

Press Release

To: Coshocaton Tribune, WTNS Radio, and Coshocaton County Beacon
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SUBJ: Ohio Senator Jay Hottinger visits Coshocaton JFS

Coshocaton, OH – November 21, 2016 – on November 17, State Senator Jay Hottinger visited the Coshocaton County Job and Family Services. According to agency director, Mindy Fehrman, “We invited the Senator to meet our staff who are dedicated to helping individuals and families improve their lives, meet with a client who has been reunified with her son, and to go out on a home call with Children Services workers.”

According to the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) state funding for child protection has decreased 17% since 2009. Due to the opiate crisis in Ohio, the state legislature has provided additional funding for treatment. However, child protection agencies have not experienced an increase in resources for the children impacted by their parent’s addictions. While parents are in treatment programs, children need to be placed in safe and loving environments. Agencies focus on placing children with kin but when that option does not exist, foster placement is necessary.

Since 2003, Coshocaton County JFS has experienced a 55% increase in the number of children placed in foster care. Since January 2016, they have faced the

following issues

- 368 Intakes—43% were due to drug issues. 14% of the children were placed with kin within the first 45 days.
- 109 Ongoing cases—56% of these were/are drug related. 30% of the children have been placed with kin and 67% of the total going caseload is court involved.
- 42 children have been in foster care this year with 67% of those parents having drug or alcohol abuse issues.

Unlike other counties who are experiencing an increase in opioid abuse, the drug of choice in Coshocton is methamphetamine.

Locally, for the last fifty years, Coshocton County residents have supported child protection with a property tax levy. Renewed since 1984, this 1 mil levy provides the agency with just over \$500,000 annually. For many years, these funds adequately supported staff and foster care expenses. With expected placement costs of over \$800,000 in 2016, this local support falls very short of meeting the need in Coshocton County. The agency's gross foster care costs have increased 150% since 2010 and net costs have increased 260% during the same time period.

"I appreciated the opportunity to be able to go out and see the work of the Coshocton County JFS," said Hottinger. "Hearing about the work they do in my office is one thing, however seeing it first hand is quite different. Seeing the cases in person is incredibly sad as families are often going through difficult situations. That being said, the JFS employees do an admirable job. I truly hope that we can find more resources for the work JFS does because they are trying to help the most vulnerable families and children in our community. The staff at JFS have to work on some extremely heart

wrenching caseloads and are often doing it with very limited resources. I respect the work they do attempting to help incredibly fragile families through challenges and crises."