

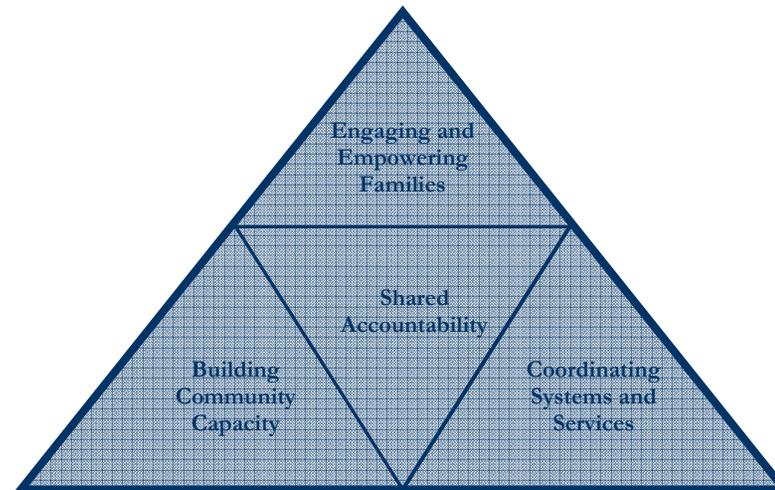


Ohio Family and Children First The Effective Practice Model for Family and Children First Council

Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) Cabinet Council and county Family and Children First Councils (FCFCs) is to help families seeking government services to assist their children by streamlining and coordinating existing government services. OFCF started as an initiative of the Governor's office in 1991, and has been in statute since 1993. Since that time the OFCF Cabinet Council and the local Family and Children First Councils (FCFCs) have operationalized the statute in a myriad of ways.

This model is intended to outline the requirements for the OFCF Cabinet Council and the local FCFCs according to what can be summarized in three core functions that work together to assure accountability: *coordinating systems and services (both macro and micro), building community capacity, and engaging and empowering families.* After 15 years of implementation, the model is intended to go beyond statute and outline what has been determined to be optimal practice for family and children first council at the state and local level.



It is commonly recognized that there are virtually eighty-eight versions of FCFC across the state (a different model in every county). There are many variables that go into implementation that cause this to be true. There are issues of capacity, turnover, experience, funding, resources, relationships, buy-in, turfism, feasibility, and many others. Early in 2007, Ohio's First Lady Frances Strickland, became the chair of Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council. In her new role, Frances Strickland, began visits to each and every county Family and Children First Council. During these visits, county FCFC members asked for a model or understanding of how to implement effective practice within councils. This model is in no way an attempt to eliminate the flexibility for implementation of FCFCs or to create a "cookie cutter" approach, it is only to serve as a guide for FCFCs who strive to improve in any or all functions of the council. It is also intended to serve as a guide to the OFCF Cabinet Council which has experienced similar issues (turnover, resources, funding, turfism, buy-in, relationships, etc) since its inception in statute in 1993.

Some county FCFCs might be considered to be operating at a level of coordination, which can be observed by elements such as: need-based interaction, informal relationships, each member agency functions separately, information is shared, authority rests in individual agencies, resources are separate, and rewards are specific to each organization. Other county FCFCs might be considered to be operating at a level of cooperation, which can be observed by elements such as: individual agency missions are reviewed for compatibility with each other, members plan some projects together, interaction is usually project specific, authority rests with individual agencies but agencies cooperate with each other, rewards are mutually acknowledged. This OFCF Optimal Model intends to outline for FCFCs and the OFCF Cabinet Council the elements needed to operate at a level of collaboration, elements such as: common mission and goals, interrelated roles that constitute a division of labor, comprehensive planning, multiple channels of communication, dispersed leadership, shared risk, and shared results (Payne, Devol, and Smith; Bridges Out of Poverty; 2001).