

Children, Families, and the Courts



THE SUPREME COURT of OHIO

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Looking Back: The Ohio Summit on Children

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In May 2008 more than 500 community leaders started a journey to improve local collaborations that help children and families. The event, called the 2008 Ohio Summit on Children, was convened by Governor Ted Strickland and, then, Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer to affirm shared goals, and to collectively harness community resources for children. County teams heard national, state and local perspectives on the importance of collaborating on children's issues, saw examples of proven and promising programs and, most importantly, discussed local issues affecting children. Facilitators assisted county teams as they assessed strengths and challenges, identified service gaps and developed local plans for improvement in delivering services to Ohio's children. By the conclusion of the Summit, county teams produced an 18-month planning agenda to address the challenges posed during the Summit.

On November 12 and 13, 2009, the Governor and Chief Justice reconvened the 2009 Ohio Summit on Children, to share their progress and experiences. First Lady Frances Strickland also participated in the Second Summit. One year hence, this edition of the Children, Families, and the Courts: Ohio Bulletin briefly looks back at the Second Summit.

With generous funding from Casey Family Programs and two federal discretionary grants (the Court Improvement Program and Children's Justice Act), the 2009 Summit was held without using any state or local financing. Underwriting was also provided by the Ohio Public Children Services Association and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

County participation was comparable to the 2008 Summit, with 75 county jurisdictions sending delegations. About half of the participating counties provided reports of activities accomplished since the initial gathering.

Building on the 2008 Summit, local juvenile court and public children service agency officials were once again asked to assemble key local stakeholders and to provide leadership in strategic planning sessions at the conference. Participants were diverse, representing local mental health, substance abuse, and other service provider communities, as well as educators, local Families and Children First Councils, county commissioners, and local prosecutors. Some local delegations also included members of the community-at-large.

Summit Format and Speakers

The goals of both Summits on Children were to increase local interagency collaboration and to identify ways that the state could support county efforts. Summit planners made sure that multiple perspectives and voices were featured throughout.

Keynote Speaker – Victor Rivas Rivers

Victor Rivas Rivers, the keynote speaker opened the event by challenging Summit participants to continue championing the causes of children and other vulnerable family members exposed to violence. He described the importance of both visible champions, and behind-the-scenes "angels," who had helped him survive family



Victor Rivas Rivers providing the keynote address at the opening evening of the Summit.

violence growing up in California and Florida. Mr. Rivers said his first line of defense as a homeless teenager were the teachers and families who provided support when he faced difficult decisions about right and wrong.

Mr. Rivers, a successful athlete, actor, and motivational speaker, grew up in a family plagued with violence perpetrated by an abusive father. He described the “survival toolbox” he had as a young person growing up in unspeakable circumstances of unpredictable violence and emotional cruelty. Evoking the opening speaker of the first Summit, Cedric Riley,¹ Mr. Rivers reminded participants that each child is a knowledgeable and capable person who has been asked from an early age to handle life experiences often reserved for adults.

Mr. Rivers used his personal experience to assert the responsibility of each of the primary groups represented at the Summit. He reminded participants of how the advocate angels in his toolbox stood up for his worth and helped rebuild his self esteem bit by bit, sometimes by taking chances—as when his 8th-grade teacher recognized his collapse in class as hunger at home, and bought him a meal ticket for the year. This teacher came through with a necessity at a pivotal moment, making all the difference when he later made personal choices in his own behavior that would influence his future. He challenged participants to creatively recruit and position behind-the-scenes angels for vulnerable children

today—those who may provide shelter, guidance, and an open ear and mind.

Other Speakers and Workshops

The other speakers for the workshop and planning day of the conference were Steven C. Hollon, Administrative Director of the Supreme Court of Ohio, and Douglas E. Lumpkin, Director of the Ohio Department of Child and Family Services.

Mr. Hollon refreshed the group on the origin of the state summit, arising from Ohio’s participation in the National Judicial Leadership Summits for the Protection of Children, held in Minneapolis in 2005 and New York in 2007.²

Director Lumpkin encouraged the local teams to heed the ideas and comments of children and families involved in human service systems, and to nurture an environment that encourages creativity and collaboration. He also emphasized the value of meeting and interacting with diverse colleagues, and returning to work with new ideas. Finally, Director Lumpkin challenged the group with a current recession-era slogan — “Let’s not let a good crisis go to waste” — to take the opportunity to listen to youth and colleagues, and to be ready to move forward when the recession ends.

After learning the history of the Summit and hearing the challenges from the perspective of the judicial and family services systems, the local teams moved into the breakout sessions. These sessions stemmed from requests from county teams at the 2008 Summit for more opportunities to share ideas and learn from each other. The 10 topics and their subtopics for the breakout sessions reflected the local challenges reported in Post-Summit County Plans and during Family and Children First Cabinet Council visits to each county. Unlike traditional workshops



Director Lumpkin addresses the Summit during the opening morning session.

where participants passively listen to an instructor, each breakout session was designed to be an interactive learning session with experts and representatives from successful programs acting as resources and discussion facilitators. Topics included:

1. **Funding**
 - a. Leveraging local funds
 - b. Coping with the escalating cost of services
 - c. Flexible funding
 - d. Communicating your public message to generate resources
2. **Systemic Issues**
 - a. Establishing a shared vision
 - b. Developing/maintaining a continuum of care in this economic climate
 - c. Measuring outcomes/data
 - d. Connecting data systems
 - e. Maintaining a healthy work culture
3. **Behavioral Health**
 - a. Access to services
 - b. Placement prevention/intensive home-based services
 - c. Early screening for mental health and developmental needs
 - d. Application of trauma informed care
4. **Education**
 - a. Increase graduation rates and academic performance
 - b. Engaging youth that do not adapt to traditional education
 - c. Engaging families and building community partnerships
 - d. Creating safe schools and healthy communities
 - e. Supporting children with autism spectrum disorders and their families
5. **Building and Sustaining Local Planning Teams**
 - a. Developing a high functioning Family and Children First Council
 - b. Engaging all partners
 - c. Integrating Summit and HB 289 plans
 - d. Developing leadership
6. **Transitioning Youth (Out of the System)**
 - a. Youth employment/WIA
 - b. Housing
 - c. Healthcare needs
 - d. Post-secondary education



Mark Carey motivates the group during the noon address.

7. **Health**
 - a. Access to healthcare
 - b. Timely screening and coordination of care
 - c. Teen pregnancy
 - d. Prevention and prenatal care
8. **Out of Home Care**
 - a. Supporting kinship programs
 - b. Ensuring the sufficient availability of foster homes
 - c. Short-term residential/Step-down care
 - d. Timely adoption of children in permanent custody
9. **Family Engagement**
 - a. Involvement of fathers
 - b. Parenting skill development
 - c. Parent advocacy/family driven plans
 - d. Families separated by incarceration
10. **Youth in Court**
 - a. Truancy
 - b. Violent youth crime
 - c. Alternatives to incarceration/detention
 - d. Disproportionate Minority Contact

The afternoon speaker, Mark Carey, a national juvenile justice consultant and motivational speaker, added to the conference momentum with his overriding message of hope and optimism for youth.

Mr. Carey explored the characteristics of optimists, and linked them to better results in human services. He provided a variety of examples from research, personal experience, and popular culture, supporting the view that optimism alone can make a difference. Mr. Carey also made suggestions for how optimism can be personally cultivated and applied in working with youth.

Planning Results and Products



Participants acquired a framework for self-examination on how they approach difficult issues. They learned to be mindful of thinking habits that can produce artificial barriers to collaboration and discouragement about overcoming them. His presentation set the stage for the second Summit wrap-up, in which county planning teams interacted with state leadership.

The afternoon started with the county teams prioritizing their current planning issues, aligning them with solutions, and listing strategies for how they would sustain a collaborative approach after the Summit.

First Lady Frances Strickland, Director Lumpkin and Angela Sausser Short, Director of Ohio Family and Children First, discussed the efforts of the Family and Children First Cabinet Council's efforts to address some of the challenges and issues shared by counties during her visits with each county FCFC. Many of the issues were similar to challenges and issues raised at the 2008 Summit and reported by the counties in response to the question, "Beyond funding, what action does the county need from the state to help the county achieve its action plan?" An emphasis was placed on need for a shared vision and alignment of systems to benefit children, family engagement, and the need for flexible service delivery.

Throughout the Summit's conclusion, the First Lady and Chief Justice Moyer listened to the reports of county teams as they identified the most troubling issues at home and strategies for addressing them. Chief Justice Moyer then closed the Summit with a view of the path ahead.

The presence and energy of Chief Justice Moyer, First Lady Frances Strickland and other state officials during the day's activities reinforced the Summits' theme statement, "**Working together for our future.**"

County teams were asked to submit a final plan to the Summit planning team and to report on their pre-Summit activities. Fifty-three counties chose to submit final plans, and 32 reported on their activities. The Supreme Court of Ohio used the reports to publish a monthly newsletter during 2009, Ohio Summit on Children: Action Update, highlighting local activities and accomplishments. The Supreme Court additionally posted the 53 Post-Summit County Plans on the Summit web site (please see the Summit website sidebar on page 5).

An Interbranch Summit Planning Team,³ was charged with focusing a publication product for the plans by organizing county recommendations specifically for "what the state can do, beyond funding, to support county work." The Team chose to organize the detail for this key question into six themes:

1. **Communication**
2. **Data Sharing**
3. **Finance**
4. **Regulations, Rules and Legislation**
5. **Services**
6. **Technical Assistance**

The Interbranch Summit Planning Team published the results in Beyond Funding: State Response to County Post-Summit Plans, which was provided to second Summit participants. In this report, specific county requests for state action to support local planning efforts are aligned with the quasi-official state response obtained by the Interbranch Team. The Team also compared each request to similar feedback provided to First Lady Frances Strickland during her visits to the 88 Family and Children





Voices of Ohio Children delegates with the First Lady and Chief Justice during the Summit closing.

First Councils (FCFCs) in 2008 (please see previous issue of the Ohio Bulletin concerning FCFCs). The requests ranged from “cross-system release of information” in the Communication area, to “enact legislation related to court authority regarding parents” in the Regulations, Rules and Legislation area, and “program-specific training” in the Technical Assistance area.

The Beyond Funding: State Response to County Post-Summit Plans report is a principal product of the second Summit and can be obtained on the Summit website at www.summitonchildren.ohio.gov (please see side bar on the facing page).

In addition to submission of their local plans, counties were asked to provide information on their planning and collaboration efforts since the first Summit. The planning teams were asked to rank their top five issues, strengths, challenges, and most-needed services as well as action steps that would be needed to address these locally-identified service gaps.

County-level responses were organized by the Summit planning team into various categories. On the question of **most needed services**, responses were organized into a number of topics ranging from practical/programmatic issues such as Improved Transportation and Expansion of Recreation Opportunities to expansive categories such as Foster Care, Placement Services, Education, and Health Care. Gaps/deficiencies in local substance abuse treatment services and highly specialized foster care were among the most frequently cited specific needs. Strategies to involve parents and to provide mentoring support to both parents and youth were often identified as areas of substantial need. Lastly, specialized services and wrap-around support for families with infants and young children (including educational support to prepare pre-school youths for kindergarten and grade school) were areas of notable concern.

Themes of service coordination and the need for a comprehensive family court response were routinely intertwined as key response strategies for the most frequently cited local needs. Practical examples include coordinating services to families and children with incarcerated parents and help transitioning adults recently released from jail/prison as they return to families with children.

County teams also developed a list of **action step responses** to address these local service gaps/deficiencies as part of the pre-Summit planning. Responses were organized into approximately 35 specific topic areas that were further subdivided as either being **administrative** or **programmatic** in nature. The most frequently cited action step response areas are displayed in figure 1 on the next page.

Come Visit the Ohio Summit on Children Website
<http://www.summitonchildren.ohio.gov/default.html>

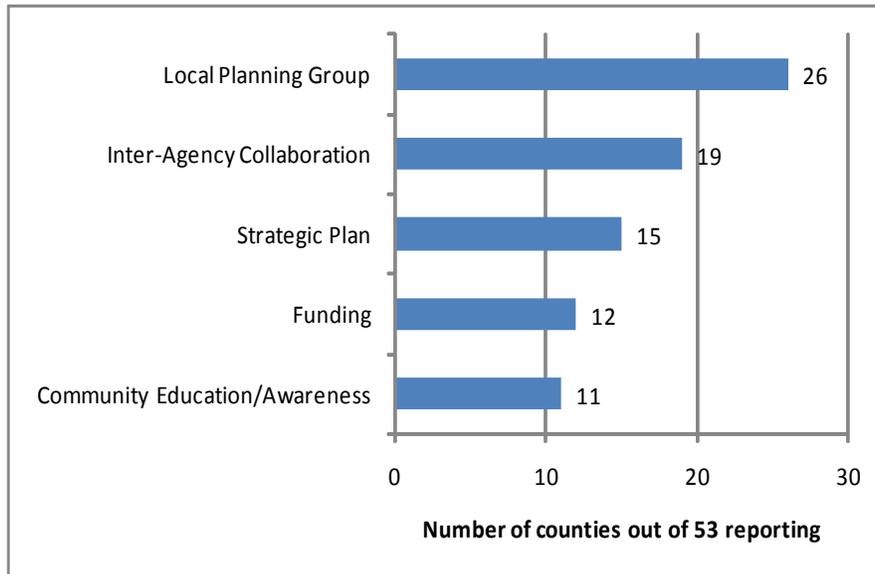
The Ohio Summit on Children web site lets local planning teams revisit the resources developed to support collaborative planning and houses the products of the effort. It stores the Action Update newsletter that was published to share between-Summit activities among the counties. The series includes county planning highlights for Ashtabula, Delaware, Erie, Hamilton, Lorain, Ross, Seneca, and Trumbull counties. The web site contains the county planning reports produced from the Summits in an interactive map, with a link to an activity report summary.

The web site also helps the few counties that could not attend the Summit to learn about the advancements made in other places and to find the tools provided in the Summit process.

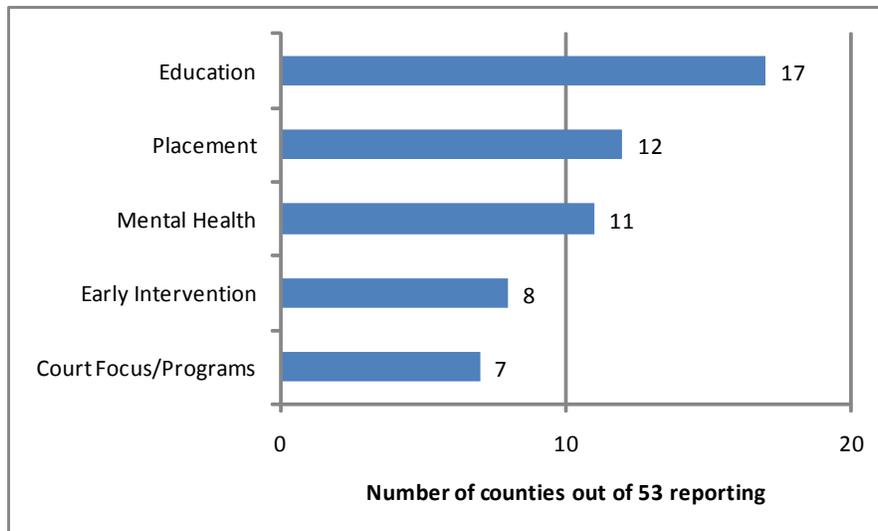


Figure 1:
Top Five County Action Step Response Topics
by Administrative and Programmatic Areas

Administrative



Programmatic



Source: 2008 Ohio Summit on Children County Plans (Supreme Court Analysis of Action Step Topics).

In the administrative area, actions falling under rubric of local planning topped the list. Specific local planning activities often involved efforts to increase coordination and collaboration with long established Family and Children First Councils and/or newer Summit planning teams.

Education was the most frequently cited programmatic action step response area. The continuum of specific action steps cited for this topic area is provided on page eight. Responses in other topic areas contain similar specifics on how counties planned to use the Summits for leverage to improve services to families and children. This included:

- Recruiting additional foster-adopt homes with specific details on how the local FCFC will support this need area (Trumbull)
- Development of a plan to establish a full-service family court in their county (Clark, Scioto)
- Establishment of Family Treatment Drug Courts (Allen, Trumbull and Union)
- Developing strategies to identify struggling families with young children (ages 3-5) who are exhibiting problem behaviors (Union and Sandusky)
- Plans to explain and distribute information concerning parent education and support options (Wood, Marion, Coshocton)

The full set of individual county responses related to all five question areas is available on the Summit web site at: <http://www.summitonchildren.ohio.gov/default.html>

The intent of the November 2009 Summit on Children was to reconvene leaders to hear about local efforts; to provide opportunity to group-solve the pressing issues raised in the first summit; and most importantly, to encourage cross-jurisdictional sharing of ideas. Summit evaluations showed that participants left with new ideas, contacts and resolutions for action.

When assessing the status of your county's progress with implementing your Summit Plan you may want to ask the following questions:

- Have we checked the Summit on Children website to review county data?
- Has our team continued to meet?
- Have we implemented an idea or solution that was generated at the Summit?
- Have we gathered more information from someone who shared a good idea at the Summit?

- Have we made use of the resource documents available on the Summit on Children website?

Conclusion

It is important to not think of the Ohio Summits on Children simply as two state-level events; these simply were "check-in points" during an ongoing process. The Summits were part of a broader initiative to offer resources that support a county-level planning process to enhance the safety, permanency and well-being of children. The initiative started in 2004 and includes the state and regional "Beyond the Numbers" meetings and Dependency Docket Caseflow Management Courses. All of the events have been based on meaningful data and the best practices of colleagues and national experts. It is hoped that county teams have continued to direct and refine their local plans in the time since the last Summit on Children.

Ohio is distinguished among the states by holding these Summits on Children. The Summits build on the framework explored in the previous two articles in this series, which described Ohio's pioneering history in juvenile and family case coordination (Family Court), and more recently, the comprehensive planning and service coordination framework, modeled over the past 30 years through Ohio's Family and Children First Councils.

Endnotes

- ¹ Please see the Ohio Summit on Children, Children, Families, and the Courts: Ohio Bulletin, Vol. 4., No. 2 2008.
- ² The Ohio Summits on Children were a direct result of participating in the national Summits on the Protection of Children in Minneapolis (September 2005), New York (March 2007), and Austin (October 2009). The national Summit series is intended to sustain the commitment of judicial and child welfare agencies to share a child-centered vision, to update action plans prepared by state teams, to broaden collaboration, and to measure performance and success. An Ohio team participated in all three national Summits.
- ³ The Interbranch Summit Planning Team was assembled from members of Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council Agencies, and helped to link Summit results with the First Lady's visits to each County Family and Children First Council (described in the previous article in this series).

YOUTH CORNER: In Our Own Words

By Dauntea A. Sledge



My name is Dauntea Sledge, and I was in kinship care from ages 6 to 12. I lived in foster care from ages 12 to 18. I experienced 3 foster homes before “aging out” of foster care at age 18.

Today, I serve as President of the Franklin County Youth Advisory Board and Media Spokesperson of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board (YAB). I am also an active member of the Ohio chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America. As a former foster child, I share the same passion as many other foster care alumni, to make a difference and to give back.

Empowering young people to be a part of youth advisory boards helps them recognize their strengths and abilities, and empowers them to give back to their local communities, and society as a whole. The Ohio YAB exists to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that effect all youth who have or will experience out of home care. Eight Ohio counties currently have youth advisory boards: Athens, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lorain, Mahoning, Montgomery and Stark. We hope to establish additional county youth boards over the next two years.

Recently, several Ohio YAB members had the opportunity to present during a Judicial College Teleconference on Youth Voice in Court. Participants included the Ohio YAB’s current Vice President and 2011 President-Elect, Cieria Rodriguez Toney of Lorain County; 2008-2009 Ohio YAB President, Adrian McLemore; former Ohio YAB Secretary, Vanessa Jackson of Montgomery County; and, myself.

We talked about whether or not we were allowed to participate in court hearings during our time in foster care. What it felt like, not knowing what goes on in court. Specific information about our case that we wanted the judge or magistrate to know.

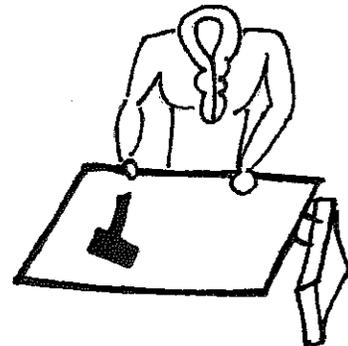
A question asked by one of our listeners was, “Doesn’t it traumatize a young person in foster care to hear about their case? What if the court hearing reveals that their parent’s substance abuse problem isn’t getting any better?”

My response was that, “The child probably already knows. When I was five years old, I knew that my mother was heavily on drugs. I didn’t need for anyone to tell me. When you are a child, the most important people in your life are your parents, and you notice what they do. I didn’t want anyone to sugar-coat things for me – I just wanted the truth.”

From now on, a Youth Corner will be included in the Ohio Bulletin, to provide readers with an opportunity to hear the voices of youth throughout Ohio on various family and court related issues. I invite readers to share suggestions regarding topics that might be covered. Please email your suggestions to dsledge@student.csc.edu. We look forward to sharing with you over the next year.

In Our Own Words

Artist: Laquita Howell



Ohio Updates

History Made in Ohio

On Jan. 1, 2011, Maureen O'Connor made history in Ohio by becoming the first woman Supreme Court Chief Justice. Ohio voters elected her to a six-year term as the Supreme Court's 10th Chief Justice on Nov. 2, 2010.

First elected to the Court in 2002, she was re-elected in 2008 and decided to run for Chief Justice in 2010 to replace the retiring Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer. During her time on the Court and in many public servant roles beforehand, her experiences have mirrored those of, or crossed paths with juvenile, domestic relations and probate judges as well as children services directors. Chief Justice O'Connor has authored several Supreme Court opinions concerning child and family issues. A sampling of those opinions includes:

- A decision that held that a juvenile in Ohio must have the benefit of counsel or advice from a parent, guardian or attorney in determining whether he or she should proceed through a delinquency hearing with the advice of an attorney, and that the juvenile can waive that right only if he is counseled and advised by his parent, custodian, or guardian.
- A decision that held that the hearsay statement of a child declarant can be admitted under Evid.R. 807 without a determination of the child's competence to testify in a prosecution for child sexual abuse. The case arose from a situation in which a man admitted to having sexual contact with his young stepson, who was then killed in a house fire set by his mother.

As a Summit County Probate Court magistrate, she protected Ohio's most vulnerable citizens: children and the elderly by handling thousands of cases involving adoption, guardianship of minors, incompetents, decedents' estates, and involuntary commitment proceedings.



Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, the first woman elected as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Justice in Ohio history.

As a Summit County Common Pleas Court judge, she sentenced murderers and other violent felons to ensure the safety of Ohio's families by handling hundreds of cases involving capital murder, felonious assault, rape, drug trafficking and domestic violence.

As Summit County prosecutor, she successfully prosecuted murderers, serial rapists and child molesters. She instituted strong anti-crime measures, including career criminal prosecution and direct indictment programs. She utilized the prosecutor's office to become a vocal advocate for children.

As director of the county Child Support Enforcement Agency, she instituted sweeping reforms that increased the establishment of paternity by more than 25 percent, expanded the number of cases with administrative and/or judicial support orders and improved the collection rate of child support to 40 percent, exceeding the state and national average. She also actively lobbied the General Assembly to enact stricter criminal legislation through her testimony in support of redefining sexual conduct in order to strengthen Ohio's rape laws.

Local officials can look for Chief Justice O'Connor out on the road in 2011 as she has announced her intention to schedule trips across the state to meet and listen to courts and bar associations on a regular basis. She has stated that she envisions these informal visits – whether it's lunch or simply coffee – as a chance to get to know better the bench, bar and court personnel in every county in Ohio.

Ohio Updates

First African-American Woman to Serve as a Justice on the Supreme Court of Ohio

A series of firsts defines the judicial career of Justice Yvette McGee Brown. She was the first African-American elected to the Franklin County Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court. And, most recently, she became the first African-American woman to serve as a Justice on the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Appointed by Gov. Ted Strickland on Dec. 10, 2010, she filled the vacancy created on the Court when Maureen O'Connor began her term as Chief Justice on Jan. 1, 2011.

A common theme in Justice McGee Brown's business and community work is her advocacy for children and families. As a domestic relations/juvenile judge, McGee Brown founded programs that assisted Franklin County young people including SMART, a truancy and educational neglect intervention program; and the Family Drug Court.

In 2002, McGee Brown retired from the county court bench to create the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, a multi-disciplinary child abuse and family violence program that co-locates prevention, assessment, treatment, research, advocacy and education services for children and families experiencing abuse. In that role, she lead a team of 400 child abuse, medical, and behavioral health professionals that became a national model for the integration of multi-disciplinary services. She served as founding president until early 2010 when she became a candidate for lieutenant governor.

In the news release announcing her Supreme Court appointment, Justice McGee Brown said her service to Ohio's children and families would continue on the Court. "I have been fortunate to have a life and career that has allowed me to pour my heart into helping others and expanding opportunities for vulnerable Ohioans. I look forward to bringing my diverse experiences and thoughtful perspectives to my work on the Ohio Supreme Court."

McGee Brown graduated from Ohio University in 1982 with a degree in journalism/public relations. She continued her education at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, earning her Juris Doctorate in 1985, while her mother attended college at the same time.

Following graduation, McGee Brown worked at the Ohio Attorney General's Office and then became chief legal counsel to the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and the Department of Youth Services. Immediately before being elected to the bench, she was a partner in the law firm of Turner, Wright & McGee.

An active community and corporate leader, McGee Brown has served on the boards of Ohio University, The Ohio State University Medical Center, the National Council of the OSU Moritz College of Law, M/I Homes Inc. and Fifth Third Bank of Central Ohio. She is the former chair of the United Way of Central Ohio and YWCA Columbus Board of Directors. In 2008, McGee Brown was inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame. Among her honors, she has received the Champion of Children Award, YWCA Woman of Achievement Award and several honors from Ohio University and The Ohio State University.

McGee Brown was born to a single, teenage mother on Columbus' East Side who worked two jobs to provide for her family. Early in life, her mother and grandmother instilled in her the importance of education and hard work.



Justice Yvette McGee Brown, first African-American woman to serve as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Ohio Updates

Advisory Committee on Children, Families & the Courts Subcommittee Updates

The **Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency**, chaired by Rhonda Reagh, Ph.D., was formed to: 1) determine if Ohio's statutory guidelines for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect properly serve children and families in need of government intervention; 2) make statutory and administrative recommendations to improve Ohio's system for accepting and investigating reports of child abuse and neglect; and 3) make recommendations to standardize and make uniform Ohio statutes regarding abuse, neglect, and dependency cases.

In April, the subcommittee received the report and evaluation of the 18-month Ohio Alternative Response Pilot Project from the American Humane Association and its partners from the Institute for Applied Research and the State of Minnesota. The most significant finding of the independent evaluation of the pilot project was that child safety is not compromised using the alternative response approach – children who came to the attention of the child protection agency were as safe with the alternative approach as they were with the investigation approach.

Other notable outcomes of this field experiment are as follows:

- Subsequent reporting of families for child abuse and neglect declined under alternative response, particularly among minority families, the most impoverished families in the study.
- Removals and out-of-home placements of children declined.
- Families that received an alternative response approach were more satisfied with services received than those families that received an investigation.
- Reports of participating a great deal in decision making occurred more frequently for alternative response families than for control families.
- Families that received an alternative response approach were more likely to report that they were very satisfied with treatment by their workers.
- Almost 40 percent of county staff involved with the pilot reported that alternative response had increased the likelihood that they will remain in the field of child welfare.

The subcommittee completed its review of the Pilot Study Report and forwarded a set of recommendations on to the Advisory Committee on Children, Families & the Courts. The recommendations were approved by the Advisory Committee following its September meeting. The most significant recommendation is in support of statewide implementation of alternative (differential) response. Ten additional counties have been added to the pilot project bringing the total number of counties implementing alternative response to twenty-five. More information on the project and a map of participating counties can be found at: <http://www.law.capital.edu/adoption/AR/>

The **Subcommittee on Legal Representation**, chaired by Jill Beeler, Esq., was formed to identify and recommend strategies for increasing the availability of quality legal representation for the children, families, and child-serving agencies that come before Ohio's courts. The subcommittee concluded its work with recommendations that were approved by the Advisory Committee in October. The recommendations identified many promising strategies to improve the number and quality of attorneys who practice in the child and family law area. The Advisory Committee referred the report to a new Subcommittee on Family Law Reform Implementation. The promising strategies will

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Ohio Updates

Advisory Committee on Children, Families & the Courts Subcommittee Updates.....continued

...continued from page 11

be analyzed and integrated with the 2005 recommendations on Family Law Reform for further consideration and, if appropriate, implementation. It is anticipated that family law justice system partners will be identified and invited to help refine the strategies prior to implementation.

The **Subcommittee on Adult Guardianship**, chaired by Judge Dixilene Park, was formed to make recommendations for standards of practice, data collection, and monitoring protocols in this area. The Subcommittee's recommendations were approved by the Advisory Committee and an implementation is being prepared to submit to the Supreme Court's administration. The recommendations include standards for non-relative guardians. Additionally, a "bench card" is being developed to assist judges during case reviews in guardianship matters.

The **Subcommittee on Domestic Relations Forms**, co-chaired by Judge Craig Baldwin and Heather Sowald, Esq., was created to develop five uniform court forms that will be accepted in all Ohio domestic relations courts. The first set of forms were published for public comment, revised and adopted by the Justices of the Supreme Court. The forms became effective on July 1, 2010 and can be found at: <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JCS/CFC/DRForms/default.asp>.

The Ohio Adoption PhotoListing is Back!

Prospective adoptive parents are now able to view photos and profiles of children in foster care in Ohio who are waiting for their forever families.

All children have the a right to a permanent family - a family to love and care for them and keep them safe – but right now more than 2,000 children are living in foster families or in other out-of-home placement settings in Ohio. These children, who reside in the custody of local children service agencies, may be dealing with issues of past abuse, neglect, or dependency. They all need permanent families through adoption. The Ohio Adoption PhotoListing (OAPL) will assist individuals and families interested in learning more about the adoption process and provide information on waiting children in Ohio.

The new site, brought to you by the National Center for Adoption Law & Policy in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, offers step-by-step information on adoption and foster care processes, an interactive inquiry form, lists of resources and county contacts and, most importantly, photos and profiles of children who are available for adoption.

Visit OAPL at <http://adoptionphotolistingohio.org/index.php>.

THE OHIO ADOPTION PHOTOLISTING WEBSITE

Home About Us Resources FAQs Contact Us



Ohio Updates

Alternative (Differential) Response

The last Ohio Bulletin update on Alternative (Differential) Response reflected on the ten Alternative Response pilot sites' adaptation to a more natural, post random case assignment environment. Over subsequent months, most of these counties have selected to expand Alternative Response programming both in the number and types of cases that are assigned to the alternate pathway. The transition is reflective of a growing confidence and comfort level, affirmative response from staff and community, and the positive findings of Ohio's Alternative Response Pilot Project field study.

At the time of the last update, a consortium of 6 counties had been competitively selected as one of three national sites to participate in a federal study of differential response. Since then, an additional 10 counties have been authorized to offer an alternative intervention to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Twenty-five Ohio counties currently provide alternative response as an option for families.

APPLICATIONS FOR NEW SITES

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services has assumed responsibility for the application and selection of new sites. A Request for Applications has been released to solicit ten additional sites. This competitively selected set of expansion sites will be notified by early April 2011 and is expected to be operational by fall 2011. Applications are due to ODJFS by 3:00 p.m. on March 7, 2011. The request for application and all instructions can be accessed at <http://procure.ohio.gov/proc/viewProcOpps.asp?oppid=8167&disclaimer=N>.

WHY NOT JUST OPEN UP ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TO ALL 88 COUNTIES?

Ohio's 25 current counties will tell you that there is a tremendous amount of preparation, training and planning that must precede the implementation of alternative response to ensure that child safety is not compromised. Currently, Ohio does not have the infrastructure to provide the necessary support to maintain operational counties and develop the remaining counties. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Supreme Court of Ohio and the Differential Response Leadership Council are actively engaged in developing capacity through a 3-year, step-down contract with the American Humane Association. Ohio is fortunate to have Casey Family Programs as an ongoing partner in this work. Casey Family Programs continues to offer critical support to developing counties and the state.

OVER THE NEXT QUARTER, INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS WILL BE ON:

The Differential Response Leadership Council

As Ohio moves differential response from a pilot study to an integrated component of its child protection system, the Differential Response Leadership Council requires both re-purposing and reorganization. A newly drafted charter and structure establishes the Leadership Council as bringing together experienced public children services agencies to provide:

- Advice to the Subcommittee on Child Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency, Supreme Court of Ohio, and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services regarding the statewide implementation of a differential response approach.
- Peer leadership, guidance and problem-solving throughout Ohio counties' differential response capacity development.

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Ohio Updates

Alternative (Differential) Response...continued

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State-Level Capacity

This work begins with the establishment of a position at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (please see next article, Welcome Ohio's Differential Response Manager) that will, over time, assume and distribute the responsibilities now held by outside consultants. The new Differential Response Program Manager will work closely with American Humane Association staff and Ohio public children services agencies as the state transitions into these functions.

Training

The Ohio Child Welfare Training Program has been an integral member of the Design Team and Leadership Council since inception. Work now is targeted on integrating training responsibility for new and ongoing caseworkers into Ohio's training curriculum and developing a pool of approved trainers.

Ohio's pilot counties found the opportunity to interact with communities and professionals engaged in the practice of alternative response to be the single most influential factor in decision-making and skill development outside of the work itself. Classroom instruction is useful in developing a conceptual perspective, but workers learn to do alternative response by doing alternative response; they learn best from those that are doing alternative response. Through the support of Casey Family Programs, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services has established programming to support the transfer of learning between newly developing and experienced jurisdictions and among Ohio's jurisdictions where alternative response is an ongoing option. "*Alternative Response Experiential Learning*" supports peer-to-peer activities such as regional case staffing, immersion visits, shadowing experiences, coaching, and mentoring experiences. Public child welfare agencies wishing to learn more about Alternative Response Experiential Learning should refer to Family, Children, and Adult Services Procedure Letter no. 207 issued January 26, 2011.

SACWIS

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is working with representatives from the Leadership Council to integrate the remaining Differential Response forms and activities into SACWIS, as well as incorporate any changes that may have resulted from pilot recommendations. As with any management information system, enhancement is a continuous and ongoing process, but Ohio is fortunate to have the experience of the 10 original pilots to provide sound direction in decision-making.

Statutory Authority

The legislative authority for Ohio's Differential System and expansion opportunities currently is set forth in temporary language. The translation of the experiences of the 10 pilot sites into permanent statute will be important work to be addressed over the next six months.

Ohio Updates

Welcome Ohio's Differential Response Manager

The establishment of a position specifically to oversee the statewide implementation of Differential Response is a sign of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' commitment to move forward with this initiative. The Differential Response Manager will be responsible for ensuring that implementation occurs in a manner that supports counties in their efforts and does not compromise child safety. It requires an individual who brings a thorough understanding of Differential Response, an ability to engage stakeholders from all disciplines, and the flexibility to visualize programming in the many different environments that characterize Ohio's 88 counties. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is pleased to welcome Carla Carpenter as Ohio's new Differential Response Manager.

Carla Carpenter comes to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services from the National Center for Adoption Law & Policy at Capital University Law School (NCALP). NCALP is engaged in multidisciplinary education, research, and advocacy initiatives aimed at achieving improved permanency outcomes for children. Carla served as NCALP's Child Welfare Programs Coordinator from 2004-2006 and then as Associate Director of the Center from 2007 to December 2010. Her responsibilities with NCALP included child welfare research, with a particular emphasis on Differential Response systems, and coordination of several of the Center's educational and programmatic initiatives related to adoption and child permanency.

Carla's involvement with Alternative Response in Ohio dates back to 2004 when NCALP began its work with the Supreme Court of Ohio's Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency. NCALP's work with the Subcommittee to research Differential Response approaches in other jurisdictions, combined with extensive outreach to Ohio's child welfare community, contributed to the development of Ohio's Alternative Response pilot. Throughout the pilot design and initial ten-county implementation, Carla served in the role of chronicler, creating a narrative to document the experiences of the counties and state as they worked to implement the practice shift of Alternative Response. The chronicling project provided an opportunity to capture significant milestones, project successes, challenges and lessons learned through these critical stages.

Carla is a Licensed Social Worker. Prior to her work with NCALP, she spent eight years working with children and families in community-based services. Carla's experience includes the provision of case management, advocacy, education and prevention services for children and families.

Carla holds a Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University. She is also an alumna of Capital University where she earned dual Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Social Work degrees, Summa Cum Laude.



Ohio's new Differential Response Manager, Carla Carpenter.

Ohio Updates

What's in a Name: Alternative or Differential Response?

The ability for child protective services to respond in multiple ways to accepted reports of child maltreatment goes by a wide array of names, including alternative, multiple, multi-track, dual track, family assessment and differential response. Up to this time, Ohio had an alternative response system with two possible pathways: a traditional response pathway and an experimental response pathway.

HOW DID OHIO SELECT THIS SPECIFIC TERM?

Alternative Response was the language used in the authorizing statute for Ohio's pilot program and evaluation. Pathway names were highly debated during the design phase with much introspection regarding the associated connotations of terms. Ultimately, since the new pathway was under study, it was called "experimental." What wasn't new was 'traditional.'

The Final Report of Ohio's Alternative Response Pilot Project recommends that Ohio replace the term Alternative Response with "Differential Response." Differential Response describes Ohio's new system of child protection, a system that offers caseworkers more than one option to respond to accepted reports of child maltreatment.

WHY CHANGE?

The purpose of multiple pathways is to match intervention commensurate with circumstances. This system does not construct a **better approach**; it allows caseworkers to select the **right approach** for each family.

For example, please consider how the term "differential" is used in medicine. According to Wikipedia: ...differential diagnosis is the process whereby a given condition or circumstance, called the *presenting problem or chief complaint*, is examined in terms of underlying causal factors and concurrent phenomena as discerned by appropriate disciplinary perspectives and according to several theoretical paradigms or frames of reference, and compared to known categories of *pathology* or exceptionality. Differential diagnosis allows the physician to:

- more clearly understand the condition or circumstance
- assess reasonable *prognosis*
- eliminate any imminently life-threatening conditions
- plan treatment or intervention for the condition or circumstance
- enable the patient and the family to integrate the condition or circumstance into their lives, until the condition or circumstance may be ameliorated, if possible.

IN SUMMARY

Expect to see the term "Differential Response" to appear more frequently in reference to Ohio's newly emerging child protection system. The names of the two pathways still are under debate by Ohio's Differential Response Leadership Council. An important lesson of Differential Response is that language is important. Ohio will take care to select terms that reinforce the values of its future system.

Ohio Updates

Responsible Public Policy. Juvenile Jottings September 2010

Christine Money, Ohio Department of Youth Services

The Department of Youth Services (DYS) touches the lives of thousands of youth in Ohio. Beyond youth in DYS facilities and those on parole, DYS funds and supports over 650 direct service programs throughout the state offering more than 130,000 youth (based on annual program admissions) opportunities and services to effect positive change. These services range from prevention and diversion programs to residential treatment and community treatment in areas such as mental health, sex offending and substance abuse.

Within DYS Facilities

Over the past couple of years, reform has been in progress at DYS to enrich treatment and programming for rehabilitating youth in facilities while promoting greater public safety.

The foundation for full-service living units has been laid over the past year through enhanced Unit Management, the development of strength-based goals for youth and the roll-out of the Strength-based Behavioral Management System (SBBMS). SBBMS is a multi-level behavior motivation system designed to increase positive youth behaviors through the use of reinforcements and decrease unwanted behaviors through a menu of appropriate sanctions.

The next step in transforming the treatment milieu of the living units is with the incorporation of Cognitive Based Therapy (CBT) and the New Freedom-Phoenix curriculum into every housing unit. CBT focuses on targeting certain criminogenic factors youth might have and helps them to restructure, or change, the way they think and respond in various situations. This is done through learning and practicing pro-social skills and behaviors. New Freedom-Phoenix is designed to fit the needs of youth in the care of DYS. The comprehensive program addresses the most critical personal, environmental and community risk factors while building on the most important protective factors and assets. The roll-out of both CBT and New Freedom-Phoenix began in August 2010 and will continue through June of 2011.

SBBMS, CBT and New Freedom-Phoenix provide staff with many proven tools and skills for working with youth and are transforming units into effective treatment milieus.

In the Community

DYS has established a variety of community initiatives to reach youth, support families and build communities.

The Ohio Youth Assessment System, a web-based system, provides objective assessment of youth risk to reoffend and promotes consistency in the determination of treatment and level of supervision for juvenile offenders.

RECLAIM Ohio is a funding initiative that encourages juvenile courts to use a range of community-based options to meet the needs of juvenile offenders. Targeted RECLAIM, which currently includes Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery and Summit counties, funds evidence-based and model programs which resulted in a 39 percent reduction in DYS admissions from these courts in FY 2010.

The agency funds the operational costs of 12 Community Correctional Facilities which are operated by counties and used to treat lower-level felony delinquent youth who would otherwise be committed to a DYS facility.

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) recently launched in Ohio to promote collaboration between systems to reduce secure confinement, improve public safety and make efficient use of resources. Cuyahoga, Franklin, Lucas, Montgomery and Summit counties are supported in local implementation of the JDAI to improve the juvenile justice system based on research and evidence-informed practices.

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Ohio Updates

Responsible Public Policy...continued Juvenile Jottings September 2010

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The Behavioral Health/Juvenile Justice initiatives enhance the community's ability to locally serve juvenile offenders with serious behavioral health needs. In FY 2010, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery and Summit Counties began using family-centered, evidence-informed interventions to contribute to a reduction in DYS admissions.

Parole officers are using Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS), an evidence-based model through which officers build collaborative working relationships with youth and effectively employ graduated programs to address individual youth needs.

For more information about DYS and how the agency is making a positive impact on the lives of youth in Ohio, please visit our website at www.dys.ohio.gov.

Longtime Supreme Court Division Director Retires

After 28 years of service to Ohio Courts, with 21 of those years at the Supreme Court, Doug Stephens, Director of the Judicial and Court Services Division, has retired.

Admired by peers for his easygoing manner and apt decision-making, Stephens also was well known to many judges, court personnel and justice system partners throughout the state. His early career included work at the Delaware County Juvenile Court and the Licking County Probate/Juvenile Court, where he served as court administrator. In 1990, Stephens joined the Supreme Court of Ohio as its first statistics officer, managing the Court's Statistical Reporting Section. He also served as the Court's judicial assignment coordinator before being appointed director of Judicial and Court Services in 2001.

Of particular note was his work in the area of child and family law. In 1995, Stephens worked closely with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to negotiate the first inter-branch agreement between the two entities. The first activity undertaken through this agreement was a Family Court Feasibility Study. The study found that mandated family courts were not necessary in Ohio, but it also found that many good practices were taking place in courts that, unfortunately, were not being widely shared and replicated. In response, under Stephens' supervision, Court programs encouraged initiatives and activities that promoted sharing information and learning among the courts.

As Judicial and Court Services director, Stephens oversaw the work of the Ohio Judicial College, Case Management; Children, Families & the Courts; Dispute Resolution and Specialized Dockets sections; and the Domestic Violence and Interpreter Services programs. The division's work supports the work of 724 judgeships in the state.

Stephens was a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Ohio Association for Court Administration and National Association for Court Managers. His involvement with boards and advisory committees included the Ohio Children's Advocacy Center Board of Directors, the Ohio Sexual Assault Task Force, the Ohio Criminal Justice Information Services Advisory Board, the Ohio CASA/GAL Association Board, and he was past president of the Mid-Ohio Chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

A round table of experts, convened by Casey Family Services and the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2006, defined permanency as having an enduring family relationship that:

- Is safe and meant to last a lifetime;
- Offers the legal rights and social status of full family membership;
- Provides for all levels of a young person's development;
- Assures lifelong connections to extended family, siblings, other significant adults, family history and traditions, race and ethnicity, culture, religion and language.

As trainers in the child welfare system, the term “permanency” is mentioned in almost every workshop. However, many of us have not stopped to consider what we mean by permanency, and what shapes our definition.



HAS THE AUTHORITY
TO DEFINE
“PERMANENCY?”

Lisa Dickson, Communications Chair,
Ohio Chapter, Foster Care Alumni of America

HOW YOUTH DEFINE PERMANENCY

It is important to note that young people in and from foster care define permanency quite differently. During a youth panel at the Casey *It's My Life* conference, youth:

- Differentiated between biological or legal family, and “chosen family”
- Said they needed an entire network of connections, and not just one person
- Didn't want to be viewed as a “failure” if they aged out of the system without being adopted
- Expressed their need for independence and independent living skills

When the Urban Institute and the California Youth Connection facilitated focus groups of foster youth, some referred to permanency as a physical or concrete entity: “A place to stay until you age out.” Other young people said, “No, it's more than a place to live. It's a feeling of connection.”

Perhaps the best definition of permanency came from a young man who compared the concept of permanency to a permanent marker. He said, “If you draw on the paper, that mark ain't going nowhere. The paper may go somewhere or it could be picked up, but the mark ain't going nowhere.”

Broadening Our Definition of Permanency

The Casey roundtable definition of permanency too narrowly defines the scope of “success” in achieving permanency. As defined, permanency would not be an attainable goal for all youth in care. As a former foster care youth, I found my first “family” in my peers while living in a college dorm and did not have the legal rights of full family membership until my marriage. Foster care alumni echo my experience and often report finding “permanency” through friendships and mentoring relationships.

Is a nuclear family for foster youth what we are trying to accomplish, and anything less a failure? Or, are we trying to lay a foundation that will lead to lifelong emotional resiliency? In my opinion, the choice is simple. Professionals can independently continue to define and enforce what permanency should look like for a young person or they can let young people define what permanency means to them and work with them to achieve it.

For a researcher, permanency is an outcome. For a staff person, it might be a job task. But, for a young person in foster care, this is his or her life.

Click [here](#) for two possible training activities you could implement to help participants gain a better understanding of permanency.

SOURCES:

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