

## **Assuring Best Practice and COA**

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*By Max F. Bucey, PCSAO Assistant Director*

Best Practice- How can you know that your agency provides Best Practice to assure that children are safe in secure, permanent families? One way would be to recruit, train, and retain competent, quality staff at all levels. Another would be to be sure your community, including your governing authorities, are knowledgeable and supportive of your mission. Certainly another would be to adopt the PCSAO Standards for Effective Practice within your agency. Each person could make their own list of qualities to assure best practice to assure safety and permanence for children in their communities.

Eight counties in Ohio already have gone to the next level to assure best practice by becoming accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA). These PCSAs are Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Lorain, Montgomery, Richland, Summit, and Trumbull. Below are some of the benefits a PCSA can receive from accreditation:

- Assures that children, families and individuals receive the highest quality service
- Identifies organizations in which consumers can have confidence
- Enables organizations to receive public and private funding support
- Provides solid risk-management strategy and ongoing plan for quality improvement
- Enables organizations to meet measuring and reporting requirements of governing authorities, funders and regulators
- Demonstrates accountability in management of resources
- Builds staff morale and increases program effectiveness

Accreditation is a long and difficult process that takes commitment from the governing authority (board or commissioners), top management, staff, and buy-in from the community.

ODJFS under the direction of Barbara Riley, Deputy Director of the Office of Children and Families has offered a challenge and an incentive to the Ohio PCSAs to become accredited by COA. In addition, ODJFS is working to become accredited by COA. ODJFS has made available funds to assist PCSAs to cover part of the costs of becoming accredited, as well as fiscal incentives once accredited. ODJFS is also offering significant technical assistance and has arranged specialized training from COA, in Intensive Accreditation and Quality Management.

PCSAO has also committed to assist ODJFS and the counties by designating staff time and developing a guide for the counties to identify which sections of the ORC, OAC, and PCSAO Standards for Effective Practice, correlate to each COA standard. This will be of significant help to the PCSAs as they go through the Self-Study process. The PCSAO Public Information Committee is also developing materials to assist PCSAs to present information on COA to stakeholders, governing authorities, and their communities.

Currently 14 county PCSAs have verbally committed to be in the "First Class" of new applicants to COA. (Allen, Champaign, Clermont, Clark, Coshocton, Cuyahoga, Lucas, Marion, Morrow, Scioto, Seneca, Stark, Union and Washington). A second class will start in about a year. These 14 PCSAs have made a significant commitment to assure that they too will go the extra mile to provide "Best Practice". The children and families in these 14 counties will be the beneficiaries. If you would like more information on COA, please contact Candace Novak at ODJFS at 614-995-9925 or Max F. Bucey at PCSAO at 614-224-5802.