms (e.g. Release of Information, Dispute Resolution Process)
- Coordinator reviews gathered information to determine, either individually or in review with the county FCFC or appropriate subcommittee, the most appropriate planning and support model to implement with the family (i.e. Service Coordination process or High Fidelity Wraparound)

- Coordinator begins implementing either the Service Coordination process (as delineated in the county Service Coordination Mechanism) or the High Fidelity Wraparound model as delineated by the National Wraparound Initiative (NWI).
- At minimum Coordinator will:
 - Work with the family to develop a team
 - Facilitate team meetings to create an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Plan of Care designed to meet the family's determined goals and needs.
 - Monitor the impact and effectiveness of the IFSP Plan of Care and update the plan as needed, but at least every 90 days
 - Update/complete on-going assessments as needed, but at least every 90 days.
 - Upon completion of model, Coordinator transitions family to next appropriate level of care and support.
 - Complete Exit Survey