



Levy Campaign Guide

November 2017

Ohio's county public children services agencies (PCSAs) strive to keep children safe, growing up in stable families within supportive communities. Such an important mission requires excellent public agencies, a collaborative legal system, a strong and well-prepared workforce, critical community service partners, resourceful foster and kin families, and, of course, good policies and adequate resources.

In Ohio -- a state-supervised, county-administered child protection system -- our communities take particular pride and responsibility for our children. Unlike other states, where state government pays an average of 43 percent of child protection costs, Ohio government pays less than 10 cents on every dollar spent, and is 50th in the nation in spending for child protection. This forces many local agencies -- 46 counties as of 2017 -- to rely on voter-approved property tax levies to sustain their efforts.

Local levies offer voters the chance to invest in child protection. Using these local funds to match federal funds, county governments protect children and pay for the costs of necessary and court-ordered services. County PCSA performance is regularly reviewed by federal and state government, as well as by the local media.

Because of the heavy reliance in Ohio on local investment, PCSAO offers support to communities that seek new, replacement, or renewal children services levies. This PCSAO Levy Guide, updated in 2017 by the PCSAO Community Education Committee, is a helpful document to assist agency leaders as they consider all the elements needed to run a successful levy campaign. I want to thank the hard-working members of the committee, which consists of experts throughout the state who have coordinated local levy campaigns. They have shared their successful strategies and lessons learned.

Good luck as you create value for your community's investment for safe children, stable families and supportive communities.

Sincerely,



Angela Sausser
Executive Director, PCSAO

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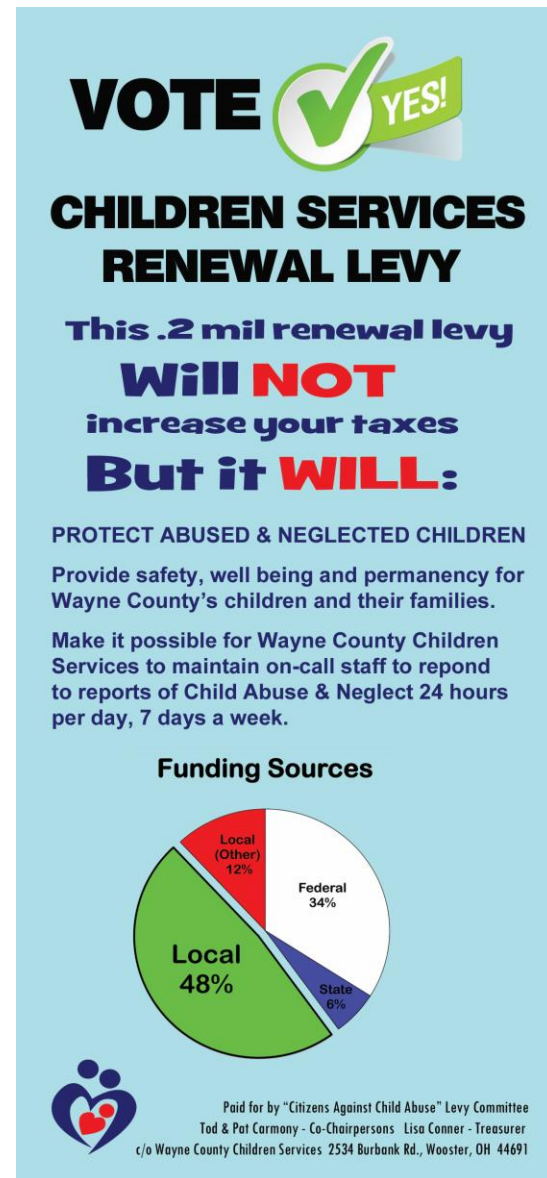
Section 1: Levy Basics

Definition: A “levy” is the collection of a tax. When a school or human service agency is supported (in full or in part) by a levy, taxpayers are voting to support the entity in the form of property taxes. The agency’s levy is added to the taxpayer’s property tax bill. Generally, voters approve a levy for multiple years, usually between four and ten years. In Ohio, property tax amounts are “frozen” in the first year so that taxpayers do not pay more after the first year even if their property values increase. Taxes are paid based on mills.

Millage: Millage is the rate at which property taxes are levied on property. A mill is 1/1,000th of a dollar. Property taxes are computed by multiplying the taxable, or assessed, value of the property by the number of mills levied. It is important to note the difference between the terms “appraised value” and “assessed value.” Appraised value is the estimated market value of a property; assessed value is the value at which the property is taxed, which is 35 percent of the property’s appraised value.

Here is an oversimplified example: If Agency A has a 1-mill replacement levy on the ballot (.001), a taxpayer owning a home

with an appraised value of \$100,000 would have an assessed value of \$35,000. Therefore, $35,000 \times .001 = 35$, or \$35 in tax a year. Another way to help voters think about this is \$2.91 per month -- about the cost of a cup of coffee.



VOTE YES!

CHILDREN SERVICES RENEWAL LEVY

This .2 mil renewal levy Will NOT increase your taxes But it WILL:

PROTECT ABUSED & NEGLECTED CHILDREN
 Provide safety, well being and permanency for Wayne County's children and their families.
 Make it possible for Wayne County Children Services to maintain on-call staff to respond to reports of Child Abuse & Neglect 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Funding Sources

Source	Percentage
Local (Other)	12%
Federal	34%
Local	48%
State	6%

Paid for by "Citizens Against Child Abuse" Levy Committee
 Tod & Pat Carmony - Co-Chairpersons Lisa Conner - Treasurer
 c/o Wayne County Children Services 2534 Burbank Rd., Wooster, OH 44691

New, renewal, or replacement levy: A new levy asks taxpayers for a new source of revenue that did not previously exist. For

example, in one of the counties that currently does not have children services levies, an agency may work with the county commission to get a dedicated levy on the ballot. Or a county with one levy may want to have a second levy (preferably one that is staggered with respect to expiration dates). Before an existing levy expires, the agency must determine whether to renew or replace the levy. A renewal levy considers the same property values that existed when the levy originally passed, so that the revenue (or “yield”) from that levy remains the same during the new period as it was in the expiring period. A replacement levy considers the current value of property so that the tax amount is reset based on current property values and, therefore, yields more (assuming that property values rise year after year). Agencies can also propose a renewal with an increase or decrease of millage or a replacement with an increase or decrease.

Section 2: Legal Considerations

Legal restrictions on levy activity: Using public funding to promote the passage of a levy is prohibited by Ohio law. ORC 9.03(C)(1)(e) states:

“No governing body of a political subdivision shall use public funds to do any of the following: (1) Publish, distribute, or otherwise communicate information that does any of the following: (e) Supports or opposes the nomination or election of a candidate for public office, the prosecution, investigation, or recall of a public official, or the passage of a levy bond issue.”

Ohio Law specifically prohibits a PCSA from expending public funding to campaign for levies. Ohio Revised Code states that a governing body of a political subdivision SHALL NOT:

1. Utilize public funding to distribute, publish, or communicate supporting or opposing information to pass a levy or bond issue. 9.03(C)(1)(e)

2. “Compensate any employees of a political subdivision for time spent on any activity that influences the outcome of an election for any of the purposes described in division 9.03(C)(1)(e) This includes the passage of a levy or bond issue. (However, employees that attend public meetings that present information regarding the political subdivision’s finances, governmental actions, and activities in a way that is NOT influencing the outcome of an election or the passage of a bond issue or levy, can be compensated even if the election, levy, or bond issue is discussed or debated during the meeting.) 9.03(C)(2)

3. Consciously direct or conduct transaction of public funding to benefit a campaign committee, political action committee (PAC), campaign fund or a political committee. Effective September 5, 2012, amended September 29, 2013, 9.03(D)

If an agency's website is maintained using public funding, it would be illegal to utilize that forum to promote the passage of a levy. Furthermore, if an agency's computers are utilized to maintain a Facebook account, it can be argued that public funding is being used to support the passage of a levy. Therefore, it is recommended that agencies consult legal counsel before committing public or agency funding, whether that be directly or indirectly, to further a levy campaign.

ADAMH Boards possess specific statutory language that has been interpreted to allow them to utilize public funding to promote their levies per Ohio General Opinion 99-030. What differentiates ADAMH is that community mental health boards are required to actively pursue public and private financial support for initiatives.

<http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/OhioAttorneyGeneral/files/11/112cc2ba-a567-4a85-aa4b-348864991cfd.pdf>

While the statute referenced above has been repealed and replaced by 340.03, the

operative jargon is still the same. See <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/340.03>



State law for new and replacement levies:

Historically in Ohio, the state has picked up 12.5 percent of each taxpayer's property tax responsibility, referred to as a "rollback." Under a change in state law, effective July 1, 2013, the rollback on property taxes for new and replacement levies was eliminated. Therefore, rather than homeowners paying 87.5 percent of their property tax bill, they pay 100 percent for new and replacement levies, but continue to pay only 87.5 percent for renewal levies. Using the above example, a renewal levy would not cost the taxpayer the full \$35; instead, the taxpayer would pay just over \$30, and the state would pay the remainder. A new or replacement levy, on the other hand, would cost the taxpayer the full \$35. Consult your county auditor to determine the amount a homeowner would

pay on the difference between new millage and the current levy.

Section 3: Making the Case

Determining the amount needed: Whether considering a new, renewal, or replacement levy, agencies must first ask why the agency needs a levy. A response of “we just need more money” is insufficient. Put the need in terms of positive outcomes for children, families, and the community.

Analyze and project the agency’s expenditures for the next period of the levy (say, five or ten years). Take into consideration historic costs, figure in rising personnel costs (including negotiated contracts, increases in health care, etc.), and project costs into the future. Many counties have had a consistent entry rate of children into foster care for decades, and so they can roughly predict the number of children who will come into care based on changes in child population. However, the opioid crisis has led to a sharp increase in the number of children entering care statewide, and so this may become an impairment in plotting for future costs. Plot these figures on a spreadsheet and show the surplus or deficit for each year.

Define what services will be lost to children and families if the levy does not pass. How will these cuts increase the vulnerability of

children, or affect contracts with community providers? Again, frame the message in positive terms. Finally, meet with the county auditor to determine what millage is necessary to meet the agency’s needs.

Timing: There are several options regarding when a levy should be on the ballot. Most counties get a renewal/replacement on a year before the current levy expires. That way, should the levy not pass, there is still time before the funding dries up to get on a future ballot. Some counties put their levy on the May primary election ballot, while other counties have it during the November general election. This decision will vary from county to county depending on the individual county dynamics, political atmosphere, and other issues on the ballot during the election. There are advantages and disadvantages to both choices, and each county must consider voter turnout, commissioner support, public perception, “competing” levies on the ballot, and possible failure of the levy during the decision-making process.

The time of year, type of election, type of levy, and county make-up can have a significant impact on the passage rate of a levy. Since March 2004, 88% of levies, on average, have passed during November elections, while 80% of levies have passed during Spring elections. During a presidential election, 73% of levies passed, while an

average of 92% of levies passed in non-presidential elections. A levy on the ballot during a primary presidential season may be less likely to win than in any other election cycle, with only 61% of levies passing in a primary election. It seems that Fall elections may yield the most success, but the type of election should be considered as well when deciding when to put your levy on the ballot.

Overall, most levies pass, with a rate of 86% passing since 2004. However, new levies tend to have greater difficulty in passing, with only 43% of new levies succeeding, versus a rate of 85% for replacement levies, and 97% for renewal levies. The political make-up of a county can also be a factor, as 82% of Republican-leaning counties, in the 2016 presidential election, passed levies, while 97% of levies in Democratic-leaning counties succeeded.

On the ballot: Discuss the levy with the board (for separated children services agencies) and the county commissioners. Use the information you have compiled to convince the board and the commissioners that you need this levy. Presentations should be made in a strategic manner. Be aware that commissioners have sometimes been branded as “tax-and-spend” politicians for approving levies, impacting their run for re-election. Give them clear and convincing data that they can use to counter such

attacks should this occur. PCSAO works closely with the County Commissioners’ Association of Ohio and can assist with messaging.

Levy presentation to County Commissioners:

Give an accurate picture of your agency. What are your mandates, and how do you carry them out? Who are your clients, and how do you serve them? What are your challenges, and what are your opportunities? What are your long- and short-term plans for serving your public? What is your current financial picture, and what does your forecast look like for the life of the levy you are requesting? Show all of the scenarios for renewal, replacement, or new if asking for that. Always build value for your work. It is very important that commissioners be able to defend your work when they are asked why they approved the levy. It can also be compelling to include a case example (without violating confidentiality).

Authorizing the placing of a levy on a ballot:

Make certain that the county commissioners’ resolution accurately reflects what you agreed to in terms of millage amount; whether it is a new, renewal, or replacement levy; the duration of the levy; the date the levy will begin to generate funds for your use; the date the election will be held, etc. There have been instances in which each of these variables has been

inaccurately recorded in a resolution. Human error and misunderstanding can lead to long-term problems for you. Take the time to check, and check again to ensure that your county board of elections receives the resolution in a timely manner and transcribes the information correctly.

Levy ballot numbers: The state sets the guidelines for the rotation of ballot numbers. This changes every election. Consult your Board of Elections for more details.

Suggested Levy Timetable:

10+ months before: Reach out to taxing authority and county auditor; establish millage rate, meeting schedules and deadlines for election agenda
9 months before: Finalize tax levy resolutions for adoption by PCSA board. Once approved, approach county auditor for levy certification.
7 months before: PCSA board adopts resolution of placement of levy on election ballot and PCSA taxing authority is notified
4 months before: Taxing authority authorizes issue to be on primary/general election ballot
90th day before: Deadline for levy; taxing authority confirms resolution to proceed to county board of elections
30 days before: Early or absentee voting begins

Election Day: Vote! Optional election night activity or viewing party

Day After Election: Broadcast public "thank you" acknowledgement to volunteers and supporters; address next steps if necessary

Source: OLC Levy Guide (Ohio Library Council 2014)

Section 4: Political Action Committees

PACs vs. advisory committees: A Political Action Committee, or PAC, is the name commonly given to a private group, regardless of size, organized to elect political candidates or to advance the outcome of a political issue or legislation. A PAC may be organized prior to levy approval by commissioners, or may be in continuous operation since the last levy was approved. Donations to PAC's are not charitable contributions, and are not tax deductible. A levy advisory committee is composed of local business leaders, parents, and community members.

Members of the PAC: Stakeholders, former board members, interested community members, and anyone who has a passion for your agency and will work hard to get the word out can join the PAC. Identify the people or group(s) who have both the authority and resources to implement the desired action or decision. Develop a

stakeholder's map of individuals or groups that can and will contribute to the passage of your levy. Consider civic, faith, union, and business leaders; the media; and supportive foster and adoptive parents. Think in terms of names, not organizations. Consider the types of tasks suitable to each individual: serving as media spokesperson, writing letters to the editor, speaking to groups of voters.

PAC logo and branding: Your PAC should have its own logo. It can have a similar look and feel to your agency logo (for brand recognition), but it should be a separate logo. If your campaign has a logo or slogan, make sure that it is used in all materials. When you develop a theme, it should be carried throughout all activities. For example, your parade float, your booth at the local festival or fair, and the sign at the polls should all look the same. A consistent message is helpful when it is seen over and over by the public.

Ballot issue committee: One type of PAC, called a ballot issue committee, is organized specifically to support or oppose ballot issues, such as levies. Tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundations can give to ballot issue committees supporting levy campaigns, so long as the donation is not a "substantial" amount. This is expected to be no more than 5%, though there is no formal legal definition and is up to the discretion of

the IRS. Charitable foundations wishing to make a donation to a levy campaign can register for a 501(h) designation, allowing the foundation the advantage of higher contribution limits. It is suggested that both foundations and ballot issue committees contact a tax attorney or volunteer with legal/tax experience for advice, or consult the Secretary of State website for campaign finance to confirm rules and regulations.

Section 5: Funding

Public vs. private funds: As discussed above, public funds may not be used to run a child protection levy campaign. All promotional, educational and other campaign-related efforts must be paid for with privately raised funds. This includes the use of agency staff time and resources (telephones, computers) unless the cost of those services is billed to the PAC. This restriction does not apply to ADAMH and DD boards.

Raising funds: Donations can be accepted from private citizens, businesses, unions, and other private entities, and can be raised using fundraisers. If you have established an auxiliary entity to assist with activities for the agency, such as holiday presents for children or supports for caregivers, it may also use its funds to assist, depending on its mission statement and legal structure.



Cost of a campaign: In even-numbered years (e.g., when U.S. and Ohio House members are up for reelection), the board of elections pays primary costs associated with managing an election. However, during most odd-numbered years (“off-year elections”), if there is little else on the ballot, the cost may be divided among those entities that have county-wide ballot issues. Election costs must be considered when

selecting the date to put an issue on the ballot.

Fundraisers: There are a variety of fundraisers that can support your PAC. Reverse raffles, golf outings, bike races, marathons, auctions, and other such events have been highly successful in different counties. Identify an event that will be well received in your community and recruit key stakeholders such as business leaders, agency staff, community agency representatives, politicians, and foster parents to participate in these events. Form a committee for planning and organizing the event. The committee may struggle at first with all of the details required, but after several years, event planning becomes easier when the event remains the same year after year.

Another key to successful fundraising is to build a base of supporters who attend this event to keep it successful each year. This will allow supporters to recognize your event and plan to attend each year. It might be beneficial to have the event during the same month each year, perhaps during Child Abuse Prevention Month (April), National Foster Care Month (May), or National Adoption Month (November). This will allow you to support your agency's mission and the levy campaign simultaneously.

Agency-based fundraisers: While staff cannot run a campaign on agency time, they should be encouraged to contribute to the campaign in reasonable ways. Ideas for successful fundraisers include chili cook-offs, spaghetti dinners, casual Friday/jeans donations, and community garage sales. Just make sure such events do not interfere with work if employees are hosting or participating in the events.

Campaign finance: Maintaining proper financial records and reporting both revenue and expenses to the county board of elections is critical to maintaining the PAC's reputation, and compliance with the law. Because describing campaign finance regulations is not the purpose of this guide, visit:
[https://www.electionsonthe.net/oh/clark/pdfs/Campaign%20Finance%20Handbook%20\(Updated%202013\).pdf](https://www.electionsonthe.net/oh/clark/pdfs/Campaign%20Finance%20Handbook%20(Updated%202013).pdf) for detailed information. Selecting a trusted and competent treasurer for the PAC is important.

Adequate carryover balances: Local governments may have in place a "floor" or balance below which the General Fund must not fall. The Auditor of State may place the local government on "fiscal caution status" if it met one or more fiscal indicators. To avoid fiscal caution status, for example, a local government might have to stay above 8% carryover balance.

Section 6: Developing a Strategy

Running the campaign: If you do not have a staff member whose time can be reimbursed by the PAC to coordinate efforts, enlist the help of local colleges. Many communications, marketing and public relations course instructors would be happy for the opportunity to create a hands-on class project. You can also enlist the help of someone well known in the community to head your public relations effort. Even if you do have a communications staffer, you should consider external resources because it can be difficult for full-time agency staff to function as campaign heads during business hours. Volunteers can operate throughout the day.

Professional consultant: The decision to hire a consultant must be made after careful consideration by the PAC. A consultant may cost a significant amount of money and may or may not be feasible depending on the funding available. A consultant can provide important planning and management for your levy campaign including a campaign strategy, voter analysis, aggregate data analysis, household data, and theme development. A consultant can review the campaign budget to offer the media, printing/mailing,

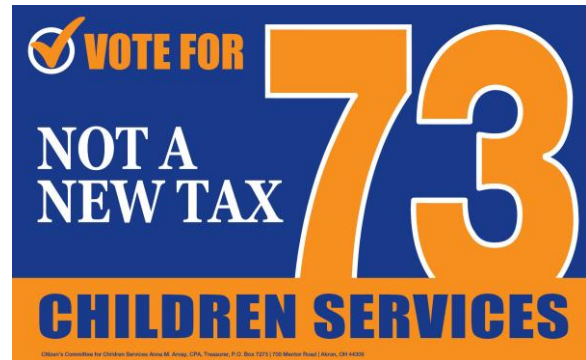
and grassroots plan for a successful levy, and then follow through by coordinating news releases, commercials/PSAs, and other media advocacy. The website <https://www.win-your-levy.com> is an excellent tool, providing an entire marketing campaign, individualized to your levy, for a reasonable fee, which can be refunded in full if your levy fails to pass.

Start campaigning: You can begin campaigning once a treasurer for the PAC has been designated. If you have a treasurer in place, you can campaign three years in advance of the election! That being said, your agency can campaign separately from the PAC and without even mentioning the levy. Traditional and social media advocacy, newsletters, and events can and should be used during agency operating hours throughout every year to promote the good things you are doing in the community. Keep your message in the media! (Check out PCSAO's Media Guide for more information.)

Assess the outcomes of prior levies:

- Meet with the county board of elections and secure precinct-by-precinct results of all school and human service levies for the past five years (or the most recent of each).
- Ask the board of elections to provide you with an estimate of how many

people will vote in the election in which your issue will run.



Focus your efforts: Using the information gathered from the board of elections, begin to identify where you might target the bulk of your campaign efforts. Divide the precincts into thirds: those that almost always support levies, those where the vote is usually very close on levy issues, and those that traditionally vote down levy issues. You only have so much time and money. Develop campaign plans to target the precincts where issues are almost always passed and those where the vote is generally close. Think about who can be recruited in those areas to help you, how you will get your message out, etc.

Traditional and/or social media: Consider your audience. Radio, newspaper, and television ads are still effective ways to communicate your message. Billboards in targeted precincts are also useful. These traditional forms of media are also the most expensive. In 2009, Stark County had a budget of approximately \$25,000 for its levy.

More than \$20,000 was spent on traditional media. The committee received many compliments about its 30-second radio spots, which highlighted a few horrific cases and featured a local 7-year-old saying, "I can't prevent child abuse. You can." The Stark County levy passed with 64% voting in favor of it. Most of the traditional media ads were launched during the last few days before the election.

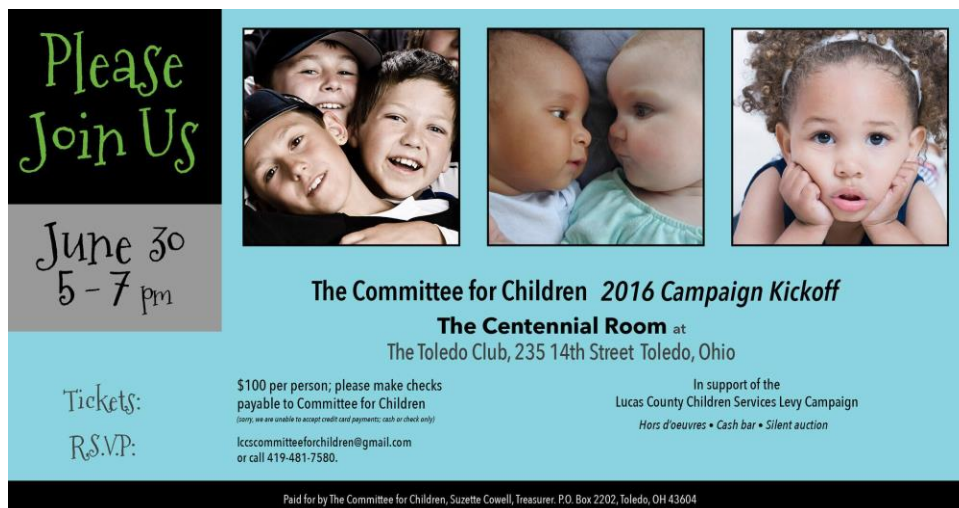
Today, no one running an effective levy campaign can overlook social media. It's free or low cost, and easily executed. Stark was able to build its levy Facebook friends number to 650 within a few weeks. The constant messaging generated more than 1,500 hits to the website. Start with a user-friendly and attractive website. Once built, Facebook and Twitter can be used to attract visitors and build support. The person

Email and text message blasts should also be used frequently to keep your volunteers and staff engaged in the campaign process. Ask your volunteers to forward these messages to their friends and family. The biggest advantage to using social media: You won't have to pound the pavement to find someone to volunteer. Who doesn't love Facebook?

Still not sold on social media? According to Pew research compiled in 2015, more than 65 percent of adults in the United States use Facebook. More than a third are over age 65 – a reliable voting population – and that figure is up more than three times what it was in 2010.

Negative vs. positive campaign messages:

Use a message that resonates with voters, such as Stark County's "I can't prevent child



Please Join Us
June 30
5 - 7 pm

The Committee for Children 2016 Campaign Kickoff
The Centennial Room at
The Toledo Club, 235 14th Street Toledo, Ohio

Tickets: \$100 per person; please make checks payable to Committee for Children
(sorry, we are unable to accept credit card payments: cash or check only)
RSVP: lcccommitteeforchildren@gmail.com
or call 419-481-7580.

In support of the
Lucas County Children Services Levy Campaign
Hors d'oeuvres • Cash bar • Silent auction

Paid for by The Committee for Children, Suzette Cowell, Treasurer, P.O. Box 2202, Toledo, OH 43604

or people in charge of updating should be doing so two to three times per week. As the election approaches, social media sites should be updated daily, boosting posts.

abuse. You can." The levy passed by focusing on the wellbeing of the child, using emotional appeal to engage voters. Some counties have succeeded when showing

bruised and battered children, or with messages that elicit sadness or fear about the consequences should the levy not pass. Other counties have succeeded showing smiling, happy children and messages that focus on positive outcomes for children and families. When creating a message, stay away from verbiage such as “Keep Kids Safe.” Using this type of message puts you at risk, especially if something horrific happens to a local child during the election.

Section 7: Running a Campaign

Employees working on levy materials during the workday: Employees should be trained on what they can and cannot say on agency time. They CAN talk about and explain the agency, its programs and the fact that the levy is on the ballot and what that means to the agency. They CANNOT distribute campaign materials, ask for votes, or fundraise on agency time, in agency facilities, or with agency equipment. If it is part of your job to speak on behalf of the agency, you may include the levy facts in the course of your regular work.

Successful marketing activities: Depending on the agency budget, marketing activities can run the gamut: TV ads that feature young adults helped by the agency, direct mail sent the same day to each voter who requested an absentee ballot, phone banks

staffed with callers armed with voter lists (again, targeted by precinct), yard signs aimed at getting voters to the polls, email blasts to supporters, media support from minority and alternative community papers, and ongoing community outreach and earned media. To assist in the process, acquire a list of registered voters, which should be available for a nominal fee from your local board of elections.

Levy website linked from agency website:

You can link your levy website to your agency website, but it needs to have its own domain. It shouldn't be part of the agency website.

Low-budget and no-budget options: When working with little or no budget, agencies can employ email blasts, social media, speaking engagements, and other outreach activities. Direct mailings to absentee voters and door-to-door literature drops in targeted precincts are both inexpensive options. Some radio and TV stations might be willing to play public service announcements (PSAs), and most would be willing to interview the campaign spokesperson (earned media).

Contacting the media: Your local news stations and newspapers can provide both positive and negative media coverage of your campaign. It may be beneficial to list the strengths and weaknesses of the levy

and come up with specific responses to any anticipated negative reactions in your community. A news release or, if holding a press event, a media ad can be written and forwarded to local newspapers. An outline describing whether it is a replacement or renewal, the levy millage, annual budget, expenditures covered by the levy, specific services, prevention programs, and effectiveness of services will guide you through the meeting.

Perhaps there is a specific journalist or news anchor who supports your cause and is willing to endorse the levy. Sometimes, the newspaper will invite the PAC to an editorial board meeting to discuss the levy facts in order to make a decision whether to support the levy or not. Meet editors, reporters, and broadcasters BEFORE there is a tragedy in your community. Respond quickly to media inquiries, and understand their deadlines. More information is available in PCSAO's Media Guide, but here are some basic reminders:

- Make your pitch relatable- tell "people stories."
- Be as forthcoming as possible when asked questions
- NEVER EVER EVER lie about or attempt to cover up mistakes or problems
- Be proactive – pitch story ideas

- At minimum, use special "months" as hooks for positive stories
- AVOID "no comment" if at all possible (and it almost always is!)

Using volunteers: Volunteers are vital to the grassroots component of your campaign. It may be beneficial to create a volunteer committee with one person as the volunteer coordinator. This person will need to recruit people from within your agency as well as others who support your levy to volunteer their time to walk in parades, forward information on Facebook, distribute yard signs, participate in leaflet drops, pass information out at sporting events, or stand at the polls on Election Day. The coordinator can send out emails or create online sign-up sheets (e.g., SignUpGenius.com) to ensure that there are enough volunteers to cover these events.

The effects of absentee ballots and early voting: Ohio currently allows absentee voting and early voting, without stating a specific reason, up to 30 days before the election, and many voters are now voting absentee just to make it easier on their schedule. This can impact your campaign in a variety of ways. Contact your county board of elections to gather information about the percentage of absentee voters in each precinct. This can help you decide when to coordinate campaign activities in

your community. The percentage of absentee voters in your community can also impact when you air commercial advertisements.

Conducting speaking engagements:

Speaking to your community about the importance of your agency can greatly impact the success of your levy campaign. There are many groups that you should contact regarding your issue, so creating a list of organizations will provide you with an excellent starting point. You can create a blanket letter requesting to speak at local meetings, and send the letter to various community stakeholders such as chambers of commerce, city/township councils, houses of worship, schools, your local League of Women Voters, the YMCA, community colleges, American Legion, and civic clubs (Eagles, Elks, rotary, VFWs). It may be important to identify one or two members of the PAC and/or a staff member to address the community through public speaking, and create a sample presentation so that all necessary information is included.

Statistics: It is important to share with the community specific information about the services provided by your agency in order to receive community support for your levy. A levy fact sheet can be created detailing the specific services provided by the agency. The information can include the

number of reports received, investigations made, the basic needs of children in care, kinship programs, foster and adoption programs, contracts with community agencies, parenting programs, and quality of services provided. Some counties use the information from their annual report to outline expenditures and the need for a levy; other counties just describe services provided.

Obtaining support from public officials:

There are some public officials who openly support children services and will be great assets to your levy campaign. There are other officials who may need to be contacted in order to receive their support. If there are members of your PAC who personally know a public official, they can call them directly and ask for their support. You can also ask them if they are willing to help with the campaign by allowing their name in an endorsement or using their picture as an official supporting the campaign. You can also send out endorsement request letters asking for their support.

Section 8: Handling the outcome

During election night: It is nice to have an election night activity to watch the results come in. The PAC members who have

worked so hard to spread the word will greatly appreciate a place to watch nervously for the results after all their hard work. You can have the local news on and Internet access of poll activity through the board of elections, and it can be available on a projector screen for minute-by-minute updates. Perhaps you can provide appetizers for the supporters who stop by.

Close votes: It is difficult to communicate results when you do not know the outcomes; however, you can share the facts. You may be asked for results before they are official. You can only share what you know unofficially for the record. This is especially important if the vote is close. You can also share your optimism for a positive outcome.

Failed levy: An unsuccessful levy is a difficult situation for everyone involved in the campaign. Your levy chair (if you have one) and/or your agency director have to acknowledge the loss and make some general statement of next steps. This can be done at the election night gathering if the loss is clear, but should also occur the next day to the staff and perhaps the media. Most campaigns have a contingency plan or “what if” scenario. Because so much depends on what gets approved for the ballot, it may be hard to make a specific statement right on the heels of a loss. However, volunteers and the community of

supporters can be acknowledged for their efforts, a general statement of the agency’s concerns moving forward can be conveyed, and a timeline can be shared for decisions on the next try at passing a levy.

Post-levy advertisement (thank you): A thank you should be broadcast the very next day if the outcome is clear. This can go on websites, social networking sites, newspaper ads, or if you ran a billboard campaign, place “thank you” on your latest billboard (this is pretty cheap to do).

Reflect, debrief: Regardless of the outcome, here are some basic steps for the weeks following the election:

- Clean up your materials immediately after the campaign or put thank you stickers on your signs and remove one week after the election.
- Maintain your visibility in the media. Show children and families who were assisted by the levy.
- Keep your agency in front of the community on an ongoing basis (“every year should be a levy year”).
- Thank the voters with one last newspaper ad. Celebrate the victory and recognize all who contributed.
- Have a levy committee recognition party. This is a get-together where you recognize the levy chair(s) and

other key volunteers with a small token of appreciation. Volunteers who are recognized will come back again to help the agency.

- Within 30 days, conduct a post-election analysis to determine where you did well and where you did not. Use this information to begin planning for your next levy.
- Follow up with the campaign treasurer to be certain that all post-election forms are filed with the local board of elections. Also check to see what is done with any leftover campaign funds. This could include use for other PACs or donations to charitable organizations.



External Sources:

Ohio Library Council. 2014. "Ballot Issues Handbook Volume I - Campaigns 101: The Nuts and Bolts." *Ohio Library Council*. <http://olc.org/pdf/BallotIssuesVolumeIAugust14.pdf>.