

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Response to the 2023 Ohio Citizen Review Panel
Annual Report and Recommendations**

December 6, 2023

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), Office of Families and Children (OFC), which will transition to the Department of Youth and Children (DCY) in January 2024, has reviewed the 2023 Annual Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Report. ODJFS appreciates the time and commitment panel members invested in reviewing information, conducting analyses, developing recommendations, and compiling the annual report. Below includes the ODJFS response to the panel's recommendations, as well as information on current initiatives and activities related to the work completed over the past year.

For State Fiscal Year 2023, Ohio operated five CRPs located in areas throughout the state:

- The Northwest Ohio CRP in Sandusky County
- The Northeast Ohio CRP in Stark County
- The Central Ohio CRP in Franklin County
- The Southwest Ohio CRP in Hamilton County
- The Southeast Ohio CRP in Athens County

Northwest Panel

The Northwest Ohio CRP decided to focus their work on understanding how Ohio supports the well-being of youth involved with Ohio's child welfare system. The panel took time to arrive at this topic following a conversation about a broader look and definition of child well-being. The Northwest CRP spent the 2022-2023 work year laying the groundwork for a bigger project in the coming year.

Next Steps

The panel participated in the annual strategic planning with all Ohio CRPs on May 18, 2023. Panel members used this time to solidify their plan for 2023-2024 data collection procedures. The next steps for the Northwest Ohio CRP include:

1. The panel will participate in strategic planning to define their topic, question, and data collection procedures.
2. The panel will seek feedback from the Ohio State University (OSU) team, ODJFS, and other relevant stakeholders regarding their plan for primary data collection from youth and families.
3. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the panel will move forward with data collection procedures.
4. With assistance from the OSU team, the panel will analyze the data and decide on the best way to present the results.

Although the Northwest panel does not have recommendations for the 2022-2023 year, they will make recommendations for improvement in the 2023-2024 work year.

Northeast Panel

The Northeast Ohio CRP focused their evaluation on Ohio's support to families and monitoring of children after permanency is achieved. For the purpose of this report, the panel defined permanency as the closing of an ongoing case and reunification with biological family or kinship family. The panel was particularly interested in understanding which services families are referred to or linked at the time of reunification and case closure to encourage family stabilization. Additionally, they were curious about the extent to which

these services prevent reentry into the child welfare system following a successful reunification. The panel gathered information from several sources including academic literature, stakeholder interviews, and Ohio Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) data. As a result of the evaluation, the panel developed recommendations for improvement in Ohio's support of families once permanency is achieved.

Recommendation #1

ODJFS should conduct an analysis of the functionality of the case services tab in Ohio SACWIS to enhance the usability of case services data.

The case services data from Ohio SACWIS is an incomplete source of evaluative information. It seems this data could be useful for many different child welfare evaluations including for this panel in the case of understanding families who reenter the child welfare system in Ohio. The panel recommends ODJFS convene a workgroup or an evaluation project on how the case services might be more functional and useful for caseworkers as well as those with evaluation duties.

ODJFS Response

ODJFS is currently exploring ways of modernizing Ohio SACWIS. With the modernization of Ohio SACWIS, there will be opportunities to improve functionality in areas such as case services. ODJFS will work with the Automated Systems Review Committee (a committee of public and private agency members who provide feedback on ODJFS child welfare systems) to identify how case services might be more functional and useful to caseworkers and administrators/evaluators.

Recommendation #2

ODJFS should encourage the use of evidence-based programs that bring foster families together with biological families during the process of reunification and directly following reunification.

Research suggests building relationships between foster families and biological families can strengthen reunification efforts. While some Public Children Service Agencies (PCSAs) are engaged in programming that bridges these relationships, ODJFS should place an effort on educating and encouraging these kinds of practices for all PCSAs across the state. ODJFS should assist with implementation as needed or requested.

ODJFS Response

The OFC began working on Ohio's approach to strengthening relationships between primary and resource families in 2021. A workgroup was created including the following:

- Public Children Services Agency staff
- Foster and Adoptive Families
- Office of Families and Children staff
- Ohio Youth Advisory Board

The workgroup met from December 2021 to July 2022 and collaborated to develop a [tool box](#) to help facilitate engagement between resource and primary families. The toolbox contains many suggestions, tips and tricks, and resource-based information supporting primary and resource families in the process of reunification and directly following reunification.

- [JFS08106](#) Resource Parent Questionnaire
- [JFS08107](#) Quick Tips to Support Resource Families and Primary Families in Strengthening Relationships
- [JFS08108](#) Care Guide Resource Tool
- [JFS08110](#) Care Guide (Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts Guide)
- [JFS08074](#) Poster

The tool box is available through the “It Takes Heart Website” and [the Ohio Foster, Adoption and Kinship Care](#) Web page. The web page provides additional information and resources for helping resource families interact with and support primary families.

A kickoff meeting to showcase these resources was held in July 2022. The kickoff began with a recorded presentation introducing the initiative for all audiences. This was followed up by four regional question and answer sessions for public and private agencies. Additional presentations or conversations were conducted through the Ohio Childrens Alliances (OCA) Conference, Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) Conference, Caseworker Leadership Conference, Jackson County Symposium, OCA Foster Care Adoption Committee, Tiered Foster Care workgroup, and Bi-Monthly calls with PCSA directors.

Recommendation #3

ODJFS should conduct an analysis on what programs already exist in Ohio to support family stabilization following reunification. ODJFS should then use this information to develop best practices and share resources across PCSAs.

Anecdotally, the panel is aware of several local efforts to bring together community partners to support families once reunification is achieved. It is important to document these efforts and understand the logistics of this kind of supportive service. ODJFS should be involved in finding and sharing this information and providing guidance as needed.

ODJFS Response

The Ohio Department of Medicaid’s OhioRise program was designed to improve care and outcomes for families, caregivers, and youth with complex behavioral and multi-system needs by:

- Creating a seamless and integrated delivery of supportive services with system partners.
- Providing a “locus of accountability” by offering community-driven comprehensive care coordination.
- Expanding access to critical services while assisting families, state and local child serving agencies, and other health providers to locate and make use of OhioRise after care services.

An Ohio Children’s Initiative Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment is required to determine eligibility for the program. Once the youth is determined eligible, they will be assigned to a Care Coordinator who will work with the youth and their family to determine what services and supports are needed. OhioRISE is the Medicaid managed care organization providing behavioral health services to its members, so there is no time limit to receive OhioRISE services if the youth maintain eligibility.

OhioRISE provides Intensive Home-Based Treatment services, Post-Stabilization Services, Telehealth, Emergency services, and Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS). Where available within the state, MRSS provides rapid in-person care when a child or youth is experiencing significant behavioral or emotional distress and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is delivered in the home, school, or at another location in the community. This service is available to any child or youth covered by Ohio Medicaid. Lastly, OhioRISE Care Management Entities (CMEs) are contractually required to work with PCSAs, sharing their knowledge of the program and available services. CMEs and their care coordinators can work with youth and families involved with PCSAs to provide services and collaborate on care planning.

For youth reunifying after Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) placement, the QRTP is required to provide six months of aftercare support. This can include linking the youth to services in the

community they are returning to, consultation with a new service provider, and ongoing support to the youth and family as needed. QRTPs are not required to provide aftercare services.

Following reunification, families with an open case may be considered candidates for Family First Prevention Services (FFPS). FFPS must be approved on the state's Title IV-E Prevention Services Plan and currently includes Multisystemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma), Healthy Families America, and Parents as Teachers. Ohio has submitted a plan amendment to include Motivational Interviewing and Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) Online. Triple P is an effective evidence-based parenting program aimed at providing parents with simple and practical strategies to help them build strong healthy relationships, confidently manage their children's behavior, and prevent problems from developing. We continue to work to build capacity for these services and explore opportunities to expand our service array.

Central Panel

The Central Ohio CRP focused their evaluation on meeting the needs of youth who are affected by multiple systems through Ohio's Multi-System Youth (MSY) program. Multi-system youth are defined as receiving services from multiple youth serving systems including child welfare, mental health, developmental disability services, and/or juvenile court. To meet high acuity, often high-cost behavioral health needs for these youth through services like residential treatment, families often utilize child welfare services to pay for these services through Title IV-E federal funding. Some families feel they must give up custody of their child to a PCSA to access this treatment through Title IV-E funding or juvenile courts. In 2019, Ohio's Governor, Mike DeWine, provided \$68 million in new funding to address the needs of Ohio's multi-system youth with the creation of the MSY program. The panel was particularly interested in the eligibility criteria for MSY funding, the referral sources, the most often requested services, and the outcomes of the program. The Central Ohio CRP was most interested in understanding the ways in which the MSY program is benefiting children and families involved with Ohio's child welfare system, particularly whether the MSY program contributed to the prevention of youth's placement with a PCSA. The Central Ohio CRP utilized several methods of data collection to learn about and better understand this topic. The panel reviewed all publicly available data and reports regarding the MSY program, interviewed several PCSAs about their experiences with the program, and met with the Ohio Family and Children First Councils (FCFC) Director and others in the state level FCFC office, including the Ohio FCFC Association. As a result of the evaluation, the panel developed recommendations to consider as the program moves forward.

Recommendation #1:

ODJFS should provide Ohio FCFC the resources to analyze current MSY data from referral forms.

Currently MSY applications are being submitted on hard copy forms and collected by Ohio FCFC. Resources at Ohio FCFC limit their ability to conduct an evaluation of the information. ODJFS should provide Ohio FCFC with resources, such as training to enhance data visualization tools in Excel, or staff to conduct data entry to aid in the evaluation of this data.

ODJFS Response

The Multi-System Youth (MSY) Technical Assistance and Funding program is administered by the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM). Multiple state agencies are collaborative partners to the MSY program including the Ohio Departments of Education, Youth Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Developmental Disabilities, and ODJFS including Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) in the evaluation of applications. ODM retains the administrative authority over the program.

Applications are submitted to ODM by local Family and Children First Councils (FCFCs) and, beginning in July 2022, the eighteen OhioRISE CMEs. Local FCFCs submit applications for youth who are not

enrolled in Medicaid, those enrolled in Medicaid who are not deemed eligible for OhioRISE, and families who have chosen to maintain their service coordination through the local FCFC while still receiving the menu of OhioRISE services for their child/ren. Submitted applications and associated documentation are maintained in a shared site that partner agency staff access. Financial and summary data tracking for all MSY applications received is maintained by ODM. ODM shares MSY activity statistics which includes information about the number of applications, the number of youths served, and the total authorized funding amounts with state agency partners.

ODM is currently exploring needs of the MSY program to support significant program growth and enhance program service provision. ODM coordinated a two-day event in October 2023 to elicit feedback from state partners who support MSY application reviews and technical assistance. The two-day Lean Ohio event included identification of system and process challenges as well as opportunities to enhance streamlining and transparency in processes, which included the need to more easily be able to assess data for the MSY program. ODJFS and OFCFs communicated this recommendation to ODM for consideration.

ODJFS and OFCF will continue to collaborate with ODM on ways to streamline the MSY program and advocate for the needs of children and families.

Recommendation #2

ODJFS in collaboration with OFCF and OhioRISE to create and implement an online database format for MSY applications.

As MSY funding continues to be requested, Ohio FCFC and ODJFS should consider creating an online referral form for applicants. This will ease the evaluation process.

ODJFS Response

As stated above, ODM and the state partners who support ODM in implementing the MSY program acknowledge a need for a more streamlined and transparent application process that can be well-communicated to all entities who submit applications for MSY funding and technical assistance. Preliminary process planning meetings occurred in early October 2023. ODJFS, OFCF, ODM and other MSY state partners participated in these discussions and process planning, which included a recommendation to automate the MSY application process. ODJFS and OFCF communicated this recommendation for consideration. ODJFS and OFCF will continue to collaborate with ODM on ways to streamline the MSY program and advocate for the needs of children and families.

Recommendation #3

During evaluation of the MSY funding program, ODJFS should include an evaluation of families who are not funded.

It is equally important to understand which families are declined from accessing MSY funding and the reasons for the rejection. This kind of analysis allows state level professionals to continue assessing service needs in the community and tailor programs to best meet family's needs.

ODJFS Response

ODM has acknowledged a need for a more streamlined and transparent process which can be well-communicated to all entities who submit applications for MSY funding and technical assistance. Preliminary process planning meetings occurred in early October 2023. ODJFS along with OFCF, participated, as well as the other state MSY state partners, in these discussions and process planning. ODJFS and OFCF will communicate this recommendation for consideration as we explore the capacity to evaluate the MSY program and outcomes of the youth in which funding is requested.

Recommendation #4

During evaluation of the MSY funding program, ODJFS should include a specific analysis on populations of children and families served by this program to identify disproportionality and create initiatives to address any inequities.

Ohio's Children Services Transformation Report highlights the importance of addressing racial inequalities in child welfare services along with all services for children and families in Ohio. Following this priority, evaluation of MSY should include a look at racial disparities in funded applications, services offered, and outcomes of the services provided.

ODJFS Response

As stated previously, the MSY program is administered by ODM with support from state partners. ODJFS and OFCF understand the importance of addressing racial inequalities in child welfare services along with all services for children and families in Ohio. ODM is exploring the MSY program needs to enhance and streamline the process for MSY applications, training needs, program requirements and automation, including increasing the capacity to explore data and demographics, including racial inequalities. ODJFS and OFCF support this recommendation and have advocated for the need.

Recommendation #5

As MSY funding continues to change and adapt to new initiatives and family needs, ODJFS must ensure all stakeholders work together to ensure practice is based on best processes with clearly defined roles so gaps are clearly resolved.

The implementation of OhioRISE drastically changed the MSY program during the panel's work year. Plenty of confusion surrounds this transition, and interviews with PCSAs and FCFCs suggest the roles and expectations of all partners are unclear. As the state continues in the implementation of OhioRISE and MSY changes to adapt to needs unmet by families not eligible for OhioRISE, ODJFS must ensure families and other stakeholders have representation in the decisions amid these changes.

ODJFS Response:

MSY funding is received by both ODJFS and ODM. Each biennium ODJFS identifies how MSY funding received is distributed in a procedure letter. ODJFS will consider broader stakeholder feedback in the determination of MSY funding distribution for future biennium planning. The 2024-2025 state fiscal year procedure letter can be found [here](#). The funds received by ODJFS supported ODM in the administration of their MSY funding and technical Assistance program, OFCF, and funding to PCSAs. The MSY funding ODFS provides to PCSAs is for the purpose of a child obtaining needed treatment, to support the care of children in PCSA custody in congregate care, and to provide services and supports to ensure a child's successful transition from a congregate care facility following discharge. ODM receives MSY funding to implement their MSY Funding and Technical Assistance Program to prevent custody relinquishment for the purpose of obtaining emotional and behavioral care for the child.

As stated in previous response, ODM and the supporting state partners acknowledge a need for a more streamlined and transparent process well-communicated to all entities who submit applications for MSY funding and technical assistance. Preliminary process planning meetings occurred in early October 2023. ODJFS, along with OFCF, is participatory as well as the other state MSY state partners in these discussions and process planning. ODJFS and OFCF will communicate this recommendation for consideration.

ODM, Aetna, ODJFS and OFCFs continue to support counties in which OhioRISE is the primary entity to support families in submitting an MSY application to prevent custody relinquishment. One of these

supports included ODJFS and OFCFs developing and implementing an enhanced process to increase the teams' capacity to review the increase in MSY applications received with the implementation of OhioRISE. All state partners increased capacity to review the increasing number of MSY applications to mitigate the impact to families and children. ODM has increased training and support to OhioRISE care management entities in this transition. Additionally, youth who are not eligible for OhioRISE still have available supports, through local Family and Children First Councils (FCFC), to access these funds to prevent custody relinquishment. Accessibility of MSY funding is through OhioRISE and FCFCs to ensure all families are represented.

Southwest Panel

For the past two years, the Southwest Ohio CRP has focused on Ohio's ability to provide uninterrupted, stable, and high-quality education for children placed in child residential care (CRC) facilities. This topic was inspired by panel members' work with children in their communities. The panel chose this topic as they identified the lack of adequate education services for children in out-of-home care as an important concern. The panel began by conducting a literature review detailing the problem and understanding the educational needs of youth placed in out-of-home care. While this information was helpful in learning more about the needs of these youth, there was little to no information about the details of the educational services provided to youth in CRC facilities. Panel members decided to collect their own information to carry out the goals as outlined in their strategic plan. This report details the results of a survey distributed to all Ohio CRCs with the following objectives:

1. Understand how youth placed in a CRC in Ohio attend school (with a local school district, a charter program, an online program, etc.).
2. Catalog the characteristics of school programs in Ohio CRCs.
3. Learn how youth transition between CRC education programs from their home education programs.

Recommendation #1

ODJFS should create a guidance document to prepare youth and educational professionals for a transition from one placement to another.

Due to the high educational needs of youth in custody of PCSAs, it is imperative special attention be given to how these transitions occur. ODJFS should develop a guide or checklist type guidance to PCSAs to ensure youth's educational needs are met during these transition periods.

ODJFS Response

ODJFS and The Education and Workforce (DEW) are federally required to have points of contact for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) representing education and child welfare. When ESSA was federally mandated in 2015, DEW and ODJFS ESSA created joint guidance for Ohio PCSAs and local school districts to implement ESSA. These documents were shared in December 2016 when Ohio officially implemented ESSA. At that time, DEW and ODJFS provided regional guidance sessions to support this implementation.

Since then, DEW and ODJFS continue to partner and collaborate to support ESSA for youth in foster care. The [ODE-and-ODJFS-Joint-Foster-Care-Guidance.pdf \(ohio.gov\)](#) continues to be available on both DEW's and ODJFS's website. In addition, DEW and ODJFS have created [Ohio's Foster Care Checklist | Ohio Department of Education](#), which is a reference tool that walks through the steps that districts and custodial agencies must complete each time a youth is placed into foster care, or a placement change occurs. A full list of resources for federally required Foster Care Liaisons, per district, that is fully available to

custodial agencies can be found on DEW's website [Liaisons Supporting Students Living in Foster Care | Ohio Department of Education](#).

DEW and ODJFS acknowledge a continued need for information sharing. To this end, both departments are consistently offering training and learning opportunities to the public. During the Fall 2023, DEW and ODJFS presented at the PCSAO conference along with a panel of agencies, schools, and systems providing best practice in ESSA for youth in foster care. At the same time, DEW and ODJFS were exhibitors at the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) conference sharing information about youth in foster care. CASA is a national association in the United States that supports and promotes court-appointed advocates for abused or neglected children. CASA are volunteers from the community who complete training provided by the state or local CASA office. DEW is offering education opportunities on the basis of ESSA available to child welfare workers and local school districts.

Recommendation #2

ODJFS should engage with ODE partners at the state level to engage in advocacy for additional funding and resources to be directed toward meeting the needs of youth in CRCs or those who have moved from their home district.

The survey results overwhelmingly suggest the need for additional resources and attention paid to the unique needs of educating youth placed in CRCs. About 71% of youth placed in reporting CRCs in Ohio were in the custody of a PCSA. ODJFS holds responsibility for meeting the education needs of youth in out-of-home care, and it seems the partnership between ODJFS and ODE is essential to meet these educational needs.

ODJFS Response

As noted previously, DEW and ODJFS are strong collaborators for youth in foster care under the federal legislation of ESSA. DEW has dedicated resources to support youth in foster care to include resources and funding. DEW has identified that schools need support identifying, addressing, and providing for mental health wellness. To this end, they have created the [Supporting School Wellness Toolkit | Ohio Department of Education](#). The tool has resources to address needs of students for teachers, school administrators, district administrators, communities, and to the students and families.

For students placed in CRCs, education is primarily funded based on the facility's agreement with an education provider. There are few options for how a CRC may provide education. Some CRCs may have access to federal funding through Title I Part (A) Improving Basic Programs and Part (D) Neglected and Delinquent. Part A provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Part D provides formula grants to State educational agencies for supplementary education services to help provide education continuity for children and youth in state-run institutions for juveniles and in adult correctional institutions so these youth can make successful transitions to school or employment once they are released. This funding is to be used to supplement the education received by students in the center.

DEW and ODJFS recognize that outward sharing of information on how to access these resources is critical to their success in meeting student's needs and plan to address the educational resource needs of Ohio CRCs. DEW and ODJFS will continue to collaborate to provide educational opportunities including trainings and presentations, technical assistance when requested, resources, and updated guidance documents.

Recommendation #3

ODJFS should direct funding to CRCs to provide tutoring services for those youth in PCSA custody to meet their educational needs.

CRC staff overwhelming reported a lack of resources to meet the needs of youth in PCSA custody placed in their facility. PCSAs often provide funding for tutoring services for children in out-of-home care, and the panel recommends ODJFS to work with PCSAs to set aside money specific to tutoring service for those in CRCs. ODJFS should provide guidance to PCSAs to overcome any potential barriers to providing these services.

ODJFS Response

DEW and ODJFS recognize the need for resource and funding support information to be provided to CRCs in Ohio. Based on how the education is provided in a CRC, these additional tutoring services may already be financially provided by the local school district of the CRC, through an educational service center, or even through sponsors. Virtual platforms also exist to support youth in non-traditional education centers.

ODJFS will explore with the DEW to understand how Ohio CRCs have structured their individual education programs and provide guidance and resources, as needed, on how the CRCs can access available funding resources.

Recommendation #4

ODJFS should provide opportunities for trauma-informed training for educators in CRCs who serve youth in custody of a PCSA.

Survey results suggest CRCs need educators who are informed and prepared to work with youth who have experienced trauma and been involved with the child welfare system. ODJFS has access to these trainers and training curriculum, and the panel recommends they open access to these trainings to those providing educational services in CRCs in Ohio.

ODJFS Response:

The [Trauma Training Directory](#) was created as one resource for agencies to use to meet the training requirements for trauma treatment models and trauma-informed approaches. Each residential facility is to ensure completion of initial and annual training for all employees, volunteers, and independent contractors within the facility in trauma-informed care, or the individual must have a current "Level 2 Trauma Informed" or "Level 3 Trauma Competent" certificate.

Information on the Trauma-Informed Care Certificate can be found at: [Trauma Informed Care - OCCRRRA](#). The Trauma Training Directory is a listing of eLearning trainings available on a variety of platforms. Each of the trainings in the directory has a course description, learning objectives and competencies addressed in the training.

[FCL145TraumaInformedDirectory.pdf \(ohio.gov\)](#) was issued on October 19, 2023, and describes the updated format of the directory and how the trainings are organized.

Southeast Panel

The Southeast Ohio CRP conducted a project in the 2022-2023 work year focused on the ways in which Ohio can improve its capacity for providing family foster homes for adolescents. While this topic provides several avenues for consideration, the panel focused on how language and the way agencies document and communicate about youth needs plays a role in placement success. In the prior year, panel members embarked on a similar project focused on learning about the placement process and hearing about the issues

as reported by youth who have experienced the child welfare system. Building on this previous project, the panel moved to learning about the placement process and the barriers to successful placement from the perspective of Ohio PCSAs and private placement networks.

Recommendation #1

ODJFS should create and implement a consistent referral form for placement requests to be used statewide.

Currently all PCSAs utilize their own methods for requesting placement of a child from network providers including different forms, inclusion of the Individual Child Care Assessment (ICCA), and different Level of Care (LOC) tools. In consultation with PCSAs, youth, and private networks, ODJFS should create a referral form that meets the needs of all parties to maximize the chances of successful family foster home placements.

ODJFS Response

In February 2023, the Automated Systems Review Committee (ASRC) participated in a workshop to discuss the current placement issues, identify root causes, and brainstorm possible solutions. One of the issues identified was not having a consistent referral form for placement requests. The result of the workshop identified a variety of root causes along with a dedicated session to brainstorm concepts they felt could best aid and address the placement challenges. As a result of the workshop, the Bulletin Board solution was identified and prioritized within the ASRC as possessing the greatest potential for impact across Ohio's children services community.

The committee identified the idea of a "Bulletin Board" to streamline communication and opportunities to better match youth in need with available placements through further incorporating the recommending agencies/providers into finding beds for children and youth.

This concept is rooted in functionality and the digital experience that citizens experience every day when using social media across a variety of applications. Social media has redefined how we engage with each other, and the Bulletin Board embraces the style and functionality that social media has made commonplace and leverages its efficiencies to help address Ohio's placement challenges.

The key benefits of the Bulletin Board will include:

- Promoting quick communication and coordination of needs.
- Enabling rich reporting capabilities.
- Enabling a centralized solution.

The Bulletin Board will be designed to allow for efficient posting of child placement needs to a controlled and secure forum, or page, that providers would be able to easily see, view, filter and then comment on, depending on their ability to support the placement of that child. When a Title IV-E agency publishes an ICCA information is pulled and displayed on the Bulletin Board for all recommending agencies to see. This information will include demographic, educational, and medical information, and the child's level of need.

Design of this concept will begin in 2024 with input from the ASRC members during listening sessions scheduled for public and private agencies. During the design of the Bulletin Board concept and Tiered Foster Care, changes on the ICCA will be made.

Work continues with the ICCA in collaboration with systems and the Tiered Foster Care Initiative. Draft rules for utilizing the Ohio Children's Initiative Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment for children entering foster care have been written with specific areas of the CANS pulling into the ICCA. ODJFS has committed to reviewing other tools used by agencies to assess the level of need of

youth entering placement. The overall goal is that one tool will be used by all agencies to assess youth's level of need.

Recommendation #2

ODJFS should create and implement a consistent, evidence-based, level of care tool to be used at the time a placement is needed.

Like the previous recommendation, all PCSAs utilize their own LOC tool. As the state moves towards a tiered foster care system, it is imperative that the standards for determining level of care are consistent across the state.

ODJFS Response

The Ohio Children's Initiative CANS is the assessment tool currently identified as Ohio's standardized level of care tool for OhioRISE and Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) placements. The Ohio CANS is being tested as a possible statewide tool to provide consistency and support of the continuum of foster care in alignment with the assessments that are being completed for QRTP and for OhioRISE. This tool is currently used by a growing number of states who are implementing similar initiatives across the nation. It is used to inform and support decision-making for program eligibility, care planning, level of care, and the level of need (LON) for the foster care population. To support the results of the Ohio CANS assessment a decision support model specific to foster care in Ohio has been developed. Four distinct child/youth LON have been identified and are also being tested. Family Foster Home LON and three-tiered Treatment LON.

1. **Tier 1 LON:** Children/youth exhibit moderate behavioral and psychological issues resulting from abuse, neglect, sexual victimization, multiple separations, and environmental / genetic factors.
2. **Tier 2 LON:** Children/youth exhibit extensive and multiple moderate behavioral and psychological issues resulting from abuse, neglect, sexual victimization, multiple separations, and environmental / genetic factors.
3. **Tier 3 LON:** Children/youth exhibit extensive and multiple severe behavioral and psychological issues resulting from abuse, neglect, sexual victimization, multiple separations, and environmental/ genetic factors.

ODJFS collaborated with a group of stakeholders which included members representing public and private agencies, advocacy organizations, caregivers, and former foster youth to develop an initial list of child and youth behaviors and needs for each of the planned LON. Two decision support models have been created specific to foster care, using these levels and are currently being tested: one for children ages 0-5 and one for children ages 6 years and older.

Recommendation #3

ODJFS should advocate for consistent application of the prudent parenting standards (Ohio Revised Code Section (ORC) 5103.162) across all PCSAs.

Inconsistent interruption and practice of the prudent parenting standard causes confusion and conflict between placing PCSAs and private placing networks. Private networks often work with several PCSAs in differing regions across Ohio. Interview results suggest differences in county level practice regarding the prudent parenting standards has caused conflict between caseworkers and seasoned foster parents as well as confusion between placing networks and PCSAs. This recommendation is specific to one practice identified by networks as being problematic in the placement process, but there may be other practices across PCSAs that are inconsistent and causing confusion among partners.

ODJFS Response

ODJFS continues to work to improve consistency across the state regarding normalcy and the prudent parenting standard. In 2021, the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and the Resource Family Bill of Rights were established. The Foster Youth Bill of Rights, as established in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rule 5101:2-5-35, provides youth in foster care in any setting numerous rights related to participating in age and/or developmentally appropriate activities. These include the right to their own money, the right to receive timely support from adults in their lives, the right to participate in educational and school related activities without any barriers to access, the right to life skills preparation and the right to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities. The Resource Family Bill of Rights, as established in OAC rule 5101:2-42-20, provides all resource caregivers defined as foster and kinship families the right to receive training on the reasonable and prudent parent standard (RPPS) and once trained, to act as the reasonable and prudent parent (RPP) in making decisions for children placed in their care to participate in normal childhood activities that still maintain their health and safety.

The Ohio Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office, [Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office | Youth and Family Ombudsmen \(ohio.gov\)](#) was established in May 2022. If a youth or resource caregiver believes one or more of their rights has been violated, the youth or resource caregiver can reach out to either the youth ombudsman or the family ombudsman to assist in resolving the potential right's violation. On July 4th, 2023, Governor DeWine signed Amended House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly into law. One piece of legislation included in this law ensured all resource parents can act as the RPP. The law change also ensures that all resource caregivers now have qualified immunity when acting as the RPP. The law change resulted in an administrative code change to rule 5101:2-42-18, to clarify that kinship caregivers are to be trained on the RPPS. ODJFS provided access to a two-page online document that can be used to train the caregivers on the standard. The department continues to seek avenues to educate and train agencies and caregivers on this topic as well as the rights of youth in foster care and the families that serve them.

Thank you to each panel lead and members of the committee for your continued efforts to help improve Ohio's children services system.