



Public Children Services
Association of Ohio
www.pcsao.org

NEWS RELEASE

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New Report Reveals Key Issues Affecting Child Safety

Factbook unveils trends impacting Ohio's child welfare system

Columbus, OH: A report released today depicts Ohio's child protection system as faced with critical needs and rising costs. Child and family advocates are calling for increased funding and reforms to the system.

"It is time for the State of Ohio to make children a priority and increase its contribution to the costs of keeping kids safe and families stable," says Crystal Ward Allen, executive director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, which released the biennial Factbook. "Data in this Factbook points to key investments the state and federal government can and should make to improve the lives of Ohio's children and families."

Based on trends highlighted in the PCSAO Factbook, the Association is making the following recommendations for the state of Ohio:

- **"Improve our ability to serve children and youth with mental health and substance abuse issues by investing in the Access to Better Care Initiative.** Increasing numbers of unruly and delinquent adolescents are taxing the system, largely due to the unavailability of mental health and substance abuse treatment services. The ABC Initiative proposes critical investments in prevention, early intervention and treatment for our children, thus avoiding many of the traumatic and expensive out of home placements experienced by many children and families today."
- **"Use available TANF funds to support permanent kinship families for children who have been abused, neglected or dependent.** Nationwide, this has shown to be an effective support for many extended families that have agreed to raise their grandchildren, nephews, and nieces. All children deserve a permanent home and family."

PCSAO also recommends that the federal government:

- **"Allow more flexibility with our child welfare federal funds,** vs. only supporting paid foster placements. While that is important, it is only half the job – children deserve permanent homes, not just temporary foster care. While touting the desire to be flexible, the current federal administration just proposed an extremely punitive rule that would end social work support of relative caregivers. Ohio will vigorously oppose this proposed rule."

The report is the 7th edition of the Factbook. It features information about foster care, child abuse and neglect, poverty, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, community services and more. The data is presented for all 88 Ohio counties, and the state as a whole. Allen says her organization compiles the information every two years to increase awareness of issues affecting Ohio's children and their families.

“This information isn’t just about the child welfare system,” says Allen. “It is essential that juvenile judges, county commissioners, lawmakers, social workers, community members and everyone who can impact child safety understand all the factors that can affect families and impact child abuse and neglect.”

According to the Factbook, some aspects of the system are improving. Overall, there are less children in foster care, more relatives and kin caring for children, and more children being adopted than in recent years. The report also discusses the success of an experimental funding program called ProtectOhio that allows foster care funding to be spent on supporting families.

The Factbook was released at 10 a.m. today at AARP Ohio office in Columbus. The Factbook is being distributed to Ohio public child welfare agencies, the media, the Ohio General Assembly and other members of the community. An electronic version of the book is available at www.pcsao.org

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) is a proactive coalition of public children services agencies that promotes child safety, family stability, and community strength through the development of sound public policy, program excellence, training, and technical assistance. PCSAO is a state partner of *Fostering Results*, a national education and outreach initiative for improving child welfare practices by addressing federal financing policy and improved court processes.

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Call 614-226-3116 to schedule and interview with Gayle Channing Tenenbaum.

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