



PRESS RELEASE

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OHIO LEADS THE NATION FOR A SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER/GROUP CARE

Advocates Call for Continued Investments and Innovation to Strengthen Families

Columbus, OH: A report released today reveals a child protection system with fewer children in foster care. Advocates say that despite progress in overall safety and permanency outcomes for children, more must be done.

“Ohio leads the nation in safely reducing the number of children in out of home care with a rate of 42%. Other top performing states included Florida, California, New York, and Illinois,” says Greg Kapcar, Legislative Director and Factbook Project Manager for the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. “The safe reduction of children in out of home care was the result of a multi-pronged approach and innovative practice reforms focused on strengthening families.” Kapcar noted that reports of child maltreatment increased statewide during the time period analyzed.

Crystal Ward Allen, Executive Director of PCSAO stated, “We are proponents of change and redesigning government for improved outcomes, with maximum efficiency and accountability.” Allen highlighted various practice innovations that effectively engage families, including: “differential response” and family team meetings, as well as supporting kinship caregivers. “These practices have assisted in our safe reduction of foster care use, significantly reducing the trauma experienced by Ohio’s children. Ohio’s child welfare system has demonstrated excellent outcomes and fiscal accountability with a 96% compliance rate on our most recent federal fiscal audit. We are a worthy investment,” concluded Allen.

“In order to continue to improve child outcomes, Ohio’s fractured mental health and addiction services system must be strengthened,” says Gayle Channing Tenenbaum, Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs at PCSAO. “It is estimated that 35-50% of parents with children in the child welfare system have mental health or addiction problems, or both; and over 35,000 children in our system struggle with their own behavioral health issues. Accessible and timely mental health services are so crucial to intervening and protecting children from abuse and neglect.”

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

- **Maintain Ohio’s current investment in child protection.** Already the lowest state investment in the nation, Ohio cannot afford to reduce its investment in child protection and local funding inequities require baseline funding.
- **Restore critical funding to support permanent families for children.** The Kinship Permanency Incentive Program is an efficient and cost effective program supporting over 8,000 children in safe, permanent kinship families – saving money from other costly placements. Adoption Assistance subsidies are critical to ensure waiting special needs children have permanent, forever homes and families.
- **Ensure accessible and timely mental health services for our youth.** We support continued integration of health and behavioral health services and treatment for children and parents.

The 10th 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 AARP Ohio office in Columbus. It is being distributed to all Ohio public child welfare agencies, the media, the Ohio General Assembly, the Governor's administration/cabinet directors and other members of the community. An electronic version of the book is available at www.pcsao.org

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, Factbook Project Manager

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