



## **Report for the Sunset Review Commission November 19, 2009**

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## I. History, Mission, Vision, and Goals

### **History/Statute**

Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) Cabinet Council and the 88 county Family and Children First Councils were legislatively codified in 1993 by Section 121.37 of the Ohio Revised Code. Family and Children First Council is a partnership of government agencies, community organizations, and families committed to improving the well-being of children and families through strategic coordination of resources. This partnership is intended to draw people out of their day-to-day systems and align resources, programs, and efforts around a shared vision that Ohio's families and children will thrive and succeed within healthy communities.

The OFCF Cabinet Council is comprised of eleven state agencies (Ohio Departments of Aging, Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, Developmental Disabilities, Education, Health, Job and Family Services, Mental Health, Rehabilitation and Correction, Youth Services, Office of Budget and Management, and the Rehabilitation Services Commission). The Ohio Departments of Aging and Rehabilitation and Correction were statutorily added to the OFCF Cabinet Council in H.B 1. The Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission will be added as a statutorily mandated member in a future bill. Per statute, the Governor is responsible for convening the OFCF Cabinet Council and designating a chair for the Cabinet. The current chair of the OFCF Cabinet Council is the First Lady of Ohio.

The OFCF Cabinet Council is responsible for:

- Serving as the Governor's clearinghouse for federal and private grants that often requires a collaborative structure for the application and implementation of the grant. By collaborating on grants, departments can share resources in preparing for grants; align existing and future efforts; and be more successful in obtaining federal and private monies.
- Aligning services, resources, initiatives, policies/rules, and planning requirements across departments. This would reduce the duplication of efforts that often occurs across and within departments and thus, reduce the fiscal impact on the state.
- Advising the Governor, General Assembly, and local government regarding the state's provision of services and the needed alignment of resources to build a coordinated service delivery system for children and families. This level of accountability would ensure the Cabinet is working to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.
- Strengthening the county FCF councils by providing leadership, outreach, and being responsive to locally identified barriers impacting service delivery to children and families. Services, supports, and resources are provided locally, not at the state level. Therefore, it befits the Cabinet to strengthen the local service delivery structure so a seamless system of care does exist for all children and families.

Locally, the county commissioners are responsible for regulating the 88 county Family and Children First Councils (FCFC). According to statute, the county FCFC's membership must consist of the governmental entities representing alcohol and drug addiction, mental

health, health (city and county), job and family services, children protective services, youth services, education (largest school district and another district), developmental disabilities, and early childhood. In addition, the county FCFC must have a local non-profit organization as a mandated member and at least three parents who have received services from any of the governmental agencies. Most county FCFCs will add additional members as needed and appropriate.

The county FCF councils are responsible for:

- Mobilizing child and family serving partners to address the needs of children and families through comprehensive planning to identify, prioritize, and implement needed services to fill the gaps. FCF councils must annually monitor, evaluate, and communicate progress to improving the well-being of children and families to the OFCF Cabinet.
- Aligning services, resources, initiatives, and policies/rules to reduce the duplication of efforts that often occurs from the state level and at the local level.
- Coordinating services and supports for individual families that require family-centered team planning, community involvement, pooled resources, and identification of existing and needed services.
- Recruiting and supporting families to be active contributing members on council and advocate on behalf of children and families.

### **Mission Statement**

OFCF is a partnership of state and local government, communities and families that enhances the well-being of Ohio's children and families by building community capacity, coordinating systems and services, and engaging and empowering families.

### **Vision Statement**

Ohio's families and children thrive and succeed within healthy communities.

### **Goals**

In September 2009, the OFCF Cabinet Council approved its SFY 10-11 strategic plan (see below). The plan was developed based on challenges and issues raised by the 88 county FCFCs as well as areas the state needs to work on improving coordination and alignment across departments for children and families. The full plan can be accessed at: <http://www.fcf.ohio.gov/initiatives/>. The OFCF Cabinet Council's primary areas of focus are healthy communities and school success. The OFCF Cabinet Council's priorities for SFY 10-11 include:

1. Cross-System Alignment – aligning and consolidating resources, policies, services, and efforts among state departments for youth and young adults in transition and family engagement.
2. Flexible Funding – identifying opportunities and providing flexible funding to child-serving systems; serving as a grants clearinghouse; and increasing the state's access for federal and private funding opportunities.

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3. Integrated Data Sharing – developing integrated data sharing for client specific and/or aggregate outcomes; and collecting and sharing cross-system indicators related to well-being.
4. Capacity Building – providing technical assistance to strengthen local capacity; providing regulatory relief of rules and laws interfering with local service delivery; providing assistance for enhancing public-private partnerships; providing support for local level implementation of “Simple Gifts”; and providing support for strengthening the local service coordination process.

The OFCF Cabinet Council has committed itself to accomplishing their priorities with the goal of ultimately impacting the following long term outcomes:

- Decrease out of home placements
- Decrease institutionalizations
- Increase safety within the home
- Improve the quality of life for families
- Decrease unexcused absences from school
- Decrease truancy
- Decrease drop-out rate
- Increase graduation rates
- Increase academic performance
- Increase post-secondary education attainment
- Increase successful employment of students transitioning out of secondary and post-secondary education.



**OCFC Cabinet Council's SFY 10-11 Plan**

*Shared Vision: Children and families thrive and succeed within healthy communities.*



## II. Organizational Structure

### **OFCF Cabinet Council**

The OFCF Cabinet Council is statutorily defined as a Governor's Children Cabinet. As stated above, the OFCF Cabinet Council is comprised of the superintendent of public instruction; the directors of aging; alcohol and drug addiction; budget and management; developmental disabilities; health; job and family services; mental health; rehabilitation and correction; rehabilitation services commission; and youth services. The First Lady serves as Chair of the OFCF Cabinet Council.

### **OFCF Office**

The OFCF Cabinet Council has historically had an office to provide support, assistance, and leadership for its work. The OFCF office is located in the Governor's Office and administratively managed by the Ohio Department of Mental Health. Previous administrative agents have included the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services, Education, and Developmental Disabilities.

There has been significant reduction in costs associated with the OFCF Office. Since 2003, 8 office positions and 5 contract staff have been eliminated. Two of those eight office positions were just eliminated this past biennium. In addition, state-level operations were moved to space within state departments, thereby eliminating the need to rent separate office space.

While administrative costs have been scaled back significantly, OFCF staff continues to pursue programmatic efficiencies in the delivery of services. OFCF has five staff (Director, 3 Regional Coordinators, and an Executive Secretary).

The Director is responsible for supervising the OFCF staff; operationalizing cross-system state initiatives and priorities; facilitating communication, partnership, and planning between the Governor's Office and state OFCF Cabinet agencies; engaging in budget and policy matters impacting well-being; providing communication and assistance to the 88 county FCFCs; actively participating on key state committees to create linkages and reduce duplication; promoting the Children's Cabinet throughout the state and nationally; and maintaining the office budget and daily expenditures. The Director is located in the Governor's Office.

The Executive Secretary provides support and assistance to the OFCF Director and Regional Coordinators; processes fiscal related items; coordinates meetings and other activities; manages OFCF's website and main phone line. The Executive Secretary is located in the Governor's Office.

The three Regional Administrative Coordinators (RACs) are responsible for providing technical assistance, training, facilitation, and communication to the 88 county FCFCs; participating on state committees and activities related to OFCF priorities; connecting with state partners to identify and develop technical assistance for FCFCs; reviewing local FCF councils' administrative grants and other state required documents; and providing

information about counties' needs and issues to Cabinet Council. The RACs are located at three OSU Extension offices throughout the state.

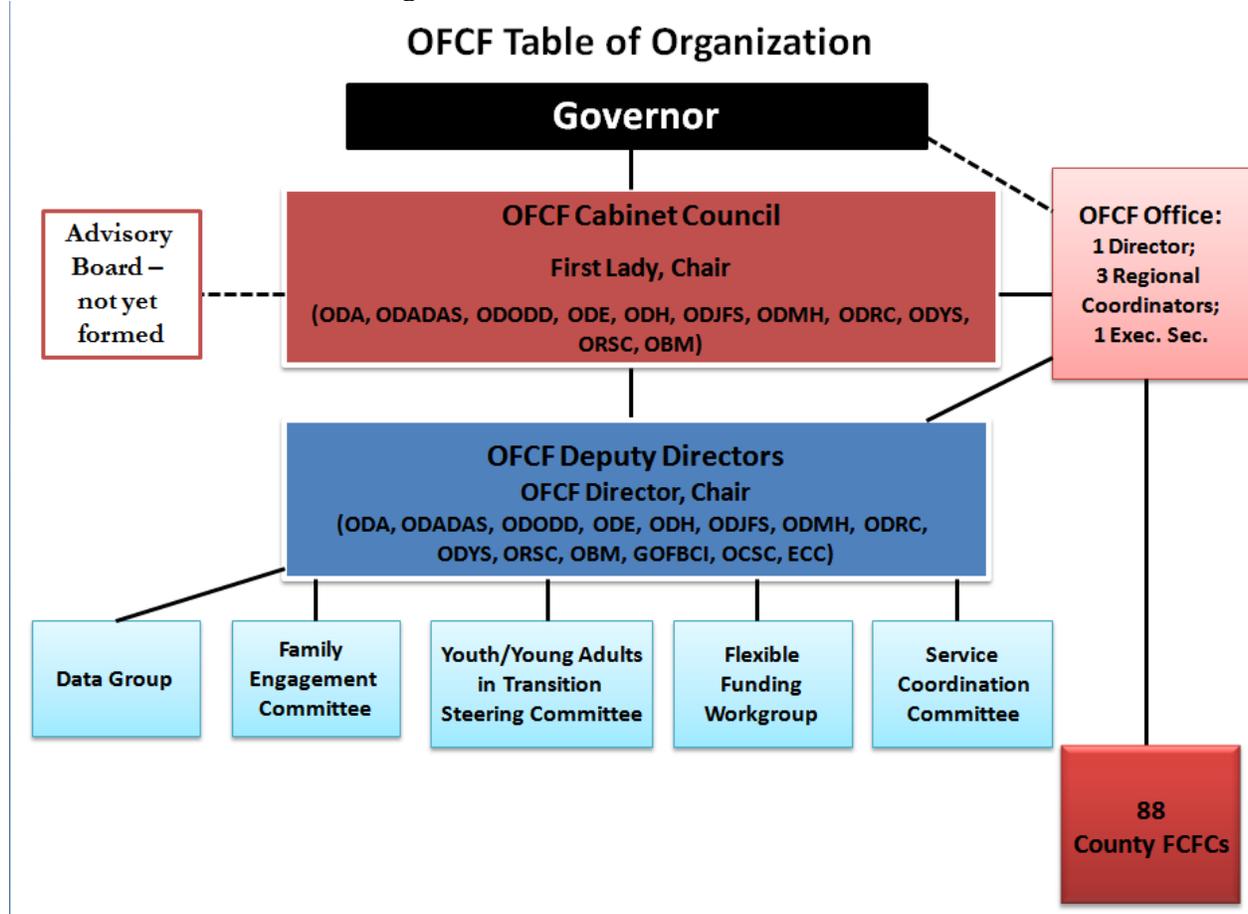
**OFCF Committees**

In order to ensure the responsibilities of the OFCF Cabinet as defined on page 2 and other identified cross-system work are being carried out, the OFCF Office chairs a committee consisting of the Deputy Directors from the eleven state agencies along with representation from the Ohio Supreme Court, Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Early Childhood Cabinet, Ohio Community Services Commission, and the Fatherhood Commission. This committee is referred to as the OFCF Deputy Directors Group.

Two other standing committees include the OFCF Child Well-Being Data Group, responsible for ensuring cross-system data collection and analysis of child well-being data; and the OFCF Service Coordination Committee, responsible for responding to service coordination referrals from county FCFCs. Other committees are established based on current OFCF Cabinet Council's priorities and needs.

**Table of Organization**

Below is a current table of organization for OFCF Cabinet and its Office.



**OFCF Advisory Board**

Amended Substitute H.B. 289 (effective: August 16, 2006) established a statewide Advisory Board to OFCF Cabinet Council consisting of: two Senators, two Representatives, one member from the Governor's Office; three primary caregivers; two members representing a foundation or nonprofit organization with expertise in issues related to children, families or education; one member from a faith-based organization; one member from a rural family and children first county council; and one member from an urban family and children first county council.

The OFCF Advisory Board's purpose is to provide consultation to OFCF Cabinet Council regarding council activities and initiatives, evaluate their existing efforts, and guide the direction of new efforts while ensuring constructive local input is thoughtfully considered for all council's activities, initiatives, and achievements of the child well-being indicators.

At the time, the Advisory Board has not been established and no formal appointments had been made by the Governor, House of Representatives, or the Senate.

**III. Funding OFCF and the 88 FCFCs**

Ohio Family and Children First is supported by non-GRF pooled funds (Fund 232: 333-621) from the participating state cabinet agencies. Staffing is the primary driver of the budget. In addition to employee salaries and benefits for five individuals, the funding level supports travel, rent for the regional coordinators at the three OSU extension offices, and targeted technical assistance for the state cabinet council and local councils. The OFCF Office budget has been reduced by 25% since FY 08. Therefore, OFCF reduced the number of regional coordinators from five to three in September 2009. The total OFCF Office budget for SFY 10 is \$469,603.00.

The eighty-eight (88) county Family and Children First Councils (FCFC) are currently supported by the state GRF through ODMH line item 335-405 (\$1.43m/year or \$16,257 per FCFC). This appropriation is almost a 20% reduction from SFY 08-09. The County FCFCs have maintained an annual appropriation at or below \$20,000 per county since the inception of the initiative in 1993. FCFCs continue to evolve to meet both new and existing state initiatives; greater accountability demands required; and the resulting increase of children and families in need of identified services locally. The state GRF administrative allocation for county FCFCs defrays costs associated with the maintenance of the county FCFC which includes a FCFC coordinator, training, parent stipends, providing public awareness and education, financing audit costs (ranging from \$3,000-\$15,000), and coordinating services for children, youth and families. The average FCFC coordinator's salary is \$40,000 with benefits.

#### IV. Key Functions and Contributions of Ohio Family and Children First

There are four primary functions of Family and Children First that are mandated by law, drive the work of councils, and demonstrate the uniqueness of such a collaborative: (1) Build Community Capacity; (2) Coordinate Systems and Services; (3) Engage and Empower Families; and (4) Shared Accountability for a Shared Vision.



The Office of OFCF has worked with county FCFC to develop a model of effective practice for each of these four key FCFC functions. The models can be found at: <http://www.fcf.ohio.gov/resources/effective-practice-model.dot>.

##### **I. Build Community Capacity**

One of the unique functions and a required mandate of Family and Children First Councils is to mobilize community child and family serving partners to improve the well-being of children and families. The mandate for county FCFCs to build community capacity derives from the passage of H.B. 289 (effective August 2006). H.B. 289 requires each county FCFC to do comprehensive planning, including a needs assessment, gap analysis, and resource assessment, and identify the community's greatest priorities and needs related to improving the well-being of children and families. With the required members of FCFCs plus additional community partners, FCFCs have the ability to truly assess and address the needs of children and families by planning and evaluating progress toward achieving desired outcomes.

The support and technical assistance the OFCF Cabinet Council has provided to county FCFCs to effectively build community capacity and strengthen county FCFCs is an approach called Partnerships for Success (PFS). PFS exists to:

1. mobilize and strengthen the cross system planning and implementation capacities of county FCFCs.
2. reduce duplication of effort between and among state and local agencies.
3. make better local decisions that lead to better investments of public dollars.
4. evaluate the impact of county investments with an eye toward accountability.

5. provide for long-term sustainability of effective state and locally sponsored programs and services.

PfS is provided in partnership with the PfS Academy through the Ohio State University Center for Learning Excellence. While Ohio Department of Youth Services has line item appropriation for PfS as the lead for this initiative, the current biennium budget does not support funding for PfS. However, the Ohio Department of Education is funding the PfS Academy to assist county FCFC with its new initiative, Family and Civic Engagement. While county FCFCs will not be able to receive the traditional PfS process, the intention under this new initiative will be to continue to strengthen county FCFCs.

Other efforts to assist with building community capacity includes assisting county FCFCs will strengthening their public-private partnerships, provide regulatory relief of rules and laws that interfere with local service delivery, and promoting evidence-based “kernels” or “Simple Gifts” statewide.

## **II. Coordinate Systems and Services**

Another unique function and required mandate of Family and Children First Councils is to provide a formalized venue to facilitate the alignment of systems, policies, resources, and services with and for children and families. There are two levels of coordinating systems and services.

The first level is the macro level which requires the OFCF Cabinet and the county FCFCs to effectively align systems and resources to meet the needs of children and families in the communities. FCFCs address this level through the service coordination process described below as well as through the H.B. 289 planning process defined under I. Building Community Capacity.

The second level is the micro level which requires county FCFCs to develop a county service coordination mechanism to serve as the guiding document for coordination of services in the county. FCFCs must offer and have available a service coordination process for families with children with multiple needs and agencies to access. The service coordination process is intended to be child-centered and family-focused, with the strengths and needs of the child and family guiding the types and mix of services to be provided. It is critical that services and supports are responsive to the cultural, racial and ethnic differences of the family. Each system has areas of responsibility, and the collaborative approach is not intended to replace or usurp the primary role of any one of these systems.

The OFCF Cabinet is responsible for assisting with the coordination of services for children and families and must be responsive to referrals and appeals from county FCFCs and families.

Prior to the current biennial budget (2006-07), service coordination financial support was targeted for the most difficult-to-serve children and youth. Counties could access funding through a state budget line called “Cluster Funding”. These funds have since been

incorporated into the Access to Better Care Initiative under ODMH, which is now referred to as System of Care.

Beyond specific initiatives being linked directly with FCFC service coordination, funding for this key function is not being supported at the state level, but may be locally supported with community pooled dollars if resources exist. If such resources do not exist, the lack of funding creates a challenge for counties to provide a high quality service coordination process and support the services needed for children and families as identified through the service coordination planning process.

### **III. Engage and Empower Families**

Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council and County Family and Children First Councils have a unique role to recruit and support parents to be active contributing members on county FCF councils; be involved in key decision-making efforts; and serve as an advocate for children, families, and communities.

The mandate for county FCFCs to engage and empower families is referenced in statute. It requires county FCFCs to have at least three family representatives, and where possible, 20% of membership as mandated members on FCF council and to obtain input from a broad representation of families. Families utilizing the council's service coordination process must be informed and invited to all family team service coordination meetings. Families have the right to initiate a family team service coordination meeting, and can invite any advocate or support person. Finally, the soon to be formed OFCF Advisory Board must have three primary caregivers as mandated members.

Over the years, OFCF has placed emphasis on engaging and empowering families to be a participating member of FCFCs and advocate on behalf of child and family issues. At one time, OFCF had regional family engagement coordinators that supported and trained families for such a role. These positions were eliminated due to budget constraints several years ago, and as a result, actions to support family engagement and empowerment have diminished.

To support families in becoming more engaged and empowered with FCFC, OFCF has held regional family network meetings. The purpose of these network meetings was to provide updates regarding state's actions and work; to elicit feedback from them; and to begin developing regional networks of families that can support, educate and connect with one another.

OCFC also contracted with a consulting firm to research the needs of families throughout the state as it relates to engagement and empowerment. The research led to the creation of the Family Engagement Committee which is charged with aligning resources, programs, policies, and efforts across state departments. Families participate on this committee. A final report will be available by October 2010.

## V. Key OFCF Initiatives

Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council will either create or be connected to key cross-system state initiatives. These initiatives are in addition to the OFCF Cabinet Council's priorities as outlined in its SFY 10-11 plan.

### I. System of Care

The OFCF Cabinet Council working in conjunction with advocates, family members and local officials developed an intensive major children's initiative called Access to Better Care (ABC). ABC was enacted as part of the FY 06-07 biennial budget. This initiative was created based on growing concerns documented in media reports and supported by data that children and youth with alcohol, drug and/or mental health issues were not having their needs addressed and at times, could only access services to meet their needs by relinquishing custody or obtaining an out-of-home placement.

The ABC Initiative has been transformed to the System of Care Initiative. It has streamlined the various ABC pilots and provided more flexible funding at the local level. The framework for the System of Care (SOC) initiative describes the OFCF Cabinet's commitment to implement a coordinated continuum of services and supports for all children and families, with an emphasis on behavioral health care. SOC is a broad, flexible array of effective services and supports that focus on family-centered practice, community-based services, strengthening the capacity of families, and providing individualized services. SOC involves an organized, coordinated network (i.e., Family and Children First) that integrates services/supports planning, coordination and management across multiple levels.

The foundational SOC components for SFY10-11 are Children's Community Behavioral Health (CCBH); Family-Centered Services and Supports (FCSS); Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC); and Behavioral Health-Juvenile Justice (BH/JJ) projects.

System of Care is funded by the ODMF, ODJFS, ODODD, ODYS, and ODADAS for a total of \$15.7m in SFY 10-11.

### II. Help Me Grow

Scientific evidence strongly suggests that a child's success is significantly determined by the quality of nurturing in the first three years of life. Recognizing this research, during the FY 2002-2003 biennium, several birth-three programs and funding streams were integrated into one consolidated initiative, Help Me Grow, to ensure that newborns, infants and toddlers receive the best possible start in life.

Help Me Grow provides state and federal funds to county FCFCs to be used in conjunction with state, local and other federal funds to implement and maintain a coordinated, community-based infrastructure that promotes trans-disciplinary, family-centered services for expectant parents, newborns, infants, toddlers, and their families. The Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Early Intervention Services is the lead state agency for

Help Me Grow. Help Me Grow is administered through the 88 FCF councils throughout the state.

Funding for Help Me Grow comes from the state GRF and federal Part C for a total of \$57.8m.

### **III. Family and Civic Engagement**

HB 1 establishes family and civic engagement requirements for Ohio's schools, families and communities. Together, schools, families and communities work to ensure all children have supports needed to graduate from high school prepared for additional educational experiences, the workforce and a healthy life style. Ohio's goal is to have high-performing family and civic engagement teams and county FCFCs that effectively and systematically connect all children, youth and families in need to school and community-based services and programs.

The soon to be established family and civic engagement teams at the school district level are required to submit a five year strategic plan to the county FCFC and annually report progress. The county FCFCs should incorporate each of the family and civic engagement teams' plans into its own H.B. 289 county-wide plan.

The Ohio Department of Education is lead for this initiative which seeks to engage 25 Family and Children First Councils (FCFCs), Educational Service Centers (ESCs) and districts to participate in a learning community. This group will help ODE develop a systems model designed to build and amplify the capabilities of ESCs, FCFCs and districts. The goal is to align systems, services and plans to meet the intentions of HB1, Family and Civic Engagement and, in turn, increase student achievement and well-being. ODE wants to benefit from the folks on the ground, learn from your real-world experiences and take advantage of your established effective practices.

Through a competitive grant process, this initiative will select 25 county FCFC, ESC and district teams to participate in the initiative. Selected teams will receive funding, coaching and technical assistance.

### **VII. Conclusion**

OFCF is the only state and county level infrastructure focused on the needs and issues of children spanning from birth to adulthood (with some councils focusing on the entire lifespan) and their families. This Children's Cabinet has grown since 1993 by strengthening its primary functions and demonstrating the effectiveness a partnership of government agencies can have when working together to improve child and family well-being in Ohio. OFCF has significantly reduced administrative costs while still pursuing programmatic efficiencies in the delivery, coordination, and alignment of services for children and families as seen by the recent successes. Since the purpose of FCFC is to coordinate and streamline services and resources for children and families at the state and local level, much work remains. Therefore, the OFCF Cabinet should remain in statute along with the OFCF Advisory Board and the county FCFCs.