

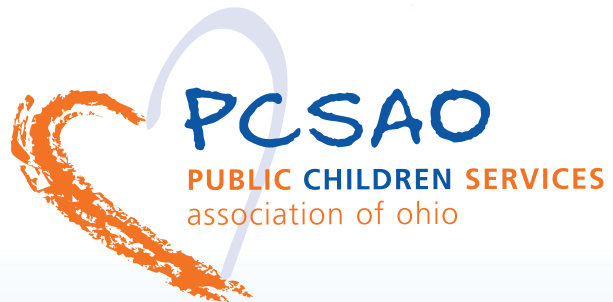
Safe Children Stable Families Supportive Communities

PCSAO Annual Report 2023



PCSAO

PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICES
association of ohio



The past year brought big changes for Ohio children services. Gov. Mike DeWine established the Department of Children and Youth to coordinate programming and improve child outcomes. PCSAO is pleased to partner with Director Kara Wenthe and her staff to strengthen the state/county partnership for families and their children. During our annual conference in September, we thanked Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Director Matt Damschroder for his longtime leadership, including a \$15 million workforce recruitment and retention grant, and welcomed Director Wenthe in her new role.

In a tight budget year, we are grateful that the General Assembly increased the State Child Protection Allocation and maintained other key investments. Legislative champions such as Rep. Jim Hoops and Sen. Nickie Antonio ensured our collective commitment to child protection and family strengthening. Even as Ohio START expanded to additional counties and new resources were made available for kinship caregivers, county agencies continued to face a lack of appropriate, affordable, close-to-home placement options for children with multi-system needs. We appreciate the new department's efforts to address this crisis.

PCSAO mourned the passing of Gayle Channing Tenenbaum in April. Gayle helped establish PCSAO in 1980 and shaped the association's public policy for 35 years. Her legacy will endure.

I continue to be impressed by the PCSAO Board of Trustees I'm honored to lead. Board members meet almost monthly to ensure appropriate oversight of the association's priorities and financials. They are also active at the district and committee level, gathering input from their peers across each region to inform their work as trustees. And they share their time and talents with fellow directors and with association staff so that we all can improve our leadership capacity.

Even as we built support internally, board members also focused their energy outwards in 2023. They testified in favor of new state budget investments, engaged with the new Department of Children and Youth on critical workforce and placement challenges, and invited their senators and representatives to ride along with a caseworker. They do this all while managing one of the most complex systems for serving families and protecting children. Every day we are grateful for this association that brings us together to learn, advocate, and thrive.



Angela Sausser, MA, MSW, LSW
Executive Director, PCSAO



Stacy Cox, MSW
President, PCSAO Board of Trustees
Director, Champaign County
Job & Family Services

Overview

As the association of Ohio's 88 county children services agencies, PCSAO is truly member driven. Agency leaders create a biennial strategic plan and inform both state and federal advocacy. Thanks to an active Rules Committee, an expert Legislative Committee, and a hard-working Board of Trustees, PCSAO focused its advocacy in 2023 on the biennial state budget, county workforce shortages, and the ongoing placement and treatment crisis.



Pictured left to right: Aimee Clemson (Ashtabula County), Child Advocate of the Year; Chris (Cuyahoga County), Leader of Tomorrow; Felicia Miller (Madison County), Child Protection Support Staff of the Year; Kara Wente, Director, Ohio Department of Children and Youth

Accomplishments

Workforce

Managed a \$15 million workforce recruitment and retention grant from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

- County agencies spent 44% of the grant on retention incentives and 32% on culture and climate initiatives
- 48 PCSAs reported retention rates of 80% or higher, including 15 that reported 100% retention
- 13 PCSAs hired 50% or more workers as a proportion of total frontline staff

Continuum of Care

- Successfully advocated for creation of a statewide, multi-system workgroup to examine the placement and treatment crisis and to develop short- and long-term solutions so that children do not have to spend a night at a children services agency
- Commissioned an article by retired journalist Catherine Candisky to highlight the crisis

Biennial State Budget

- Worked with the Administration and General Assembly to increase the State Child Protection Allocation by \$60 million over two years and to maintain key funding for Ohio START, multi-system youth, and supports for kin caregivers
- Secured needed changes in children services policy proposed in the budget
- Testimony featured Ohio START family peer mentor and agency directors

38th Annual Conference,

"The Ties That Bind: Building a Connected Future"

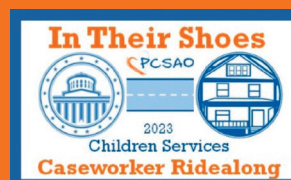
- Attended by nearly 600 child protection professionals
- 29 workshops, 3 keynote speakers, and 20 awards recognizing young adults, families, staff, and advocates
- Aetna Better Health of Ohio and 44 other corporate partners generously sponsored the conference



The Ties That Bind Building a Connected Future

PCSAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Sept. 19-21, 2023

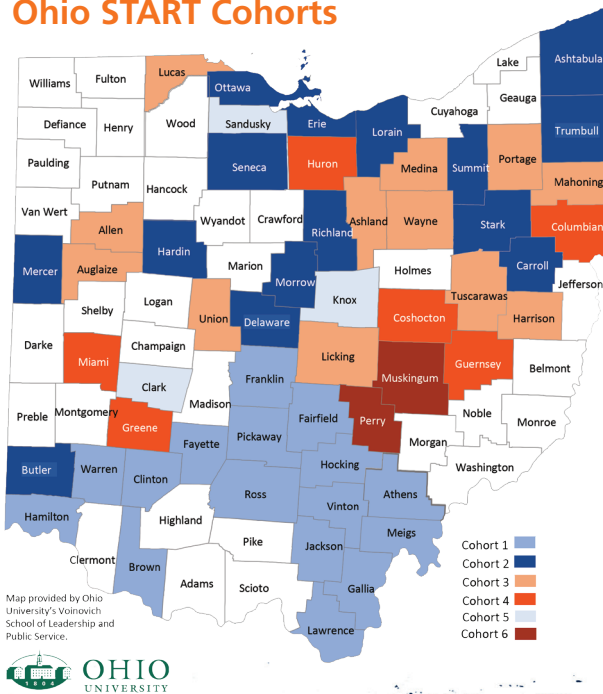


Legislators from 13 counties participated in our 2023 Caseworker Ridealong Campaign, "In Their Shoes," doubling our efforts from 2021. The ridealong provided legislators with firsthand insights into the daily challenges faced by caseworkers, fostering a better understanding of the issues and potentially informing future legislative actions. County agencies hosted four state senators, 15 state representatives, and one legislative aide. During the ridealong, legislators demonstrated interest in addressing the placement crisis, workforce challenges, families struggling with substance use disorder, and service gaps in their region.



Ohio Sobriety Treatment and Reducing Trauma (START) is a children services-led initiative that has been shown, when implemented with fidelity, to improve outcomes for both parents and children affected by child maltreatment and parental substance use disorders. Originally introduced as a pilot project in Ohio in 2017, Ohio START has since expanded its reach to 53 counties, positively impacting more than 2,300 children.

Ohio START Cohorts



Achievements

- Presented on the START model and associated topics at eight state and national conferences and other events
- Launched cohort 6
- Three counties began pre-implementation of the START model
- Hosted a legislative briefing highlighting Ohio START
- 5th Annual Ohio START Summit drew more than 200 attendees and featured a panel of parents who shared their firsthand experience as clients of the Ohio START model
- Presented the first-ever Ohio START Awards for Caseworker, Supervisor, Family Peer Mentor, and Community Partner of the Year

Pictured left to right: Bethany Bolin of Meigs & Gallia counties, Ohio START Community Partner of the Year; Lyndsey Graham of Brown County, Ohio START Family Peer Mentor of the Year; Ann Lynch of Ashtabula County, Ohio START Supervisor of the Year; and Beth Smyntek of Summit County, Ohio START Caseworker of the Year



Certification

- Ohio START became the first in the nation to receive national certification from Children and Family Futures, recognized as a Certified State Infrastructure Affiliate of the National START Model
- Summit, Butler, and Fairfield counties received local certification for quality implementation of a National START Model
- Brown County START marked its first Annual Recertification

"Certification marks a monumental milestone, showcasing the Ohio START program's commitment to excellence in its approach, training, and support for families experiencing substance use disorders and child maltreatment," said Kara Wente, director of the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. "As the first nationally certified program of its kind, it signifies a dedication to the highest standards and commitment to transforming the lives of those in need."

Success Stories

Katie's struggle with substance use led to her daughter, Ashley, being placed with relatives. Despite initial attempts at treatment, Katie returned to use. She avoided contact with Trumbull County Children Services for a while, but once her START caseworker and family peer mentor were able to track her down, she admitted she needed help and agreed to give recovery services another chance. She dedicated herself to her treatment plan with an open mind and a willingness that changed everything. It was evident that she truly came to believe in her own recovery and in herself. With the help of her treatment team, Katie went on to secure sober housing and employment while rebuilding relationships with her loved ones. Ashley is thriving in school and at home, thanks to Katie's hard work and dedication to recovery.



After Cameron and Allie's child tested positive for substances at birth, Athens County Children Services intervened, resulting in their daughter entering foster care. At the time, their older children were already with other family members. Initially resistant to inpatient treatment, Cameron and Allie changed course upon realizing the seriousness of their fentanyl use. Since Feb. 18, 2022, they have remained substance free, completing detox and inpatient programs. Allie continued with intensive outpatient treatment, while Cameron regained a supervisory role at work. With the help of their START team, they are regaining custody of their older boys and have arranged for family friends to adopt their expected child, recognizing their own limitations in parenting. Successfully completing their case plan goals, they now enjoy a substance-free life with their daughter.



Chloe struggled with substance use from a young age and returned to use shortly after the birth of her son. With the support of her START team in Sandusky County, Chloe was able to achieve sobriety and regain full custody of her son. She now works to help others struggling with substance use.



By the Numbers

Number of
New Cases/
Families Enrolled

196

(599 Individuals)

Total Number of
Open Cases
(New + Continuing)

624

(1,960 Individuals)

Number of
Successful
Closures

71

(Out of 125
Closed Cases
in 2023)

Average Number
of Family Peer Mentor
Visits Per (New) Case

23.79

Average Length of
Family Peer Mentor Visits
Per (New) Case*

66.18

Minutes

*texts, emails and secondary
contacts excluded

827

Adults

+

730

Children (0-5)

+

403

Youth (6-18)

=

Total
1,960
Individuals
Served in
2023

For cases that closed in 2023,
average months of sustained
sobriety at program closure:

7.07 Months
(range: 0-24 months)

Strategic Initiatives

Practice in Action Together

PACT – Practice in Action Together – is Ohio’s new shared practice model, designed to strengthen relationships between children services caseworkers and families. PCSAO led the formation of an Advisory Group in 2023 with two goals: 1) developing an implementation plan for the model based on research and design work in the two years prior and 2) supporting the Behavioral Research Project in partnership with Kaye Implementation & Evaluation. Both goals were successful, and PCSAO ended 2023 selecting the first set of counties that will implement PACT. As with the earlier stages of the project, the installation process will be co-designed with families, workers, and leaders.



The Behavioral Research Project sought to establish the connection between PACT behaviors and positive relational outcomes between families and workers. With help from 32 participating PCSAs, PCSAO collected 247 surveys from workers and families. Surveys showed that workers and families agreed that the most important behaviors leading to honesty, shared decision making, hope, confidence, and shared dignity are when the worker consistently demonstrates respect, listening, and vulnerability. The Behavioral Research Project will help PCSAO prioritize and test change during PACT installation and implementation in 2024.

Race, Equity and Inclusion

PCSAO’s ongoing commitment to Race, Equity and Inclusion (REI) was a key feature of both PACT and the safety culture work. And it was central to two separate communities of practice focused on race equity. The communities of practice fostered support for diversity officers within a number of PCSAs, created space for celebrating successes and overcoming challenges, identified local champions for increasing racial diversity among agency staff while addressing racial disproportionality in foster care, and advanced strategies for Ohio START to reach families of color. PCSAO hosted membership-wide equity webinars on reducing child welfare involvement through concrete economic supports, presented by Chapin Hall, and improving direct practice with LGBTQ+ youth in care, presented by Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services. The annual conference featured an REI track and keynote centered on equity.



Safety Culture

Helping Ohio Public Children Services Agencies Improve
Workplace Connection | Child Safety | Employee Retention

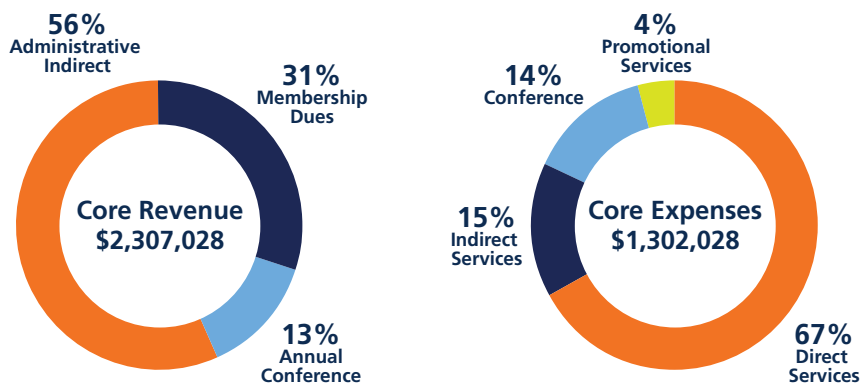
Safety Culture Learning Community

The work with a cohort of counties that came together in 2022 as a Safety Culture Learning Community continued with learning, collaborating, and testing change. As that work concluded, three primary lessons emerged: 1) culture can be measured and changed, 2) leaders’ commitment to factors like psychological safety and organizational connectedness has a direct impact on their teams, and 3) aligning culture change work with practice change presents an opportunity for an even greater outcome. Moving forward, PCSAO will incorporate safety culture work into the PACT implementation framework.



Administration

2023 Financial Report



Grants and Donations beyond Core Operations

Grants and Donations beyond Core Operations	Total Expenses Cumulative
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services - Workforce Grant	\$9,682,155
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services	\$1,327,544
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services - Ohio START	\$1,663,579
Other Grant Revenue and Donations	\$150,000
TOTALS	\$12,823,278

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