



**PERRY COUNTY
CHILDREN SERVICES**

Protecting Children. Preserving Families. Building Futures.



Perry County Children Services ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE COMMUNITY 2023



A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Throughout my five years as executive director of Perry County Children Services, I have repeatedly had the honor of witnessing our team rise to meet the prospect of change and growth with resilience, practicality, and a strong and abiding sense of purpose. The changes we've undergone in recent years, combined with our sense of purpose, led us to revisit our mission and values statement to ensure it accurately captures who our organization is today and what we intend to accomplish through our work. This turned out to be a great team-building exercise that resulted in the adoption of our new mission, which states that each day we are: ***Inspiring hope and healing for children and families by ensuring safety, providing support, and achieving permanency.***

Having aligned our efforts under this new mission statement, we went on to expand our School Outreach Program to station caseworkers at the elementary schools in all four Perry County school districts. In its first full year of operation, our School Outreach Program has served hundreds of students and families with everything from life skills and social-emotional learning support to crisis intervention and access to basic necessities like food and clothing.

In addition to expanding the new School Outreach Program, our ongoing work to evaluate and investigate reports, complete case assessments, and conduct child and family visits remained a primary focus. In fact, we recently calculated that our staff members drove a combined 72,477 miles visiting families and children in 2023!

While we saw a dip in overall intakes this year, we continued to see a high volume of cases related to drug and substance abuse. Ohio START, which stands for Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma, is a groundbreaking program adopted by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio aimed at providing a way for families dealing with substance use and child welfare issues to gain safety and sobriety while maintaining family unification. Perry County Children Services launched its own Ohio START initiative this year that is already showing great promise in helping parents maintain sober and safe lifestyles that enable them to keep their children at home.

Unfortunately, in many cases, it simply is not possible for a child to remain safely in his or her own home. Cases like these underscore our ongoing need for more caring foster families to provide safe haven and stability when children need it the most.

While we are dedicating resources to increasing the number of qualified foster families, we've continued to make financial decisions and allocations in keeping with our charge to be responsible stewards of public funds. In fact, earlier this year, Perry County Children Services retired a \$1.2 million building renovation bond 10 years ahead of schedule!

As always, our success is a direct reflection of the support we receive from our neighbors and colleagues in the Perry County community. Thank you for prioritizing our children and for working alongside us to ensure they all have the best opportunity to experience the brightest future possible.

Amy L. Frame

Amy L. Frame, Executive Director



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Mission

Inspiring hope and healing for children and families by ensuring safety, providing support, and achieving permanency.

Values:

We Believe:

- Families define “family,” and they are experts on their culture, beliefs, and experiences.
- Families have diverse needs, and by partnering with them, we can work together to address those needs.
- Families develop trust when we are honest and inclusive in the decision-making process.
- Families can recover, heal, and grow.

Perry County Children Services Leadership Team from L to R: Katie Hursey, Lacy Bateson, Misty White, Amy Frame, Michelle Clouse, Wendy Winegardner, Ashley Jones

INTAKE

INTAKE SERVICES ARE TYPICALLY THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT AT THE AGENCY.

The intake team receives and responds to reports of alleged child abuse and neglect. Each call, or report, is individually recorded in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System and reviewed to determine a screening decision. Intake services also include after-hours emergency response. The overall number of reports received was down in comparison to last year – a decrease of 6.25 percent (1020 this year compared to 1088 last year). However, the number of investigations increased this year. Mandated Reporters – individuals in professions charged with the care of children (including school employees, doctors, nurses, social workers and others) – continued to be the most common source of reports.



1,020
intakes received



287
intakes investigated



668
reports received from
mandated reporters



60
children removed from homes
and placed in agency custody



Intake Services team from L to R: Billi Klingler, Catherine Miller, Paige Dennis, Jennifer Nelson, Jalyne Hammond, Lacy Bateson

**"At the end of the day, these are OUR kids. They live in OUR community, they go to OUR schools,
and their success or failure impacts ALL of us."**

Amy L. Frame, PCCS Executive Director



ONGOING

THE ONGOING SERVICES UNIT PROVIDES SUPPORTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT TO STRENGTHEN FAMILY RESOURCES AND KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER. IN CASES WHERE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR HOME, THE ONGOING SERVICES UNIT WORKS TOWARD FAMILY REUNIFICATION.

Ongoing Services works closely with the family, their support team, and service providers to develop a case plan designed to achieve ongoing stability and safety for the child within the family. We have four ongoing caseworkers who are required to have face-to-face contact with everyone on their caseload every month. Caseworkers must attempt to see every client at least three times a month. Of note, in instances where children are placed in locations far from the Perry County Children Services office, visits can take an entire day to complete, with drivetimes sometimes reaching as far as three hours one way. Caseworker visits, which need to be completed within a specified time frame, provide opportunities to gather information for assessments, including drug screening results for parents involved in ongoing cases.



116
children in the
agency's custody
during 2023



76%
of siblings
placed together



87%
placed in Perry
County or adjoining
counties



40 out of 60
children initially
placed with
relatives



82
ongoing cases
during 2023



2,011
caseworker visits
with families and
349 attempts

76 TOTAL CHILDREN EXITED CARE IN 2023

- 8 were adopted
- 24 were reunified with a parent
- 6 were emancipated
- 38 entered legal custody of a relative



OUT OF THE 82 CASES, 40 CASES WERE DRUG-RELATED

- 970 drug screens administered
- 325 of those drug screens were negative for all substances
- 446 drug screens were positive for THC
- 582 were positive for other substances
- 765 assessments completed



Ongoing Services team from L to R: David Adkins, Kari Kern, Katie Hursey, Sarah Kunkler, Lauren Gilberti, Keleigh Smallwood, Kelly Valentine, Amanda Snellings

FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION

IN INSTANCES WHERE IT IS NOT SAFE FOR CHILDREN TO REMAIN IN THEIR OWN HOMES, ALTERNATIVE PLACEMENT ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE MADE.

When there are no available family members with whom to place children, licensed foster parents can help. Licensed foster parents must complete training and multiple assessments before they can be considered for licensing. While children are placed in foster care, the Foster Care and Adoption Unit works to find the best permanent home for them.

In 2023, the Foster Care and Adoption Unit assisted 16 children in finding permanent homes. In half of those instances, the new Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP) proved to be the solution. When KGAP came into effect in 2023, we quickly recognized its benefits and became one of the first counties in Ohio to begin effectively utilizing it. As early adopters, we were called upon to assist other counties in implementing the program.

In addition, we added a Kinship Navigator position in 2023. Among other things, this position assists in facilitating kinship home studies that help many children in agency custody find placement with relatives and non-relatives with whom they have a significant relationship.



8

adoptions finalized
in 2023



**877.75
days**

average length of
time in care prior to
these adoptions



8

children found
permanency
through finalized
KGAP agreements
(7 of these children
were in permanent
custody)



14

agency-owned
foster homes with
an open foster
care license at
various times.



3

new foster homes
licensed (2 of the
3 are child-specific
licenses that will
help 4 children
find permanency
without severing
parental rights)



49

kinship home
studies performed
for placement
requests

"The adoption process has been many things, but challenging, scary, and emotional come to mind first. Through all of this, we have been able to rely on Perry County Children Services for answers to questions, guidance on how to address certain issues, and support in many forms. The foster-to-adopt process can be a long, gut-wrenching part of a child's story, but after 632 days we are nothing but grateful for Perry County Children Services as we begin the next chapter in our daughter's life."

Rachael Gardner, adoptive mother



Foster Care & Adoption team from L to R: Ben Taylor, Samantha Reynolds, Kendall Fetty, Wendy Winegardner, Andy Bennett

SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM

THE SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL PROGRAMMING, FOOD AND CLOTHING ASSISTANCE, CRISIS INTERVENTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE AND SOCIAL SKILLS, AS WELL AS OTHER NEEDED SERVICES. OUTREACH IS NOT ONLY AVAILABLE TO THE STUDENTS, BUT ALSO TO THEIR FAMILIES.

This year, we expanded the School Outreach Program team to include a caseworker in all four elementary schools across the county: New Lexington, Crooksville, Glenford, and Millcreek. Each school outreach caseworker has a room filled with resources, school supplies, clothes, shoes, some hygiene supplies, and one school even has a food pantry. These items are free to any student who needs help throughout the school year.

Due to the increasing need for shoes, the school outreach team held its first spring shoe drive in April 2024, collecting approximately 150 pairs of shoes! In addition, one of our school outreach caseworkers teamed up with a school guidance counselor to pursue the goal of creating a school food pantry. They received a grant through the Athens County Foundation, funded by both the Rocky Community Improvement Fund and the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, to purchase a new refrigerator and 400 shelf-stable food items. Additional money from the grant is available to purchase more food for the 2024-2025 school year! The School Outreach Program team also participated in and provided resources for the Perry County Juvenile Court Diversion Program, U-Turn.



67

classroom support services



140

referrals to community agencies for mental health counselling, bed bug resources, housing assistance, etc.



207

group sessions with students



234

family supports for prevention services



316

individual supports for students in crisis during their school day



1344

items of clothing/ shoes and **1425** school supplies

"Having a School Outreach Caseworker has been such a gift to the staff at New Lexington Elementary. Not only has she been such a gift to the staff but also for our wonderful students who attend here. She has changed so much for us in such a POSITIVE way!"

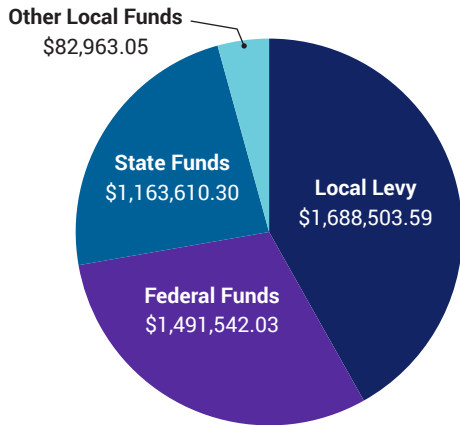
Nurse Ginny



School Outreach team from L to R: Rikki Wilson, Allison Shiplett, Misty White, Stephanie Jackson, Jaime Taylor

REVENUE & EXPENSES

2023 REVENUE - \$4,426,618.97

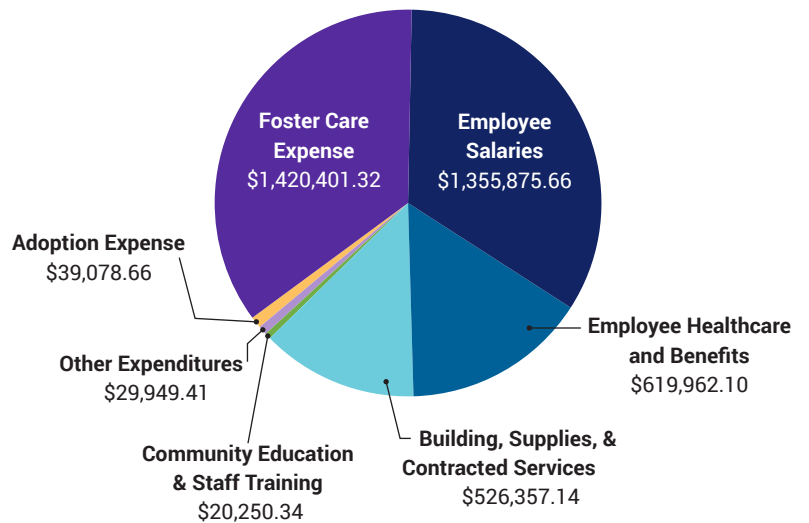


Best Practice Incentive: \$65,361.00
Foster Care Maintenance: \$665,636.28

2023 EXPENDITURES - \$4,011,874.63

Placement Cost: \$1,275,404.98

Local Kinship Cost (KSP) April- December: \$26,710.00



"I can't wait to see what great humans and adults these kids are going to become. We're blessed to have them. Everybody's like, 'Oh, the kids are so blessed to have you.' It really is the other way around."

Dee Featheroff, Perry County foster parent who, along with her husband David, has adopted six children



REVENUE BREAKDOWNS

