

Strategic Modernization Plan

2023-2024



Approved by PCSAO Membership

Dec. 1, 2022

Contents

Background	3
What We Do	3
What We Value	3
Who We Work With	4
Our Core Functions	5
Core Functions Strategic Plan	6
Modernization Focus Areas	9
Modernization Strategic Plan	9

Background

Every two years, the PCSAO membership discusses and approves the Association's strategic priorities. The two-year strategic plan drives the work of PCSAO's staff, Board of Trustees, and members. In May 2020, the PCSAO Board of Trustees launched a Board-led workgroup to discuss how the children services system could be modernized and to develop a strategic plan for membership consideration. Workgroup members discussed opportunities to modernize the system, with much thought on how to transform county PCSAs. This led to the creation and implementation of the 2021-2022 Strategic Modernization Plan that PCSAO Executive Membership approved on December 2, 2020.

The approved 2021-2022 Strategic Modernization Plan maintained PCSAO's traditional two-year strategic plan, which primarily focuses on the Association's four "core functions" with agreed-upon priorities. These core functions serve as the platform for the identified four modernization areas with agreed-upon priorities. Refer to the Core Functions and Modernization Areas for more on how they overlap and build off each other as needed.

The PCSAO Board of Trustees agreed that the current focus and work of the Strategic Modernization Plan should continue as the focus for PCSAO staff, Board, and members. The Board reviewed the accomplishments for the 2021-2022 plan and approved the 2023-2024 priorities for each of the four Core Functions and the four Modernization Areas. PCSAO Executive Membership agreed and unanimously approved the Association's 2023-2024 strategic plan at its Membership Meeting on December 1, 2022.

What We Do

PCSAO Executive Membership confirmed the following mission statement that was adopted in December 2020, which is:

PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

What We Value

Ohio's PCSAs share a set of values that must be supported by sound public policy; these include:

- **No child should live in fear or chaos in the home.** Ohio's **children deserve to grow up in families** and communities that assure their safety and basic human needs, without abuse or neglect. Protecting children from abuse and neglect is the community's responsibility, and that of every public and private service that reaches children and families, from schools and hospitals to community- and faith-based service providers.
- **Ohio's children and families deserve affirmation of their identities and diversity,** including race, color, national origin, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender

expression, and sexual orientation. A robust set of community supports grounded in equity must be in place to prevent abuse and neglect before it happens.

- When child abuse and neglect do come to the attention of a PCSA, **children deserve a timely response based on best practices** that reflect cultural humility. At the same time, families deserve an opportunity to stay together, as children's long-term outcomes will improve if they can remain with their families, with effective services designed to support families' strengths.
- When removal from the home is necessary to ensure safety, **children deserve to be placed in the least restrictive environment possible** that will limit any further trauma. That means placing them with relatives or friends (kin) first and placing them in family foster care only if kin placements are not available. Placement in a residential treatment center or group home (congregate care) should be rare and of short duration. Every effort must be made by PCSAs, the courts, caregivers, and other stakeholders to reunify children with their families as swiftly as possible.
- **Foster and kinship families deserve to be well trained and supported**, trauma informed, committed to reunifying children with their families, and genuinely engaged with PCSAs, birth parents, and the courts as partners in supporting the best interests of the children in their care. While in care, children's physical and behavioral health care, educational, and other well-being needs must be met with robust community services and coordination grounded in equity. Consideration must also be given to the needs of the caregiver family, whether kinship or foster.
- When reunification is not possible, and parents' rights are terminated, **children deserve swift legal permanency** so that they do not linger in foster care and age out of the system without meaningful permanent connections.
- Children and families deserve a **caseworker who is well trained, supported, and not overburdened** to ensure the best outcomes for that child and family.
- **Youth who age out of foster care and young adults deserve to be supported**, connected to positive mentors, and assisted with postsecondary education, employment, housing, and other meaningful supports as they transition to adulthood.

Who We Work With

PCSAO develops and maintains a broad network of professional and community contacts to keep current and involved with issues impacting children and families and the children services system. PCSAO builds strategic partnerships to inform and support association priorities centered on sound public policy, program excellence and public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

Our Core Functions

As PCSAO’s mission states, the four core functions that guide our work are:



These four core functions are fluid, overlap when needed, and build on each other to effectively carry out priorities, strategies, and activities. The primary efforts under the four core functions are highlighted below. Many of these efforts are considered PCSAO’s “ongoing commitments” to members such as holding an annual conference, promoting children services on social media, advocating for legislation, providing timely updates, and convening membership to share pertinent information.

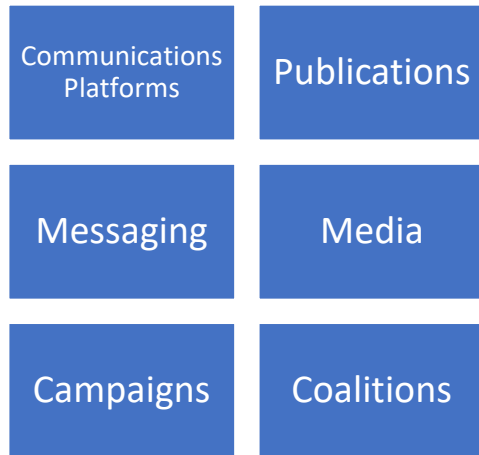
Public Policy

State Legislation	Administrative Rules
State Biennial Budget	Policy Initiatives
Federal Policy	Partners & Coalitions

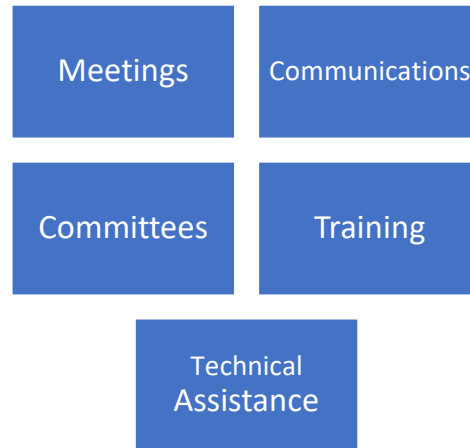
Program Excellence

Ohio START	Annual Conference
System Advancement	Workforce Strategies
Center of Excellence	OCWTP

Public Value



Member Services



Core Functions Strategic Plan

For efforts that are new, changing, or being adjusted, the strategic plan captures these strategies below. As aforementioned, for efforts not being changed, they will continue as “ongoing commitments” to PCSAO’s work.

Public Policy

Strategies (2023-2024)

- Advocate for additional financial resources in the 2024-2025 biennial budget to address the workforce and placement crises and develop a robust tiered foster care system statewide.
- Advocate for solutions to the children services workforce crisis, including recommendations from PCSAO’s commissioned research, the need to define the work including the “first responders” issue, interventions from the workforce grant that were successful, opportunities for efforts to be scaled (such as Coach Ohio and Resiliency Alliance, and new technology), and the continued need for some pause on new state requirements and changes.
- Advocate for solutions to the placement/treatment crisis, including short-term crisis stabilization options, a Governor-commissioned workgroup charged with the accountability to identify more longer-term solutions for youth with complex, high-acuity needs, and strategies identified in the Children’s Continuum of Care area of this plan.



- D. Research and monitor the impact of the *Dobbs* decision, and any further abortion restrictions Ohio may enact, on the children services system.
- E. Work with PCSAs and ODJFS to support best practices for screening, including support and review at the agency level and the impact of a reporting and notification portal, especially on disproportionality and workforce; also, explore concepts such as a regional screening support approach that could include consultation, training, coaching, CQI, and clearer definition of what information can and cannot be used to inform the screening decision. Ensure that ODJFS' review and revision of Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 5101:2-36, Screening and Investigation, reflects PCSA input and priorities.
- F. Pursue proactive policy priorities, as determined by membership, through legislation such as PCSA legal representation and driver's licenses for foster youth.
- G. Increase PCSAO's and member PCSAs' visibility and credibility and elevate the understanding and value of the children services system in the 135th General Assembly by: supporting a statewide ride-along campaign, cultivating new and existing legislative champions, hosting and participating in legislative briefings and other educational events, facilitating face-to-face meetings between PCSA leaders and their state legislators in Columbus and in district, and meeting regularly with legislators and key caucus staff.
- H. Provide leadership on new policy initiatives that impact children services; build, strengthen and maintain stakeholder relationship to help impact those initiatives; provide relevant information and technical assistance to members; and ensure that PCSAO's public policy positions are developed and evaluated using an equity frame.

Program Excellence

Strategies (2023-2024)

- A. Continue to lead and expand Ohio START by adding one or two more cohorts, working to increase the number of minority families participating in Ohio START, providing training and technical assistance and growing fidelity to the model to achieve positive outcomes for children and their families.
- B. Strategically partner with the state and other key stakeholders to advance program implementation and system improvements that support member agencies and the children and families they serve.
- C. Establish a robust structure similar to a "Center of Excellence" that would support the development, county-level implementation, and evaluation of effective children services agency practice.
- D. Advocate for the use of stage-based implementation of new evidence-based programs launched by state partners to lay a foundation for program success.



- E. Identify interventions, successful strategies and resources to improve workforce recruitment and retention in member agencies.
- F. Continue to grow the annual conference including the addition of a conference partner, increased PCSA participation on the planning committee, national keynote speakers, and additional sponsors/exhibitors.

Public Value

Strategies (2023-2024)

- A. Update and refine PCSAO's and Ohio START's communications plan to include: 1) messaging and framing the workforce and placement/treatment challenges; 2) expanding social media presence and targeting followers; 3) identifying new areas for proactive work, e.g., concrete and economic supports, SUD; and 4) supporting state budget, policy and related campaigns.
- B. Implement a consistent process and schedule for producing the PCSAO Factbook on a fiscal year basis (public release) and revisit whether also having a calendar year schedule (for members only) is desired.
- C. Publish research on the Shared Practice Model and one other timely topic.



Member Services

Strategies (2023-2024)

- A. Maintain current member services and look for opportunities to enhance services and supports.
- B. Continue to manage and lead the ODJFS workforce grant and advocate for sustained funding and solutions based on PCSA successes demonstrated through the grant.



Modernization Focus Areas

The modernization planning identified four critical areas of focus that need to be addressed if Ohio's children services system is to transform. These four areas are:



Similar to the PCSAO Core Functions, these four critical areas of focus are fluid, overlap when needed, build on each other, and leverage the four core functions to effectively carry out the strategies.

Modernization Strategic Plan

For efforts that are new, changing, or being adjusted, the strategic plan captures these strategies below. As aforementioned, for efforts not being changed, they will continue as “ongoing commitments” to PCSAO’s work.



Safety Culture

Strategies (2023-2024)

- A. Align Safety Culture approach with ODJFS workforce grant strategies that are proven successful with impacting the agency’s culture, and research effectiveness of other interventions in achieving improved agency and safety culture.

- B. Fulfill initial commitment to facilitate Cohort 1 Learning Community and expand the learning community to include additional cohort(s) including ongoing partnership with the University of Kentucky for collection and analysis of the culture survey data.
- C. Develop strategic partnerships with individuals and organizations to assist PCSA efforts to improve workplace connection, child safety, and employee retention.
- D. Explore the possibility of rebranding or expanding the concept of Safety Culture.



Shared Practice Model

Strategies (2023-2024)

- A. Finalize the development of the Ohio Shared Practice Model.
- B. Work with researcher to complete and publish the behavioral research project and to integrate the findings into the Implementation Plan.
- C. Recruit a diverse, knowledgeable, experienced Implementation Team to develop a stage-based implementation strategy driven by input from frontline workers.
- D. Align Shared Practice Model behavior implementation with existing PCSAO strategic initiatives, including Safety Culture and REI.



Race, Equity & Inclusion (REI)

Strategies (2023-2024)

- A. Expand the Race Equity Community of Practice in two ways: 1) based on local data and internal assessment, expand the focus if needed to also include other areas of equity such as LGBTQ youth, poverty, Appalachia, disability, etc.; and 2) expand the number of participating counties.
- B. Evaluate and engage with research in progress by ODJFS, the Ohio Family Care Association, and others to identify policy and practice solutions.
- C. Monitor the Casey Family Programs/metro agency Community Response Guide project, the ODJFS reporting portal, the Ohio Children's Trust Fund mandated reporter training, and other community education-focused efforts to address disproportionality.



Continuum of Care

Strategies (2023-2024)

Prevention, Intervention, Crisis and Diversion Services

- A. Advocate for the State to develop a shared commitment that includes joint accountability and ownership across systems at both the state and local level for youth with high-acuity, multi-system needs (BH, DD/IDD, JJ) and their families.
- B. Advocate for the State to convene these systems with a sense of urgency and a clear timeline to develop and implement a comprehensive, child-centered, trauma-informed, multi-system, rapid-response approach for youth with high-acuity needs.
- C. Advocate for the state to continue to fund and expand the capacity of Family First prevention services so that they are widely accessible, available, and culturally responsive to diverse communities.
- D. Advocate for a more robust and supported [Center of Excellence](#) for cultivating evidence-based prevention services that PCSAs can access to intervene, divert, and address family crises and reduce existing disparities in service delivery.
- E. Support the state's intention of broadening prevention services to be more upstream and outside of the children services system, including the possibility of expanding Ohio's Family First candidacy definition to support more primary and secondary prevention services.
- F. Work with state partners to develop and fund concrete services and supports that can meet families' basic needs, assist in stabilizing them, and navigate cultural differences, including the benefits bridge.
- G. Advocate for the expanded use of peer mentor/parent partner models to keep families together in children services, including state funding by Medicaid.
- H. Advocate and support full implementation of OhioRISE to provide moderate and intensive care coordination for youth with complex needs as well as access to RISE-specific services to prevent unnecessary custody relinquishment and stabilize those in custody, including evaluating the impact of the waiver portion of OhioRISE.
- I. Advocate for the expansion of Juvenile Court diversion and community programs to deep-end youth to prevent cross-over into children services.
- J. Work with ODJFS and ODM to study OhioRISE's ability to divert multi-system youth from children services and to assist PCSAs in securing appropriate treatment, placement, and services for eligible youth in custody.
- K. Support the state's enhancement of crisis services/continuum, including Mobile Crisis Stabilization Service, and ensure 24/7 availability and accessibility to such treatment.

Resource Family (Kinship, Foster) Services

- A. Continue to work with ODJFS and related stakeholders to develop stage-based implementation of a Tiered Foster Care system that can adequately meet the needs of children and caregivers, including professionalizing caregivers and establishing common outcomes.
- B. Evaluate the effectiveness of the state's contracted foster care recruitment and retention strategies to determine funding and strategy for SFY2024-2025. Such strategy should include funding support for PCSAs to strengthen and expand recruitment and retention of foster caregivers and to maintain a balance of privately licensed and publicly licensed family foster caregivers and treatment foster caregivers.
- C. Advocate to reduce financial and other barriers that kinship caregivers face so that they can provide a stable home for kin children without jeopardizing their own financial security; assistance should support and incentivize permanency.
 - a. Ensure effective implementation of the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP), scheduled for January 1, 2023. Advocate for ODJFS to evaluate the program, share results, and revise the program as necessary.
 - b. Advocate for the establishment of childcare support for more kinship caregivers and possibly foster caregivers.
 - c. Advocate for the expansion of [grandparent power of attorney and caretaker authorization affidavit](#) to relatives beyond grandparents. Remove barriers that prevent child support from flowing to kinship caregivers.
- D. Advocate for the state to create a tool for the systemic review of policies and practice around adoptive/kinship/foster licensing to assess the extent to which policies are supportive of diverse resource homes.
- E. Review Ohio's kinship policies to ensure that they do not reinforce inequities or unnecessarily exclude families from being considered as kinship caregivers.
- F. Review and advocate for revisions where necessary in the language and guidance that workers are using in recruiting resource families (foster vs. adoption) to ensure that language fosters relationships with families and reflects cultural humility.
- G. Advocate for enhancement of the support available to resource families to navigate cultural differences, including specific training and support.
- H. Consider advocating for a performance-based system that evaluates Ohio's foster care placements, monitors agencies in meeting such outcomes, and aligns payment based on those outcomes, similar to how value-based healthcare rewards providers with incentive payments for the quality of care based on patient health outcomes.

Residential and Other Treatment Services

- A. Advocate for the state to create new/additional short-term children's crisis stabilization options (including facility beds, foster homes, and respite homes).
- B. Request that the Governor commission a new workgroup/Advisory Council, similar to the Governor's Recovery Ohio Advisory Council, to address the treatment crisis for youth with complex, high-acuity needs that has led to the state's placement crisis. This workgroup should identify the current gaps in the treatment continuum of care for children with mental health, developmental disabilities, physical health, and juvenile justice needs; identify solutions for treatment options and services, including increasing capacity for out-of-home placements when needed; and align such options to what OhioRISE will be bringing to the continuum.
- C. Advocate for the state to commission a study to determine Ohio's current capacity to meet the needs of complex, high-acuity youth and identify treatment gaps in the state's current continuum of care, especially residential.
- D. Monitor the implementation of the OhioRISE Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility service, including delays, capacity, and target population, and work with ODM to discern if there are any gaps in the continuum and if custody relinquishment and out-of-state placements have been reduced, including any impact on reducing racial disparities.
- E. Advocate for ODJFS to evaluate annually the impact of QRTPs to determine if there is an appropriate network of providers that offer a range of residential services, effectively engage families, provide aftercare services, implement the selected trauma-informed models, maintain access to and provide 24/7 nursing services, reduce racial disparities, and improve overall child outcomes as a result of being cared for and treated by a QRTP.



Public Children Services Association of Ohio

37 West Broad Street, Suite 1100

Columbus, OH 43215

614-224-5802

www.pcsao.org