



**Public Children Services
Association of Ohio**
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PCSAO Joins National "Home At Last" Initiative to Improve Safety and Stability for Children in Foster Care

Columbus, OH – The statewide membership organization for Ohio's child protection agencies has joined "Home At Last," a new partnership focusing on reform of the nation's foster care system.

"Children deserve to grow up in safe, stable families," said Crystal Ward Allen, Executive Director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. "Ensuring that children in foster care are heard in court, and are afforded timely hearings is essential. Ohio is fortunate to have the leadership of Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Tom Moyer and many Juvenile Court Judges throughout the state who partner with child welfare leaders to improve child outcomes by examining juvenile court proceedings."

Home At Last will underscore the recommendations calling for improved court oversight, as described in the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care report, *Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence, and Well-Being for Children in Foster Care*:

- Adoption of court performance measures by juvenile courts, for improved outcomes for children;
- Effective collaboration between courts and child welfare agencies related to foster care;
- Ensuring a strong voice for children and parents in court using well trained attorneys and court appointed special advocates (CASA);
- Leadership from Chief Justices to promote effective standards for juvenile courts and judges.

Supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Home At Last will be led by the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles – a nationally known and respected nonprofit organization that provides legal representation to more than 25,000 children in foster care. The project will conduct research, issue policy briefs, and partner with state and national organizations to enhance awareness and address the challenges facing over 500,000 U.S. children in foster care and enable struggling families to remain intact without court involvement.

"Now it is time for all of us to take action," said CLC Executive Director Miriam Aroni Krinsky, who will also serve as Executive Director of Home At Last. "While foster care is intended to be a temporary refuge, too many foster youth spend years in the system and experience turbulence as they drift from placement to placement. The nonpartisan Pew Commission has given our nation a roadmap to improve safety, permanence and well-being for abused and neglected youth who too often languish in foster care."

Home At Last activities in Ohio will build on the Ohio Supreme Court's "Beyond the Numbers" initiative bringing court and child welfare leadership together to look at court trends and processes that could delay decisions for children. PCSAO will also strive to raise awareness about the need to ensure children and youth have a voice in court. Finally, PCSAO will continue to educate about improved outcomes for children in foster care being raised by grandparents and other kin, and opportunities to support those kinship families that provide safety and stability for Ohio's foster children.

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) is a proactive coalition of public children services agencies that promotes child safety, family stability, and supportive community through the development of sound public policy, program excellence, training, and technical assistance. PCSAO is online at www.pcsao.org.

More information about Home at Last is at www.fostercarehomeatlast.org.

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