



PRESS RELEASE

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510 E. Mound St., Suite 200

Columbus, Ohio 43215

614-224-5802 • Fax 614-228-5150

Contact Brandi Scales at (614) 352-0925

brandi@pcsao.org

NEW REPORT SHOWS PROGRESS IN CHILD PROTECTION

Advocates Call for Investments and Innovation to Strengthen Families

Columbus, OH – A report released today reveals fewer children removed from their birth families and a steady decrease over time in the number of children in custody. Advocates caution that despite progress in overall safety and permanency outcomes for children, now is the time to invest in preventative, up front services for families. These difficult economic and stressful times require advocates and policy makers to be creative in addressing challenges and prioritizing scarce resources to support programs that work for Ohio's children and families.

"The child welfare system has shifted its practice to focus on services and supports to strengthen birth and relative families", says Crystal Ward Allen, Executive Director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. "There have been innovations in our infrastructure through new safety and risk assessment tools and engaging families. Now is the time to maintain investments in safe, permanent families for our children."

Gayle Channing Tenenbaum, Legislative Director of PCSAO stated, "It is clear that challenges exist, we must support programs that help families deal with the stresses of the economy and poverty, while helping local governments and agencies embrace increased caseloads and reduced budgets."

Based on data presented in this report, PCSAO makes the following recommendations:

- **Restore \$62 million in flexible community based funding for child welfare services in the '10-11 budget.** These dollars are particularly important for the 43 counties unable to sustain levies in these difficult times and support in home and mental health services for children, as well as adult protective services for Ohio's senior citizens.
- **Provide continued support for relative caregivers by restoring the \$10 million dollars/year to the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program.** This program supports 6,000 children being raised by permanent kinship caregivers, at a significant cost savings to the state compared with other custody arrangements for children unable to be cared for by their birth families.
- **PCSAO also recommends investing in our young people "aging-out" of foster care** by restoring funding for independent living services and investing in their success in higher education.

The 9th edition of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio's Factbook features information about foster care, child abuse and neglect, poverty, teenage pregnancy, community services and much more.

The Factbook was released at 10 a.m. today at the downtown DoubleTree Guest Suites in Columbus, in conjunction with PCSAO's statewide executive membership meeting. It is being distributed to all Ohio public child welfare agencies, the media, the Strickland Administration, the Ohio General Assembly and other members of the community. An electronic version of the book is available at www.pcsao.org

ABOUT US: PCSAO is a membership driven association serving Ohio's 88 County Public Children Services Agencies through the support of program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families and supportive communities. We do this through member dialogue, active sharing of information, building partnerships, research, training and technical assistance, and advocacy at the state and federal level.

Call 614-557-3388 to schedule an interview with Greg Kapcar.

Call 614-352-0925 to schedule an interview with Brandi Scales.

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