

# PCSAO FACTBOOK | 14<sup>th</sup> EDITION

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# Foreword

March 2019

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies that advocates for and supports child protection program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities. We are proud to present this 14th edition of the PCSAO Factbook, 2019.

The Factbook is designed as a resource for policymakers and the media; for federal, state and local partners; and for those interested in the safety and stability of Ohio's children and families. It is the only publication in Ohio that examines children services from both a programmatic and fiscal perspective, presenting statewide data as well as 88 county snapshots. We are pleased once again this year to make the entire publication available at no cost on our website, [www.pcsao.org/factbook](http://www.pcsao.org/factbook). A hard copy of the Factbook can be purchased for \$20.

It is our hope that these data provide greater insight into and understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Ohio's children and families, and of the important work that public children services agencies (PCSAs) do to protect and nurture them. In addition, we hope that these data inform policymakers as they make decisions that impact children, families, and the children services system.

The PCSAO Factbook is a product of teamwork and many partners. We thank the PCSAs that work every day to achieve child safety, well-being, and permanency, and that shared in documenting and reviewing the county data presented here. We are grateful to our partners at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Supreme Court of Ohio for their role in providing and analyzing data. We also wish to acknowledge the faces behind the data contained within these pages: the children and youth, families and caregivers, caseworkers and agency leaders who are at the heart of why we produce the Factbook.

Special thanks are due to Factbook manager and PCSAO's director of public policy, Mary Wachtel, and the Factbook team: Julie Cibulskas, Marla Himmeger, and Browning Design. And to our colleagues Scott Britton, Kelsey Fobean, Nitina Francis, Fawn Gadel, Jeed Jitprasert, William Murray, and Bhumika Patel for their contributions. PCSAO interns Mary Imre and Anthony DeWitt provided support as well.

As the Factbook shows, Ohio's children services system is in serious crisis. PCSAO has a bold plan to reform the system by addressing today's crisis and improving outcomes for tomorrow –these next two years are critical for building that reform.

Will you join us?



Angela Sausser, MA, MSW, LSW  
Executive Director

# The Time Is Now

Every child deserves a safe, stable, and permanent family. But throughout 2018, over 26,700 Ohio children spent time in foster care because it was not safe for them to live at home. That was 3,184 more children than in 2016. The trauma of being removed from all that is familiar makes it hard for children to feel connected and develop healthy relationships.

These traumatized children have been ignored for too long in Ohio. Positive, long-term policy solutions have been limited. The availability, accessibility, and affordability of community-based services and supports for families have been dwindling. Consequently, Ohio's children, families, and the children services system are in crisis from:

- more children in foster care
- more complex needs
- more kinship families in need
- more overburdened workforce
- more expensive costs

Now is the time. Ohio does not need to settle for the status quo. Instead, Ohio must seize the moment and commit to reforming the children services system. PCSAO has a plan for doing so, a proposal to create a Children's Continuum of Care. Supported by our membership of county children services agencies and endorsed by more than a dozen state and national groups, the plan will reduce the number of children coming into foster care and get better outcomes for those who do. Through strategic financial and policy investments in the 2020-2021 biennium, Ohio can begin to build this needed reform to reduce the crisis in our system and begin building a better tomorrow for children, families, and children services agencies.



# How We Got Here

In the “home rule” state of Ohio, state government has ceded authority for day-to-day oversight of the child protection function to county government. County PCSA directors, therefore, work for elected county commissioners, and in this way, counties have assumed the administration, risk, liability, and ultimately, funding, of what in most states is a state government function. Ohio is one of only nine states with such a state-supervised, county-administered system.

The decade following 2002 saw Ohio gradually and safely reduce the number of children in foster care – leading the nation, in fact, with a 42 percent decline. But that success has been cut short. The ravages of the Great Recession, the scourge of the opioid epidemic, and the increasing complexity of children who need services from multiple systems have led to a 28 percent increase of children in foster care on any given day since SFY 2013. The majority are young children: 65 percent of children in foster care are under the age of 12; 27 percent are ages 3 and younger.

Also, during that time, through steep cuts to or elimination of the Local Government Fund, the Tangible Personal Property Tax, the estate tax, the managed care tax, and other revenue sources, the state sharply reduced its share of funding available to counties for carrying out this delegated service. Meanwhile, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services dramatically increased the level of oversight, rules, audits, and practice expectations of PCSAs, partly in response to federal government initiatives and new federal laws. The result over the past 10 years for county agencies that have assumed so much of the state’s responsibility for ensuring child safety: higher state requirements combined with cuts in state resources.

In 2017, the General Assembly recognized the crisis of an under-resourced system facing a staggering number of children in care due to the opioid epidemic. The budget increased the State Child Protection Allocation, the primary pool of funds dedicated by the state for use by county PCSAs, from \$45 million to \$60 million per year, essentially restoring those funds back to 2008 levels. The legislature also earmarked \$15 million per year in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to provide child care assistance to kinship caregivers.



In addition, then Ohio Attorney General (now Governor) Mike DeWine provided \$6 million in federal grant dollars to support southern Ohio county PCSAs in creating a program to reduce trauma experienced by children and address the substance use disorders of their parents.

PCSAs are extremely grateful for these investments and the recognition that Ohio’s children cannot be ignored. However, even with these new investments, on July 1, 2018, the number of children in PCSA custody had climbed to 15,928. While it would slowly decline in the following months, the fact remains that on any given day there are over 3,000 more Ohio children in care. The annual cost of placing children in foster care had risen by \$53 million to \$384 million in two short years, even as more children were being placed with kin in unpaid settings. These annual placement costs are estimated to increase another 12 percent, or \$44 million, by 2020 if nothing is done to improve services for families and children.



## Ohio START

Ohio START is an intervention program that provides specialized victim services, such as intensive trauma counseling, to children who have suffered victimization due to parental substance abuse. The Ohio START pilot program is modeled after a program in Kentucky, also called START (Sobriety, Treatment and Recovery Teams). The program assists parents of the children with their path to recovery from substance use disorder. The game-changing role in Ohio START program is the family peer mentor – a person who has lived experience with substance use and the children services system. Family peer mentors can connect with parents in a way that caseworkers may not be able to and help get to the root of the family's issues. They provide insight into the behaviors related to substance use disorder and can help inform the children services agency on how to work with clients in active addiction. By bringing this wealth of knowledge into the children services agency, the family peer mentors are changing office culture and reducing stigma with caseworkers, supervisors, behavioral health providers, and the court systems.

The Ohio START program began in 2017 in 17 southern Ohio counties, and over a year later has expanded to 33 counties across the state. Within a short timeframe, the program has been able to expand and serve over 100 families by helping parents enter recovery, reunify children with their families, and connect families to community resources. Together, children services agencies, behavioral health providers, and family peer mentors are changing the way the community views substance use disorder. For more information, visit <http://www.pcsao.org/programs/ohio-start>.

# Pressure Points

## Addiction

A major contributor to this trend is Ohio's opioid epidemic. Because parents who are addicted to opioids are likely to relapse – some multiple times during their recovery process – their children linger in care. If parents cannot demonstrate sobriety within the children services system's timelines, or if they fall victim to an overdose, then children come into permanent custody of an agency. Not surprisingly, the number of children awaiting adoption is up 16%, a trend many public children services agencies attribute to the epidemic.

With such a sharp increase of children in foster care, county children services agencies struggle to find available and appropriate foster homes for children coming into care. While there are nearly 16,000 children in foster care today, Ohio has only 7,200 licensed foster homes.

In response to the opioid epidemic, former Attorney General (now Governor) Mike DeWine awarded federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to PCSAO to support Ohio Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma (START), an evidence-informed approach currently being implemented in 33 Ohio counties to better engage parents with opioid and other substance use disorders in recovery so that children can either be maintained safely at home or reunify more quickly from foster care.

Nevertheless, if the rate of children entering foster care does not change, it is estimated that by 2020, more than 18,000 Ohio children will be in care on any given day. Ohio's foster care model is outdated and will not be able to support and care for all of these additional children.

## More Complex Needs

State and federal laws that govern children services were constructed to protect children from abuse and neglect. However, there has been an increase of children in foster care whose needs are primarily related to mental illness, developmental disability, or juvenile delinquency. It is often said that when one human services system reforms, children services invariably is impacted. Other social services systems have moved away from institutionalizing their youth population and towards more community-based services, which is a positive trend as children do better with families. However, when community-based services are not readily available or accessible by families,

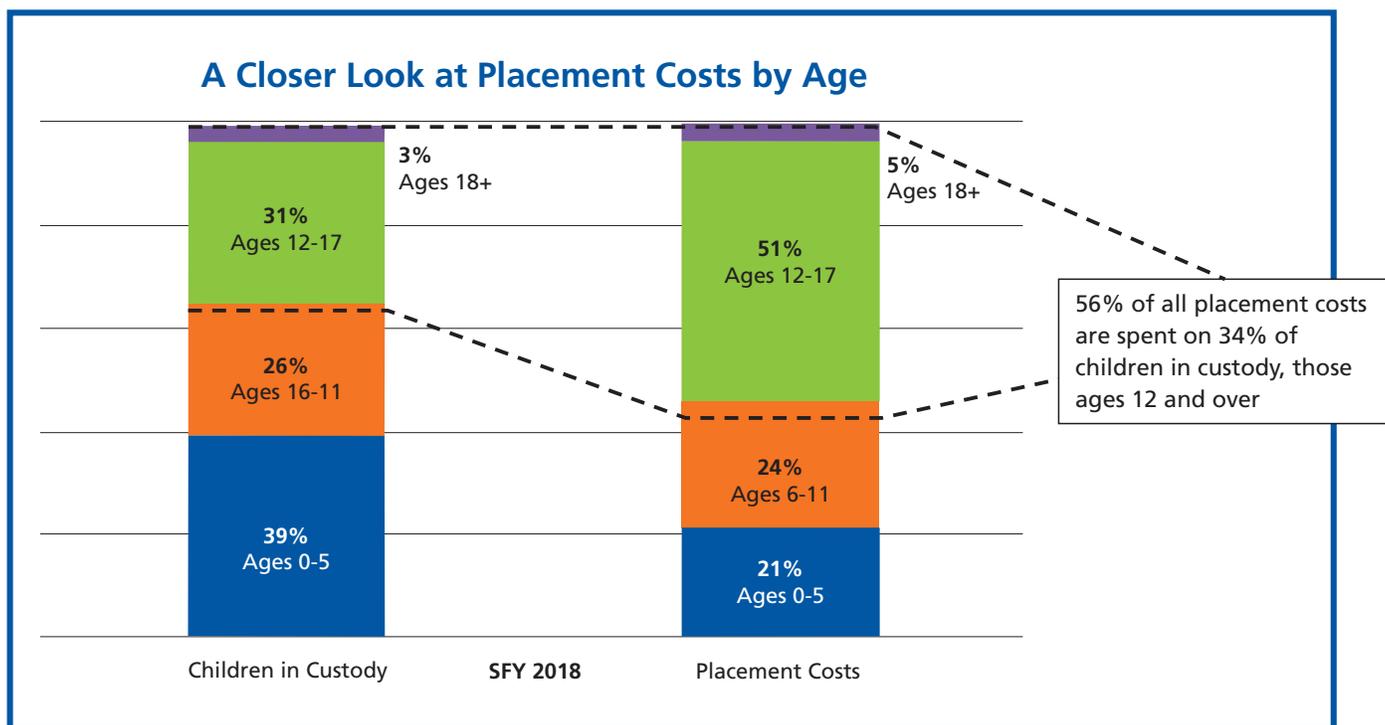
county children services agencies are often relied upon to take custody of the child and provide such services. These children often are referred to as “multi-system” youth.

These multi-system youth account for a significant percentage of children in custody of county children services agencies. In July 2018, 65 percent of youth in custody were there for reasons other than abuse and neglect. Often, they come into children services agency custody when a parent who is not abusive or neglectful is forced to relinquish custody to secure treatment and stabilization services for the child, or when a judge grants custody of a youth to children services to avoid juvenile incarceration. They primarily come into care deemed dependent, delinquent, or for other reasons beyond abuse and neglect. In fact, neglect as a removal factor has decreased from 32 percent in 2010 to 22 percent in 2018.

Children requiring higher levels of care to address their complex and multi-system needs are placed in treatment foster care, a group home, or a residential treatment facility. However, county children services agencies struggle to find appropriate and available treatment placements to address the unique, intense, and challenging needs of these children.

At times, due to the lack of options in the state, children are placed in residential treatment centers in other states. This has negative consequences. The farther away a child is placed, the less likely the child will reunify with his/her family and the more challenging and expensive it is to arrange family visits and monthly children services caseworker visits. Children placed in an out-of-state residential treatment facility stay in custody longer compared to children placed in an in-state facility; 559 median days in custody versus 318 median days in custody. Generally speaking, older children in custody are more likely to need higher levels of care compared to younger children. The SFY 2018 data below illustrate this.

In addition to placement costs, PCSAs are required to arrange for costly services to meet the challenging and complex needs of children and their families. However, significant gaps in the continuum of care mean that many local communities lack services that are accessible, affordable, and available. These service gaps, well documented in a needs assessment conducted by ODJFS several years ago, impact PCSAs’ ability to ensure the safety, well-being, and permanency of children.





## More Kinship Families in Need

With more than a hundred thousand grandparents raising grandchildren in Ohio, there are far more informal kinship arrangements, outside the purview of children services, than the more formal kinship placements arranged by county PCSAs. When children must come into agency custody, caseworkers try first to place them with kin (relative or nonrelative) rather than in foster homes, because they experience less trauma than those placed in unfamiliar settings including a foster family. However, tracking kin placement data in Ohio is complicated because some judges transfer custody directly to a grandparent or other relative and, thus, are not captured in the statewide child welfare information system.

Between 2010 and 2018, the number of children in custody placed in approved kinship homes has increased by nearly 140%; 47% from 2016 to 2018 alone. Few kinship families choose to become licensed foster caregivers; as a result, they do not receive the financial benefits available to licensed foster parents. Ohio provides little support for these kinship families who offer a temporary refuge for children. Kinship caregivers, often caring for their own children as well, struggle with additional child care costs, which can add up quickly. In 2017, the Ohio General Assembly established a new child care benefit for kinship families through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. The initial design of this program left many families unable to access the benefit. Recognizing this, the General Assembly refocused the program design, effective March 2019, to ensure more children can receive child care assistance.

For kinship caregivers who offer a permanent home to children, Ohio provides the Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI), a modest payment intended to help stabilize the family for the first three to five years after legal custody is granted. The number of children supported by KPI increased 55 percent between 2013 and 2018.

## More Overburdened Workforce

Children services caseworkers are seldom recognized as the first responders they are. Their role is like that of law enforcement, firefighters, and paramedics. Every day, they knock on doors to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect, not knowing what is on the other side. Sometimes it is a dirty home, sometimes a frightened child; more and more, it is a parent who has overdosed.

Within the strict guidelines of federal and state laws, caseworkers make critical decisions every day. Many work on call, making for long nights and weekends. Their satisfaction comes from reunifying children with their families, but the devastation of the opioid epidemic means that more and more children will never go home.

In 2018, nine county PCSAs selected as representative of the state began participating in a national project with the federal Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development, secured by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. A comprehensive survey of caseworkers at those agencies revealed, among other findings, that 53 percent demonstrated elevated levels of secondary traumatic stress that meets the threshold for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In 2016 and again in 2017, one in four caseworkers left their position, some to promotion or retirement (“positive turnover”), but one in seven left with no performance concerns by their supervisor (“negative turnover”). Negative turnover hurts agencies and slows or reduces positive child and family outcomes. Burnout and secondary trauma, as identified in the survey, lead many caseworkers to seek more traditional jobs with better pay. Regardless of the reason, such turnover costs agencies – in recruitment, training, and overtime. It costs the caseworkers who are left behind – in higher caseloads until a new worker can get up to speed. And it costs children – worker turnover is the leading contributor to youth getting stuck in foster care longer than they need to be.





## Stories from the Field: Why Reform is Needed

Every day, children enter public children services agency (PCSA) custody, each with his or her own unique story. For too many children, the traumatic experience of being removed from home is intensified by a lack of available placement options appropriate for their needs. PCSAs report that some children have been denied placement by more than 50 provider agencies. In one astounding case, a PCSA contacted 129 provider agencies and was unable to find any that could accept a 13-year-old boy in their custody. Provider agencies are unable to accept placement of a child for a variety of reasons, including no availability in a foster home or treatment facility, or their services do not align with the child's needs, demonstrating clearly why reform is needed.

Without an appropriate, stable placement, children do not receive the treatment they need for complex needs. Take, for example, the story of CS, a 14-year-old girl:

*"CS and her brother were removed from their biological mother after multiple instances of physical abuse and neglect. The children were placed with their father, who started to abuse both children and sexually abused CS. After removal from their father, a family adopted the children but soon discovered that CS also had been sexually abused by her brother. After suffering these traumas, the girl was diagnosed with multiple disorders such as major depression and PTSD. These disorders only added to an extensive list of issues, including an intellectual disability."*

*"CS's adoptive parents sought in-patient treatment for the girl's worsening behaviors. She has moved between homes, residential facilities, and the local children's hospital where she must stay until another option is found. Seven residential facilities in the state declined to accept the girl, leaving the agency to begin an out-of-state search."*

Unfortunately, the story of CS is not unique. For other children, challenges persist after residential treatment when they are ready for a less restrictive environment. It often is difficult to find a foster home that is able to meet the needs of the children who need it most. One county detailed the barriers they faced when seeking placement for a boy in their custody:

*"We searched for over a year trying to place a 12 year-old male in permanent custody who was ready to step down from a residential to a family setting but had no success. He is developmentally delayed and has a background of familial substance abuse, domestic violence, and homelessness. Previously placed in therapeutic foster care, he was removed after he behaved violently with family, pets, and property, and exposed himself to another child."*

*"Over thirty placement agencies were contacted, and the county's Board of Developmental Disabilities and Family and Children First Council became involved as well. Three different families expressed interest in placement over the year, but each changed their minds after meeting him. The potential families expressed concerns specifically regarding his developmental delays and sexual behaviors."*

## More Expensive Costs

Children in foster care are placed in a variety of settings including kinship homes, family foster homes, group homes and residential treatment facilities. PCSAs are required to seek placement first with a family member (kinship care) and then, if not available, a foster home. Children are to be placed in group homes or residential centers only when their needs cannot be met in a kinship or foster home.

Agencies spent \$275 million in total placement costs in 2013; by 2018, annual placement costs had soared 40 percent to over \$384 million. This trend is not surprising, given the significant increase of children coming into care with more complex needs and significant trauma, requiring expensive, treatment-oriented levels of care.

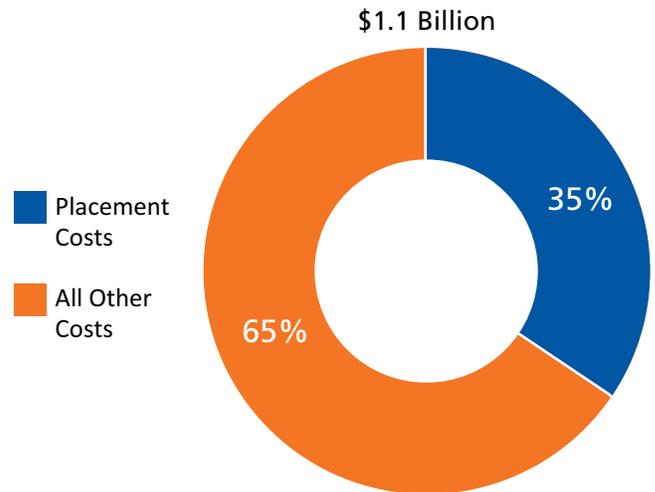
If the rate of children entering foster care does not change and the intensity of needs in this population persists, estimates show that by 2020, annual placement costs will increase by another 12 percent to \$414 million.

In addition to placements, PCSAs fund services for children who are not in foster care but remain in their homes under Court Ordered Protective Supervision and through alternative response, children not in custody of the agency but placed in kinship care, non-Medicaid

covered treatment services, and community support services, to name only some. PCSAs also must fund a workforce to respond to the needs of children and their families.

These extensive local costs, federal match for eligible reimbursable activities, and state funds totaled to \$1.1 billion in children services spending in SFY 2018, with placement costs representing 35% of that total.

### Total Children Services Spending, SFY 2018



# Children’s Continuum of Care Reform is Needed

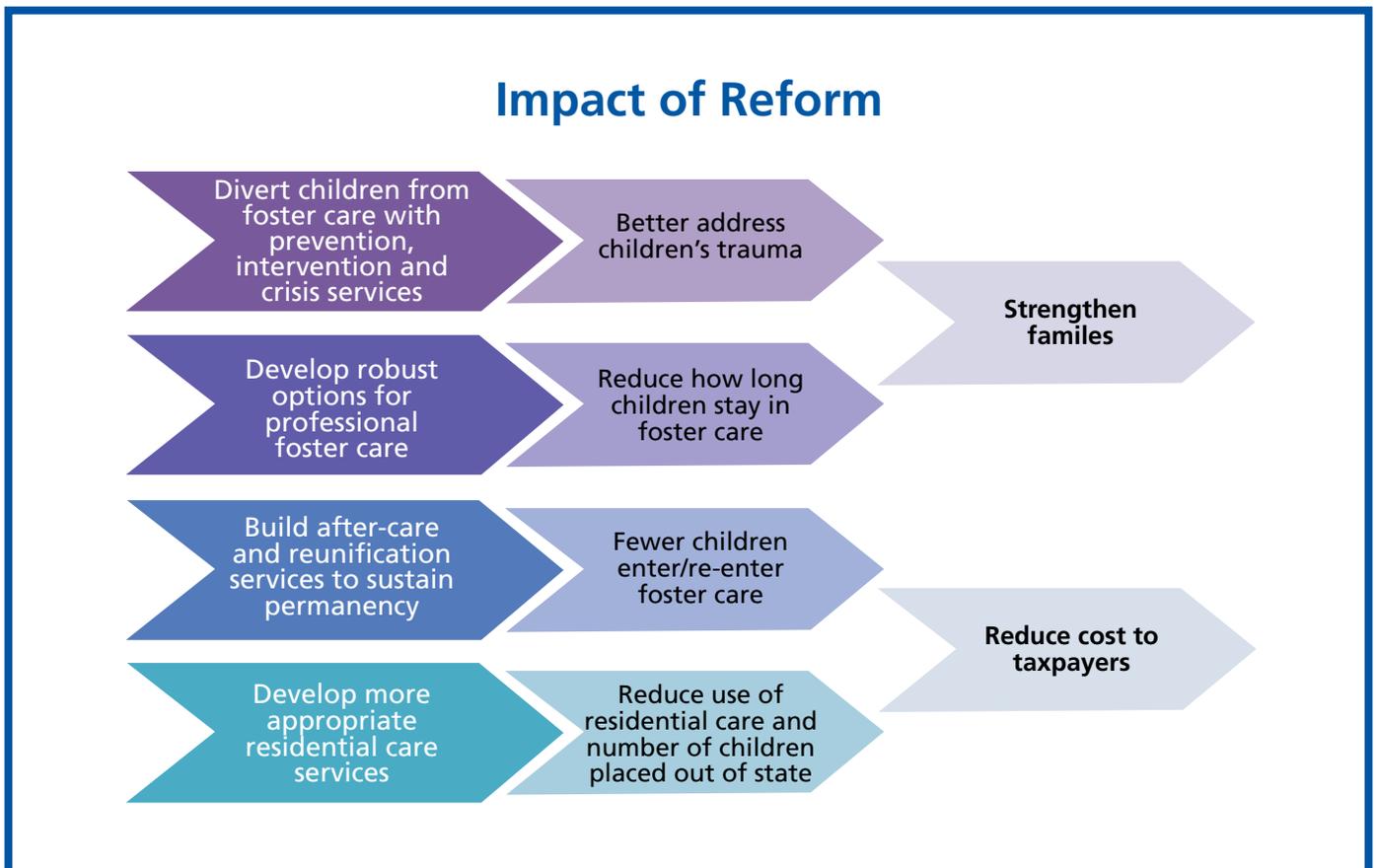
Ohio’s public children services agencies are experiencing more children in care, with more complex needs, and thus, more expensive costs. Too many children are being placed in residential facilities, often out-of-state; and too many children are being placed in foster homes that are far from their families. In addition, Ohio lacks community-based services to keep families together; the current foster care system is outdated to meet the needs of children coming into care; there is a lack of short-term crisis stabilization options readily available across the state; there is a lack of placements that can holistically attend to the highest acuity needs of children; and there is a very weak statewide trauma-treatment system of care model for children.

Ohio can – and must – do better. PCSAO is proposing system-wide reform to create a continuum of services for

children and their families. This will result in better outcomes, and ultimately, lower costs.

## Children’s Continuum of Care Reform Goal

To reduce reliance on congregate care settings and embrace that kids do better with families, Ohio needs to establish a children’s continuum of care that focuses on preventing and intervening with community-based, short-term crisis stabilization and diversion services. If children need to be removed from their families, there needs to be a robust foster care system that can support the challenging needs of kids in a family-based setting while focusing on reunification. To read the full reform plan, visit: <http://www.pcsao.org/public-policy/continuum-reform>.



# Federal Support

The Family First Prevention Services Act passed as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123) and offers the first significant change to federal child protective services financing in decades. These changes will permit PCSAs to spend federal funds (Title IV-E and Title IV-B) to prevent children from coming into foster care by enhancing support to children and families through the provision of mental health and sub-stance abuse prevention and treatment services, in-home skill-based parenting programs, and to provide kinship navigator services. The Act also focuses on reducing reliance on congregate care by allowing only short-term qualified treatment facilities to be acceptable for federal reimbursement of such placements. PCSAO will be actively engaged in Ohio’s planning and implementation of these provisions over the next 18 months. Much consideration needs to be given to whether Ohio is ready to implement such monumental change and how the non-federal match will be met. This opportunity aligns well with the goal of the Children’s Continuum of Care Reform plan to aggressively build the needed continuum of services across the state for children and families.



## 2018 Gayle Channing Tenenbaum Legislator of the Year Awardees

PCSAO’s Legislator of the Year Award recognizes outstanding leadership and action by legislators on issues impacting children and families served by the children services system. PCSAO is privileged to work with many committed legislators; in 2018, two demonstrated extraordinary leadership and advocacy. PCSAO is proud to honor Representative Janine Boyd and former Representative Jeffrey Rezabek for their efforts.



**The Honorable Janine Boyd**  
9<sup>th</sup> District  
Ohio House of Representatives



**The Honorable Jeffrey Rezabek**  
Former Representative,  
43<sup>rd</sup> District  
Ohio House of Representatives

# 2020 – 2021 Children Services Priorities

## Meeting Today's Needs

**Address the severe crisis in Ohio's children services system.** The number of children entering foster care continues to surge, largely attributable to the drug epidemic. PCSAs are in crisis, as children entering care have more complex trauma and extensive needs that require more expensive placements and treatment services. We commend the legislature for the investment of \$15 million per year in the State Children Protection Allocation (SCPA) in SFY 18-19, but Ohio remains last in the nation for the state share of children services spending. To meet today's needs and address the severe crisis in Ohio's children services system, Ohio must invest additional GRF into the SCPA.

## Reforming for Tomorrow

### Improve foster care placement and service options

- Reform Ohio's foster care structure
- Launch an aggressive foster parent recruitment campaign
- Establish regional navigators for foster care placements

### Identify multi-system solutions for families in crisis to divert them from foster care

- Preserve families by fixing the budget allocation for the Multi-System Youth Fund
- Leverage Medicaid to prevent foster care placements
- Expand Ohio START to additional counties
- Prevent out-of-home placements for juvenile justice/child welfare youth
- Better respond to the needs of substance-exposed infants

### Meet the needs of kinship caregivers

- Provide child care assistance to more kinship caregivers
- Establish a robust kinship navigator program
- Expand 30 Days to Family program

### Leverage innovative technology and practice to keep Ohio on the cutting edge

- Establish a Center of Excellence for cultivating children services best practices
- Maintain the Enterprise Document Management System that is revolutionizing fieldwork
- Allow data to be shared and accessed across county human service programs
- Provide ongoing children services fiscal training for county PCSAs

For more details on these priorities, view <http://www.pcsao.org/resources/other>



