



# Reflections on 2022



The job of a child protection caseworker may be one of the hardest there is. Children services has always struggled with turnover, but the post-pandemic workforce crisis hit us even harder. After all, shortages in manufacturing and retail are one thing, but high caseworker turnover can lead to longer stays in foster care and unsafe children. That's why PCSAO was pleased in 2022 to release the results of an intensive research project, ["Building a 21st Century Children Services Workforce."](#) We immediately went to work tackling county- and state-level strategies to recruit and retain frontline staff. In June, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services awarded counties a \$15 million grant, managed by PCSAO, to support these efforts.

In addition, we devoted resources to addressing environmental factors that affect recruitment and retention, including: 1) creating a culture of safety within public agencies, 2) ensuring a diverse workforce and equitable outcomes by addressing racial disparities, and 3) identifying shared practice values and behaviors that improve outcomes for children and families.

This annual report outlines these and other association efforts, including advocating for sound public policy, communicating the value of this important work, and leading excellent programs such as Ohio START.

Our work continues to be guided by a [strategic plan](#) adopted by our membership of public agencies in all 88 Ohio counties, led by our outstanding Board of Trustees, and carried out by our talented staff. We are grateful to Gov. DeWine and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services for a partnership that is leading to new investments that will further strengthen and stabilize our system.



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



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



As director of Ohio START, I am proud to report that 2022 was a year of exciting growth for our program. Launched by then-Attorney General Mike DeWine in 2017, Ohio START (Sobriety Treatment and Reducing Trauma) is now being implemented in 54 of Ohio's 88 counties. Part of a national model that can trace its beginnings to the Buckeye State, START (Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams) moved from a promising program to a supported program in the National Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse in 2022. Later in the year, [Brown County](#) in southern Ohio became the first local jurisdiction in the nation to achieve national START certification. And we served our 1,000th family!

Local START programs continued to graduate families, demonstrating that this children services-led model can keep families affected by both child maltreatment and substance use disorder together and reunify them quickly and safely. Our partnership with The Ohio State University, Ohio University and Children and Family Futures continues to build evidence of this success, while a new collaboration with Kinnect to Family fostered new capacity for identifying kin connections to support children and families during their recovery journey.

Central to our work is a belief that people can recover, families can heal, and peer mentors can walk alongside families on this journey. Ohio continues to build on the success of the peer mentor model as we watch START family peers and caseworkers achieve extraordinary results, and we appreciate continued investment by Gov. DeWine and his administration.



**Fawn Gadel, JD**  
Director of Ohio START





## Overview

The landscape of children services has changed dramatically in recent years. New state investments, and new state mandates. New restrictions on federal funding for certain residential foster care placements — amid declining foster home recruitment. New technological advancements and documentation requirements even as face-to-face engagement with families becomes more essential than ever.

In this new environment, PCSAO helped county children services agencies adapt, communicate and advocate. Persistent workforce shortages took their toll, as did a long-simmering treatment crisis that forced many youth with multi-system needs into foster care — often without adequate placements. County children services agencies, with support from county commissioners and other local leaders, embraced these changes, sought flexibility and stayed true to their mission of keeping children safe while strengthening families.

## PCSAO Accomplishments

### Public Policy

- Executive Director Angela Sausser testified before the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee at a special hearing on America's Mental Health Crisis; PCSAO released its report, "Placement Crisis Affecting Children Services," that same day, revealing that 1 in 4 children who came into custody in 2021 did so primarily due to behavioral health, developmental disability or as a diversion from juvenile justice
- Hosted a legislative briefing: "Children Services 101: What It Is – And Is Not"
- Recognized Rep. Tavia Galonski and Rep. Susan Manchester as 2022 Legislators of the Year, and retiring Sen. Jay Hottinger with a lifetime achievement award

### Workforce

- Commissioned research and recommendations on "Building a 21st Century Children Services Workforce" to address the frontline staffing crisis
- Managed a \$15 million grant from ODJFS to assist counties in putting the report's recommendations into action through culture and climate initiatives, incentives, and targeted supports

### Continuum of Care

Each year, PCSAO makes progress in bringing our 2018 [Children's Continuum of Care Reform](#) plan to fruition, and 2022 was no exception:

- Provided design recommendations, feedback and engagement for the new specialty managed care program for children with significant behavioral health needs, OhioRISE
- Worked with ODJFS and stakeholders to build out a new tiered foster care system that will improve therapeutic and tangible supports for children in foster care, expand training, standardize rates and focus on reunification
- Worked with ODJFS and other partners to prioritize readiness, improve assessment and operationalize new and existing prevention services, including Ohio START and motivational interviewing, through a contract with the new Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Center of Excellence

## Ohio START Achievements

### Accomplishments

- Served more than 1,900 children
- Launched [cohort 5](#)
- Launched pre-implementation track as an additional way to engage PCSAs in implementation of the model
- Worked diligently to grow positive relationships with behavioral health partners

throughout the state, including launching a new Intro to START training and developing relationships with over 120 agencies

- Launched Ohio START as a prevention service in Ohio, including implementing a new fiscal system, eligibility determination and case documentation, all in an effort to increase START

sustainability and continue to keep kids in their homes when safe to do so

- Presented on the START model and associated topics at five state and national conferences
- Continued our collaboration with Kinnect to Family to provide dedicated specialists for selected Ohio START cases

### Training and Meetings

- Facilitated two Provider Resilience series in which participants reported an increase in resilience skills after completion
- Offered 70 training sessions attended by 1,131 participants
- Annual Ohio START Summit May 11 drew 215 participants in person



### Training Spotlight

START launched a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for Supervisors led by facilitators from Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation. Monthly one-hour sessions took place January through September with three topics repeated each quarter to allow the learning and discussion to evolve. Participants were asked to practice the new skills and return to future sessions to learn, share and continue to hone their skills.



## Modernizing Child Protection

PCSAO recognizes the need to modernize Ohio's child protection system. This work began taking shape in 2022 after launching our [strategic modernization plan](#) the year before.

The modernization strategies grew from the recognition our member agencies had regarding the internal changes they needed and wanted in order to maximize new state and federal opportunities, such as the Family First Act and the Governor's Children Services Transformation. Combined with our front-facing campaign to expand the children's continuum of care, the plan reflects critical system reforms. Our research report on the children services workforce crisis offered validation that these initiatives will also improve recruitment and retention of frontline staff.

### Shared Practice Model

We engaged children services professionals and diverse stakeholders to develop a **Shared Practice Model** that will help caseworkers build relationships with families that elevate healing and improve outcomes. Introducing **PACT – Practice in Action Together** – which identifies four core values, 30 behaviors and 10 intended outcomes that will be tested in 2023 through on-the-ground observation and research. PACT model values:

**WE BELIEVE**  
families define “family,” and they are experts on their culture, beliefs, and experiences

**WE BELIEVE**  
families have diverse needs, and by partnering with them, we can work together to address those needs

**WE BELIEVE**  
families develop trust when we are honest and inclusive in the decision-making process

**WE BELIEVE**  
families can recover, heal, and grow



### Safety Culture

Drawing from safety science principles in other high-risk industries, the National Partnership for Child Safety and research from the University of Kentucky and U.S. Surgeon General, we supported 15 county agencies in a **Safety Culture** learning community. Staff survey responses, structured on-site discussion and a “Super Supervisor Day” helped participants zero in on strategies to improve physical and psychological safety, reduce burnout, and enhance workplace culture.

### Race, Equity and Inclusion

We followed an eight-part learning series focused on **Race, Equity and Inclusion** in 2021 with a year-long **Community of Practice** in 2022. During facilitated monthly sessions generously funded by Casey Family Programs, 10 county agencies identified policy and practice changes to improve outcomes for children and families of color, diversify the workforce and ultimately reduce racial disproportionality in foster care. Participants also explored reviewing policy through an equity lens and adding a diversity officer to staff.

## Ohio START Success Stories

The START teams had **93 families** successfully close their cases with children services. Here are just a few highlights of those successes:

Donna was motivated from day one. She asked to be part of START through Summit County Children Services because she heard great things about the program. Donna remained humble and took advantage of every opportunity presented to her. Donna is an amazing mother and her son is happy, adorable and thriving in her care. Donna has about 17 months of sobriety.



When Krystal signed up for Ohio START through Portage County Job & Family Services, she was all in. “I’ve been willing to do whatever it takes to better myself and my children.” Krystal benefited from family support as she fought her addiction to crack cocaine, including family who had taken custody of her two children. Krystal’s battle with addiction began with 18 months of sobriety, but a relapse took her to inner-city Cleveland, where she endured traumatic abuse and exploitation. She was found on the street in a drug-riddled neighborhood, strung out and seven months pregnant. Krystal entered residential treatment, followed by Intensive Outpatient Treatment (IOP), aftercare, and trauma therapy, all with her new baby Alyssa in tow. “Having a newborn and trying to do sobriety is very, very, very hard. I’m not gonna lie.” Krystal is also grateful that baby Alyssa’s development is on track, with no adverse effects from Krystal’s drug use. Krystal is grateful for Ohio START. “It’s an amazing program!”





## 2022 Conference

Anchored in a fresh venue, the [2022 PCSAO Annual Conference](#), "As Our World Turns," featured 25 workshops, two national keynote speakers and 16 awards recognizing youth and young adults, families, staff and advocates. The three-day event hosted 600 guests and provided scholarships to frontline workers thanks to a partnership with ODJFS. Aetna Better Health of Ohio and 43 other corporate partners generously sponsored the conference.



### Legislators of the Year



Rep. Tavia Galonski



Rep. Susan Manchester



**Lea Fisher**  
Outstanding  
Caseworker  
of the Year,  
Fairfield County



**Sara Tillman**  
Outstanding  
Supervisor  
of the Year,  
Union County



**Lori Legge**  
Outstanding  
Support Staff  
of the Year,  
Champaign County

### Families of the Year



Lisa Bible, Carroll County



Vince & Yolanda Cantu, Defiance County



Steffani Gibson & Kyle  
Eby, Hardin County



Cory & Heather Mason,  
Fairfield County



Shari Smith,  
Trumbull County

### Child Advocate of the Year



**Robin Reese**  
Former Executive  
Director, Lucas County  
Children Services

#### Not Pictured:

**Yasmin,**  
Leaders of Tomorrow,  
Franklin County

**Jenn Selders,**  
Outstanding Supervisor  
of the Year,  
Coshocton County  
(Posthumous)

### Leaders of Tomorrow



Christopher,  
Miami County



Jaylyn,  
Lorain County



Buck,  
Summit County



Department of  
Job and Family Services



OhioRISE | aetna

## Ohio START Success Stories

Kelsey signed up for Ohio START through Coshocton County Job & Family Services. She had used illegal substances for most of her life. Her drugs of choice were fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine. She had lost her first son due to abusing substances. Another son, Kai, tested positive at birth for suboxone, cocaine, and fentanyl. Kelsey lacked housing, transportation, sober supports, and employment, but she wanted to get sober and have a life with her son. She took Kai to 90-day in-patient treatment with her after he was discharged from the hospital. Kelsey completed that program and moved into sober living, and then completed Intensive Outpatient Treatment. She is still attending sober support group and individual meetings. She obtained a sponsor and has been working the steps, studying the Big Book of AA. She is currently seeking better opportunities for her and her son. She has remained sober throughout this process.

*"I didn't think I deserved my kids and they deserved better than me, even if it was with a stranger or my mom. I didn't fight hard enough for them or for myself. And as soon as that case got opened, they were there. They were like, 'Straight up. Put your Big Girl pants on. You messed up. Get over it. This is what we're going to do from this point on.' And it was amazing."*

~ START Parent



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*Communications and Events Manager*

## Ohio START Team

**Fawn Gadel, JD**

*Director of Ohio START*

**Jen McClellan, LISW-S**

*Ohio START Regional Manager*

**Jennifer Millisor, MPA**

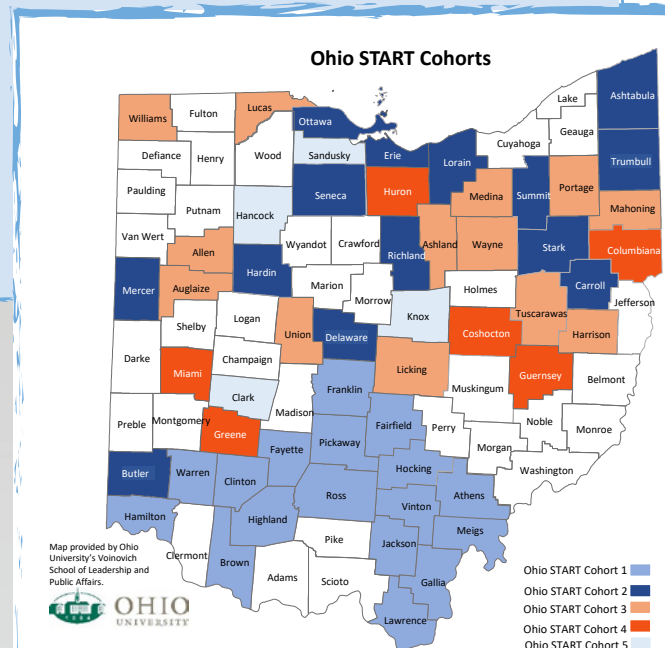
*Ohio START Regional Manager*

**Christine Morris**

*Program Coordinator*

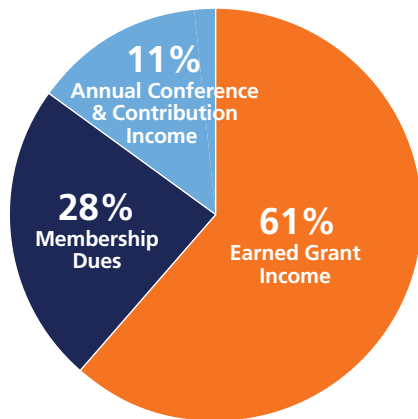
*"My experience, it was amazing. It was a blessing. I never realized how many people was in my corner until I actually STARTed this program. ... They really, really saved my life in a lot of ways."*

~ START Parent

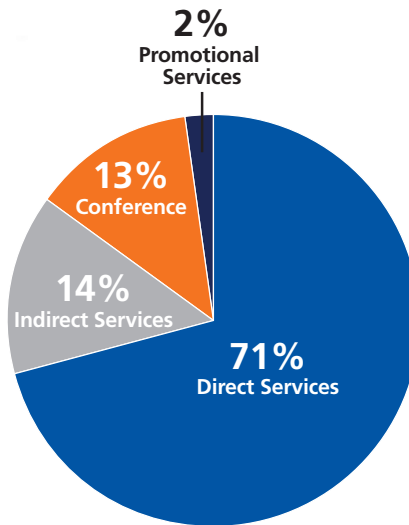




## 2022 Financial Report



**Core Revenue**  
**\$2,119,591**



**Core Expenses**  
**\$1,240,382**



### Grants and Donations beyond Core Operations

Ohio Department of Job & Family Services - Workforce Grant	\$4,742,903
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services - Ohio START	\$3,101,574
Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services - Ohio START	\$2,809,940
Case Western	\$154,000
CareSource	\$100,000
Casey Family Programs	\$48,541
Other	\$18,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,975,458</b>

### Ohio START By the Numbers

Number of  
New Cases/  
Families Enrolled  
**178**  
(528 Individuals)

Total Number of  
Open Cases  
(New + Continuing)  
**598**  
(1,782 Individuals)

Number of  
Successful  
Closures  
**93**  
(Out of 139  
Closed Cases  
in 2022)

Average Number  
of Family Peer Mentor  
Visits Per (New) Case  
**30**

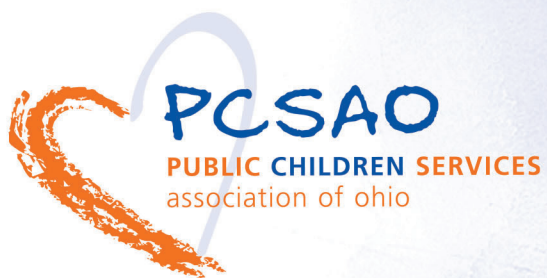
Average Length  
of FPM Visits  
Per (New) Case\*  
**50**  
Minutes

*\*texts, emails and secondary  
contacts excluded*



For cases that closed in 2022,  
average months of sustained  
sobriety at program closure:

**6.5** Months  
(range: 0-18 months)



Public Children Services Association of Ohio  
37 West Broad Street, Suite 1100 • Columbus, OH 43215  
Tel: 614-224-5802 • Fax: 614-228-5150  
Email: [pcsao@pcsao.org](mailto:pcsao@pcsao.org) • [www.pcsao.org](http://www.pcsao.org) • [www.ohiostart.org](http://www.ohiostart.org)



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