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Ohio



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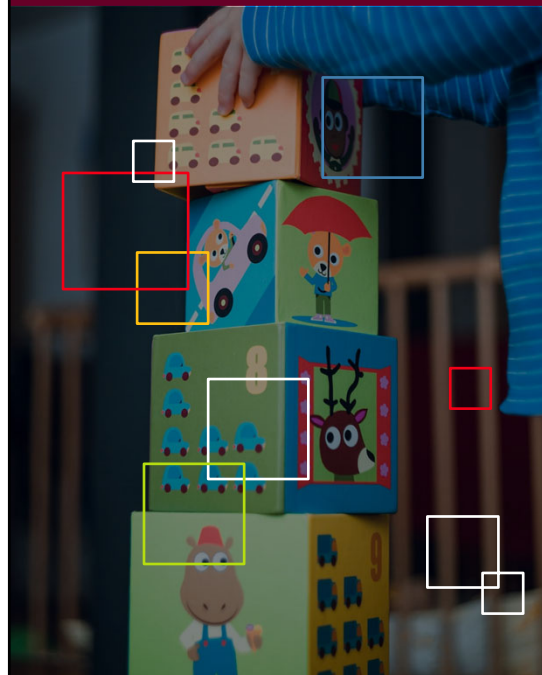
Sustainable, systemic solutions for children and families in Ohio, and across the nation, require us to broaden our perspective, change our way of thinking, and shift the paradigm from child welfare to child, family, and community well-being.



- William Bell
Casey Family Programs

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Agenda

A Word On Trauma Informed Practices

Recent Accomplishments

- Preventing Unnecessary Entry Into Care
- Providing Necessary Resources to Families
- Improving Outcomes to Permanency

Next Steps and Priorities for the Next Four Years

- Family Support Network (FSN)
- Tiered Foster Care (TFC)

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Objectives

- 1 | Learn about recent and planned improvements to Ohio's children services system.
- 2 | Understand how these improvements prevent unnecessary entry into the system, provide necessary resources to families, and improve outcomes to permanency.
- 3 | Discuss how you as children services partners/teams can leverage these reform practices to improve the lives of children and families in Ohio.

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Trauma-Informed Practices

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ALL RISE: For the Good of the Children (trailer)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZRTw25H8-Q>

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The Importance of Trauma Informed Practice

**Quotes from the January 2023 Ohio Youth
Advisory Board Report**

"Going into foster care, it felt like no one was there for me at the end of the day. I needed emotional support with boundaries and someone to trust. I'm sure everyone has trauma in foster care because we are there for a reason".

"I was hoping that my caseworker would be a role model. Someone I could trust and look to for guidance. A caseworker who would be there, and care, and demonstrate that by their actions".

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The Importance of Trauma Informed Practice

Trauma-Informed Care Aims To Do The Following:



1. Help children, youth and families:

- Find meaning and purpose in their lives
- Fulfill valued roles and engage in a life in a community of their choosing
- See themselves as more than their trauma(s)



2. Help identify and pursue avenues to reducing distress and problems in their lives and exercise personal autonomy and self-determination in making choices

These improvements, in turn, may produce better outcomes for children and families, including the following:



Fewer children requiring crisis services, such as emergency departments or residential treatment



Decreased prescriptions for psychotropic medications



Fewer foster home placements, including reentries



Overall improved child, youth and family functioning and well-being

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Secondary Traumatic Stress



- Trauma-informed care and its practice likewise acknowledges the reality of **Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)** and incorporates efforts to address and mitigate it so staff can be grounded and effective in their interactions with families or clients and families
- Experience changes us and the experience of empathetic engagement with people who have had great traumas is no exception

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Preventing Unnecessary Entry into Care


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Family First Prevent Services Act (FFPSA) Updates – Prevention Services

Recent Accomplishments



Capacity Building

- 
9 new MST and FFT teams statewide, resulting from \$2M to **Center of Excellence**
- 
850+ new slots for Help Me Grow providers, thanks to \$1M in expansion grants to Ohio Department of Health
- 
4 new Ohio START counties onboarded in 2022

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FFPSA Updates – Qualified Residential Treatment Programs

Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (Q RTP)

127 Q RTP Compliant Agencies

101 ODJFS-certified

87% Bed Capacity

80% JFS Agencies

84% JFS Facilities

26 OMHAS-certified

100% Bed Capacity

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FFPSA Updates – Qualified Residential Treatment Programs

Q RTP and the Courts



Intersection between Q RTP, OhioRISE, and the CANS

- Qualified Individual documentation
 - CANS
 - Level of Care
- OhioRISE vs Q RTP documentation



Multiple placements during first 60 days

- IV-E Reimbursement Requirements
 - CANS vs. Judicial Determination

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Qualified Individual (QI)



Prior to or within 30 days of the placement into a QRTP, the qualified individual will complete an assessment using the Ohio Brief version of the CANS. The assessment is to be completed in conjunction with the family and permanency team for the child.



The QI will determine whether the needs of the child can be met with family members, kin, or in a foster home and **which setting would provide the most appropriate level of care.**

If the QRTP is the recommended level of care, the reasons why the needs of the child cannot be met by family, kin, or in a foster home must be documented.

Judicial Determination

- **Within 60 days of the placement into a QRTP**, the juvenile court is to consider the assessment, determination, and documentation made by the qualified individual.
- The **court then determines whether the placement in a QRTP provides the most effective and appropriate level of care** for the child in the least restrictive environment.
- The court then **approves or disapproves of the placement of the child in a QRTP.**
 - *Approval is needed to maintain IV-E reimbursability.*

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Investing In Services, Training, And Supports For Parents

Programs and Initiatives Focused To Strengthen Families



**Positive Parenting
Program "Triple P" Online**



**Early Childhood Safety
Initiative**

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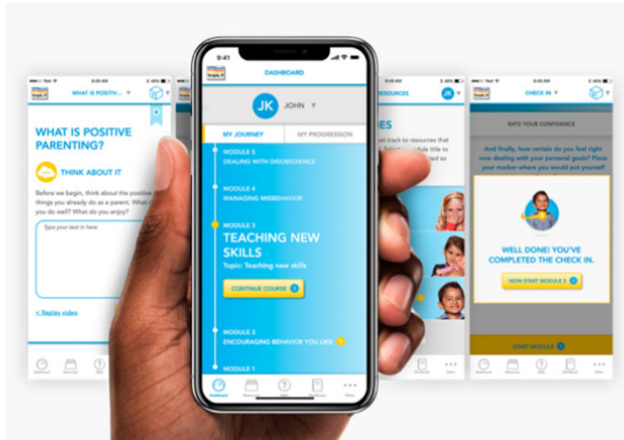
Positive Parenting Program “Triple P” Online

Overview: Triple P is a parenting program designed to prevent – as well as treat – behavioral and emotional problems in teenagers.

Objectives

Help parents:

- raise happy, confident kids
- set rules and routines that everyone respects and follows
- encourage behavior in their children that they like
- prevent and manage misbehavior
- take care of themselves
- feel confident that they’re doing the right thing



- An online version of the effective Triple P for parents with younger kids or tweens/teens
- Available in English and Spanish

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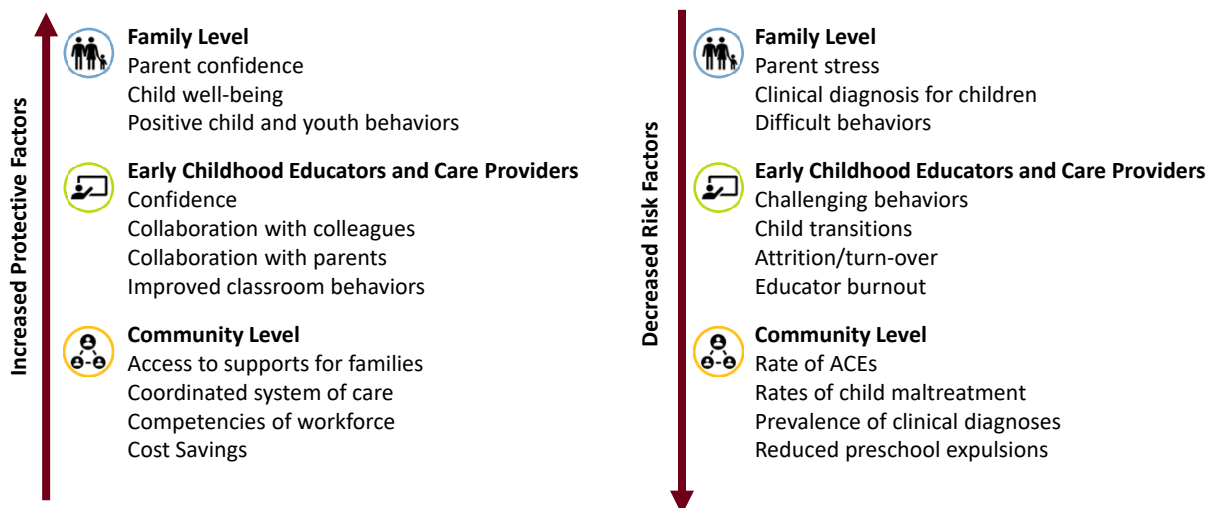
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Triple P Online Program - Outcomes



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Triple P: It's Impact

6000 PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Triple P is making an impact by *reducing stigma, providing access to resources, and building capacity.*

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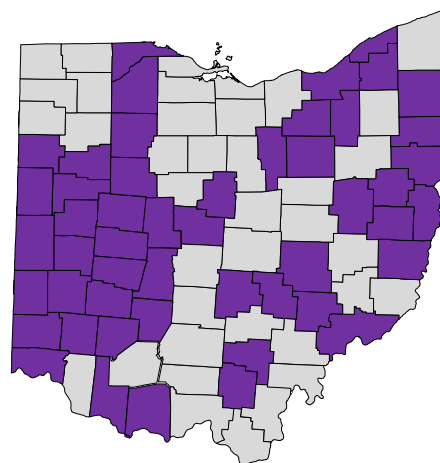
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Early Childhood Safety Initiative (ECSI)

Overview: Grants to service providers to provide one-time parent/caregiver education consultations with concrete safety-related supports

Childhood Safety Initiative Objectives

- ✓ Better support new parents.
- ✓ Decrease risk factors related to infant and child mortality.
- ✓ Potentially prevent injury-related deaths



ECSI available in 54 different counties

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Providing Necessary Resources to Families

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Providing Necessary Resources to Families - Parents

Peer Parenting Solutions

- Ohio START
- IOWA Model

➤ *Strengthen relationships between parents and caregivers*



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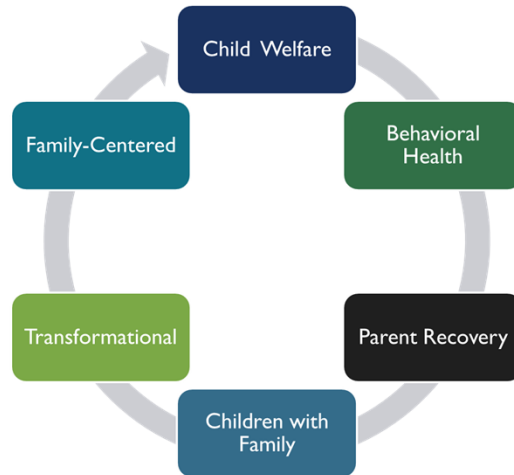
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What is Ohio START?



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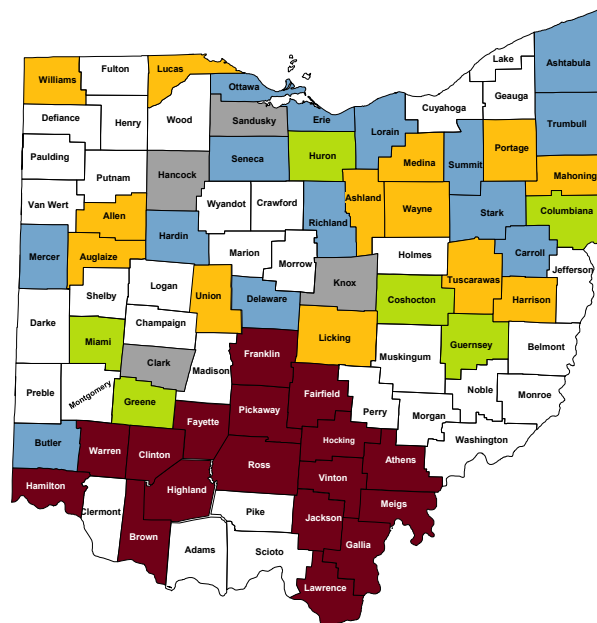
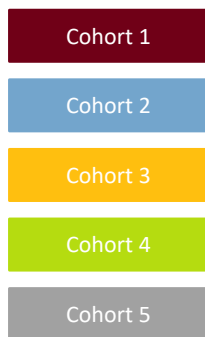
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Current Ohio START Counties



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The Ohio START Model

Early Identification Of Families

Quick Access to SUD Treatment

Weekly Home Visits

Shared Decision Making

Rigorous Evaluation

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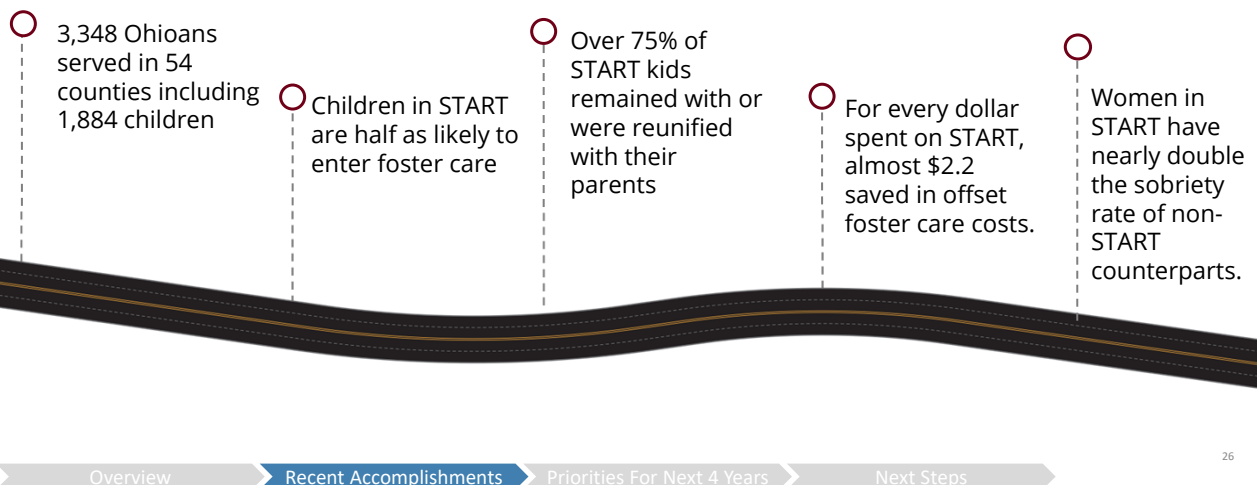
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Ohio START Success



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Iowa Parent Partner Approach (IPPA) Model

Background

- **Rated as Promising Practice on The CA Evidence based and title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouses**
- **Building a Better Future (BABF) Training**
 - brings together children services staff, parent partners, resource parents, aged out foster youth, community providers, and court personnel (judges, magistrates, attorneys) to gain better understanding of one another's roles and how to better support parents.
- **Pairs a Parent Partner with a parent**
 - once parents are trained as Parent Partners, they provide mentorship to families whose children are in foster or kinship care as they navigate through the children services system.

IPPA Goals



To support parents and their child with **safe and timely reunification**



To support parents and their child in **reducing return to agency custody**



To support parents and their child in **reducing re-abuse or recurrence of maltreatment**

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Iowa Parent Partner Approach (IPPA) Ohio Partners

Ohio was selected to receive a five-year grant through the National Quality Improvement Center for Family Centered Reunification or QIC-R to study evidence-based interventions to increase the children service knowledge base.

PILOT PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICE AGENCY SITES INVOLVED

- Fairfield County
- Franklin County
- Knox County

PARTNERS

- **Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth (SAFY)**
 - ODJFS is contracting with Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth (SAFY), the vendor, to recruit, hire, train, and support Parent Partners for all three pilot sites
- **Children and Families of Iowa (CFI)**
 - Children and Families of Iowa is the Purveyor of the Iowa Parent Partner Approach and actively working with Ohio to adapt their model.

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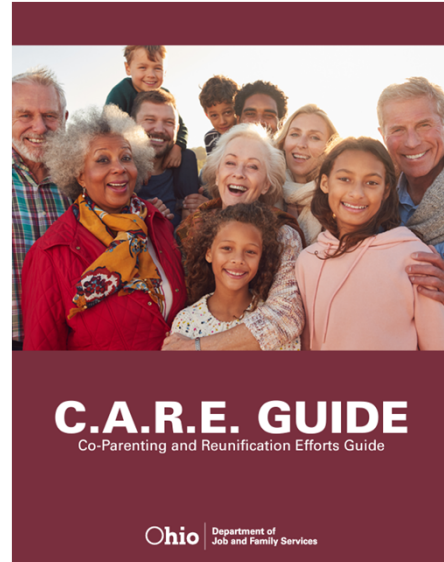
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Strengthen Relationships Between Parents And Caregivers

Ohio's Approach to Co-parenting

- **Goal:** Refocus foster care recruitment, training, and rules to develop relationships between birth families and foster parents.



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Introduction to the C.A.R.E. Guide Phases

Pre-Care Phase

- Questionnaire

Care Phase

- Comfort Connection
- All About Me Connection
- Ongoing Connections

Post-Care Phase

- Efforts to support reunification

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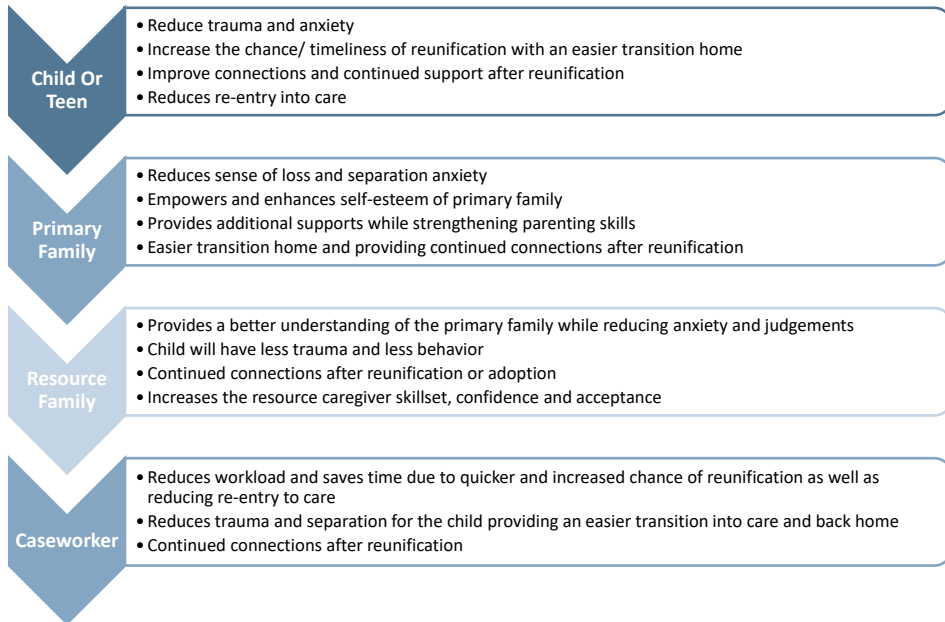
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How can the C.A.R.E Guide Benefit Us?



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Providing Necessary Resources to Families – Kin

Establish family finding requirements and tools including the topic of foster parents as kin



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National Data Regarding Benefits to Placement with Kin

- Minimizes Trauma
- Preserves cultural identity
- Increases placement stability
- Improves behavioral outcomes
- Promotes sibling ties

"Siblings are stronger together. They have survived together. Overcome together. Separating them disrupts the strength they've built together and can derail their life."

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Family Search and Engagement Enhancements in Ohio

- Mandate intensive, ongoing efforts to identify and engage kin
- Strengthened court oversight
- Establishing a path for foster parents to become kin



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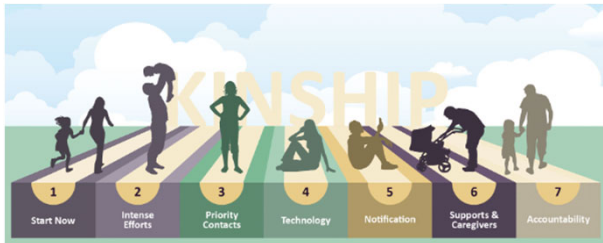
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Family Search and Engagement Enhancements in Ohio

- Offering “hands on” training to caseworkers and supervisors
- Providing free access to paid search engine tools



Additional Resources

(click any link to view PDF)

- [Fast Family Finding Search Steps](#)
- [Diligent Search Resources](#)
- [Social Media Overview](#)
- [LexisNexis Accurant Quick Guide](#)
- [Family Connections and GenoPro Comparison](#)
- [GenoPro Genogram Quick Reference](#)
- [Connect our Kids Resources and Links](#)
- [Family Support Plan](#)
- [Family Search & Engagement \(FSE\) Policy and Workflow Development Overview](#)
- [PPGD Training Resources and Guidance](#)

kinnectohio.org/seek/

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Providing Necessary Resources to Families – Youth Voice

- Foster Youth Bill of Rights
- Youth education and participation in permanency decisions



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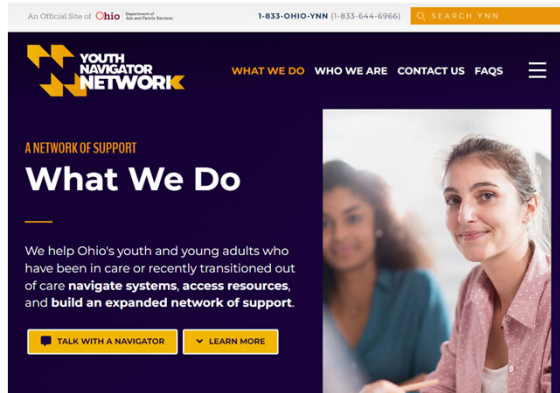
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Providing Necessary Resources to Families – Youth Voice

- Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office
- Youth Navigator Network



"I have never had the case plan explained like that before. I thought it was just punitive."

"Thank you for listening to what I have to say."

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Improving Outcomes to Permanency

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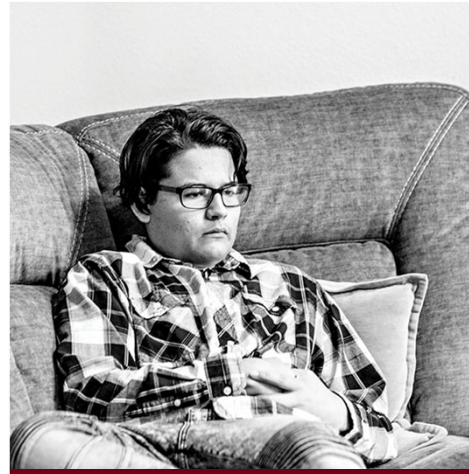
Ohio

Impact of Aging Out of Foster Care

Without the support and safety net of a permanent family*:

- **1 in 5** youth will be homeless after age 18
- Only **50%** will be employed at age 24
- Less than **3%** will earn a college degree
- **70%** of former female foster youth will be pregnant by age 21
- **1 in 4** youth will experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), equal to or higher than U.S. military veterans

*Source: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Cost Avoidance: The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care, 2013



For every young person who ages out of care, taxpayers pay **\$300,000** in social costs (public assistance, lost wages, systems involvement)

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Concurrent Planning

- Utilized when reunification is the primary family case plan goal
- A process in which more than one permanent family/kin solution is explored at a time
- Looks for multiple permanency options in case the primary plan of reunification is not possible
- Works to find a secondary permanency option for a child in temporary custody while also working toward reunification



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Ohio

Concurrent Planning Benefits

There are many benefits to utilizing concurrent planning. The PCSAs and private agencies should engage the family in concurrent planning conversations at initial custody and can focus on many of these benefits during the conversation.



Decreases the amount of time in foster care by achieving safe and timely permanency for children



Explores all relative and kinship options



Engages youth in their future planning



Supports the youth's family, culture, school and community relationships



Identifies additional support for the primary family

ODJFS partnered with Kinnect about concurrent planning, and they created a [flyer](#) on the topic.

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State Data Regarding Permanency Outcomes - Kin

Kinship and Foster Care Comparison



Kinship children were **significantly less likely to experience subsequent abuse or neglect** within 6 months (1.8% vs. 3.4%), twelve months (3.4% vs. 5.3%), and eighteen months (4.2% vs. 6.3%) of exiting care when compared to children in foster care in comparison counties.



Kinship children were significantly less likely to re-enter out of home care (the odds of re-entry into care were nearly three times greater for comparison children at 6 and 12 months of exiting care) when compared to children in foster care in comparison counties.



Kinship children reached permanency in significantly fewer days (adjusted median of 290 days vs. 325 days)

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What is KGAP?

- Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program
- Funding source to care for relative or non-relative children or teens
- 3 Programs – Federal, State, Connections to 21 (KGAP C21)



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Children Services Transformation Implementation

Establish a federal and state Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP)

- ✓ Effective as of January 1, 2023
- ✓ Administration of programs are a hybrid approach between the PCSAs and OFC
- ✓ Child must be placed into the home as a foster child for at least 6 months
- ✓ To ensure eligibility the juvenile court needs to verify the kin caregiver, ODJFS and the PCSA have signed the KGAP agreement before the court grants legal custody to the relative or kin

Federal KGAP	State KGAP
Youth <u>is</u> IV-E eligible for FCM	Youth <u>is NOT</u> eligible for IV-E FCM
Funding is Federal <u>IV-E</u> and State GRF	Funding is Federal <u>TANF</u> and State GRF
Youth <u>categorically eligible</u> for Medicaid	Family <u>must apply</u> for Medicaid for youth
	Family is <u>required to apply</u> for OWF

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KGAP Payments

- Negotiated between ODJFS and kin caregiver
- No income test/ Child's SSI is considered
- Payment is to be 80% of foster care per diem
 - Unless that amount is less than \$350
 - Then payment would be \$350 or per diem rate, whichever is lower
- ODJFS and kin caregiver may mutually agree to lower amount



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KGAP 6-month timeframe details

- Pursuant to federal guidelines, this requirement is not viewed as a calendar, 6 month, 180 days.
- Instead, it is a continuous placement that spans at least one day in 6 months.
- Example: Michael
 - Placed January 31 as a foster child
 - Continues in placement
 - KGAP planning in spring
 - Court awards legal custody June 2

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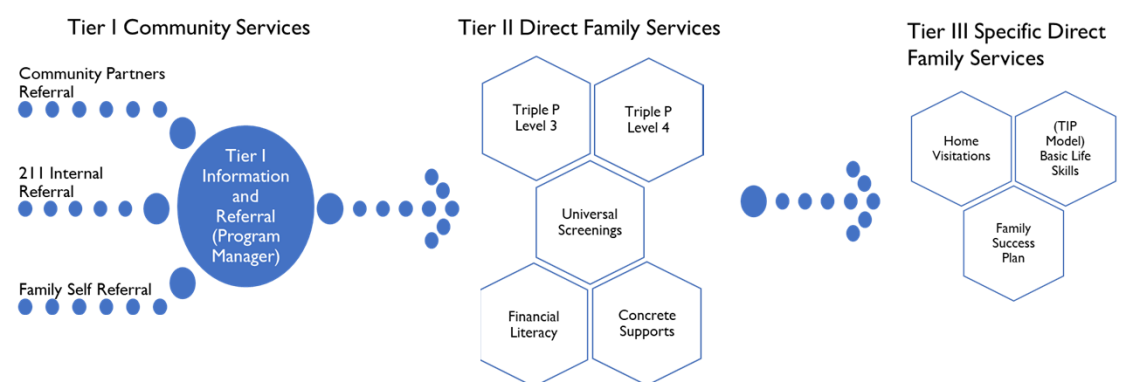
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Family Support Network

A Vision for Ohio's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services



Tier I Community Services

- Community Partners Referral
- 211 Internal Referral
- Family Self Referral
- Tier I Information and Referral (Program Manager)**

Tier II Direct Family Services

- Triple P Level 3
- Triple P Level 4
- Universal Screenings
- Financial Literacy
- Concrete Supports

Tier III Specific Direct Family Services

- Home Visitations
- (TIP Model) Basic Life Skills
- Family Success Plan

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Background to Tiered Foster Care



The **Governor's Children Services Transformation (CST) Final Report** outlined Tiered Foster Care as part of a larger effort to establish a range of Tiers and address recruitment and retention strategies for caregivers.

Vision: Expand the foster care structure to better align children's characteristics and unique needs with caregivers' skills and abilities; to provide youth with high-quality care, as well as resources for caregivers, and supports for agencies.

Mission: The mission of Tiered Foster Care is to ensure children coming into care are placed into the most appropriate level of care identified and to move children out of congregate care as appropriate, keeping in mind the child's treatment needs. Providing children with the quality care they deserve is our priority.

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TFC Overview and Goals

CURRENT SYSTEM		➔	FUTURE SYSTEM	
Types of Foster Care / Level of Care			Types of Foster Care / Level of Care	Tier / Level of Need
Family Foster Care			Family Foster Care	
Treatment Foster Care	Special		Treatment Foster Care	Tier 1 LON
	Exceptional			Tier 2 LON
Medically-Fragile Foster Care				
Qualified Residential Treatment Program			Medically-Fragile Foster Care	
Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility			Qualified Residential Treatment Program	
			Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility	

Potentially eligible for **OhioRISE**, a specialized Medicaid managed care plan with tailored services to meet the needs of youth with complex needs.

Goals:

-  **Defining and characterizing each of the planned levels of need (LON)**, utilizing the newly-developed Child Characteristics List and the Ohio Brief CANS Decision-Support Model
-  Placing **children in the most appropriate setting** for their needs
-  Updating and enhancing rules, **resources, training, and supports available to caregivers**, to better serve today's children and youth in Foster Care
-  Establishing **more consistent maintenance rate and determination tools**, structures and policies across the State

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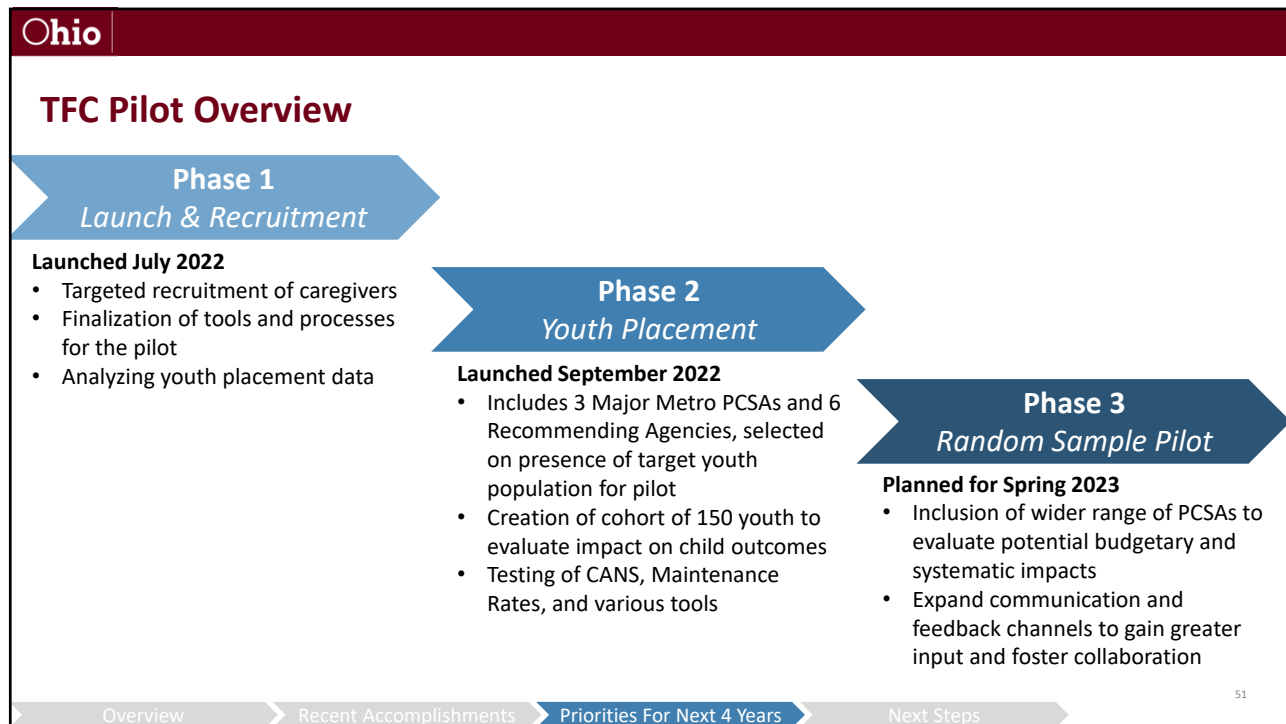
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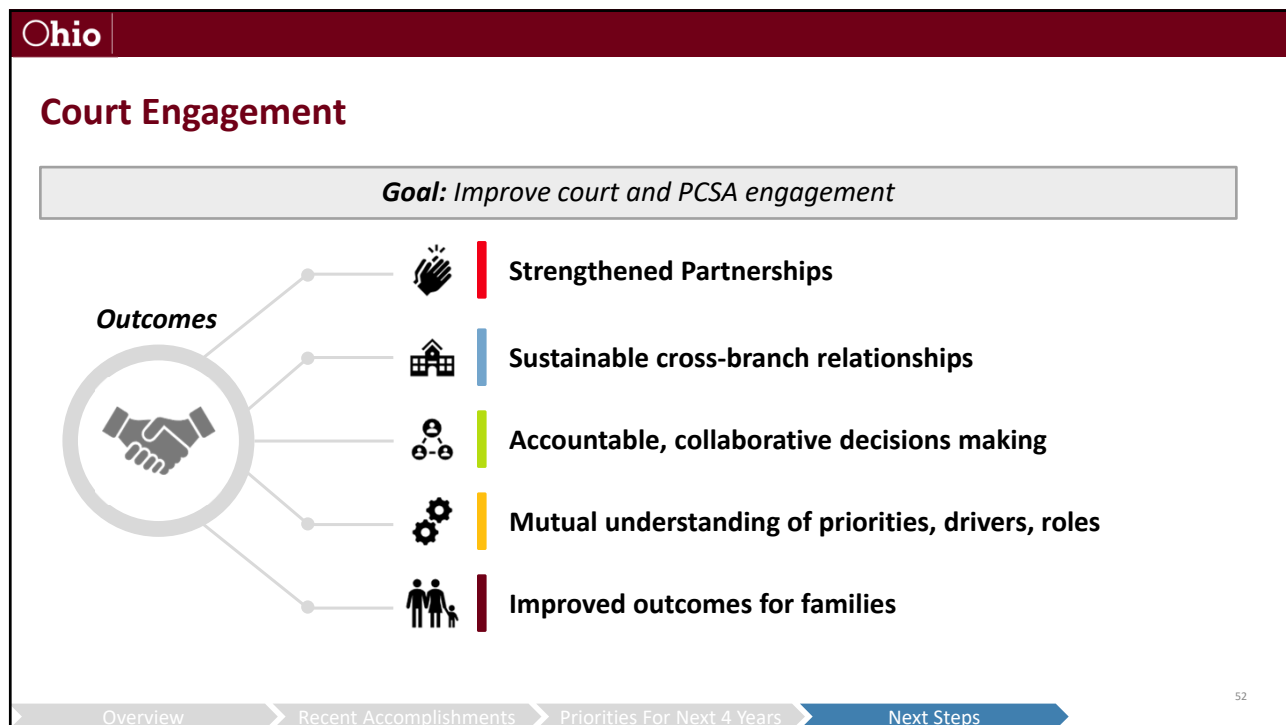
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Takeaways

1. Setting up cadence of meetings for county team to meet
2. Determining as a team what to focus on using:
 1. Strengths and gaps in services for children and families
 2. Data
 3. Community structure
3. Think of how your county's team can implement **at least 2** of these improvements now to be part of the transformation
4. Requesting feedback from stakeholders including those with lived experience

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THANK YOU!

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CONCURRENT PLANNING

Concurrent planning is a process when caseworkers explore more than one permanent family solution at a time. Returning a child to their family of origin is the primary case plan goal for a young person in foster care. Concurrent planning looks for multiple permanency options in case the primary plan is not possible. Concurrent planning works to find the best plan for a young person and their family while also striving toward timely permanence.



CONCURRENT PLANNING IS DESIGNED TO...

- help shorten a young person's stay in foster care
- achieve safe and timely permanency for children
- pursue all kinship options
- engage young people in their future planning
- support the young person's family, culture, school, and community relationships

WHAT TO KNOW

Permanency is the goal. Making it happen goes far beyond just a placement. Young people need connections, belonging, and committed relationships. A trusting relationship with an adult in a parenting role provides the emotional security needed. A legal parent/child relationship provides the highest level of security for all young people in agency custody. Legal permanency can happen through reunification, change of legal custody, adoption, or legal guardianship.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Concurrent planning should occur at the first contact with a family. Children services workers should ask families to share names and contact information for relatives, kin, or others who have a strong connection to the young person or family. The goal is to create a network of support, whether the young person is being cared for by a parent or someone else.



"Permanence is an idea, a value, and a status. If young people have permanence, they have family members...who intend to always be there for them."

www.AECF.org

Everyone teams together with the children services agency to support the youth and their family. All voices are important to this process.

References

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018). Concurrent planning for timely permanence. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/concurrent-planning/
Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP). Practice Focus: Developing Permanency. <https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/FSELlink7-Developing.stm>
The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2/6/12). What is Permanence? (Blog Post). <https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-is-permanence>



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CONCURRENT PLANNING AND YOU

Parents should be engaged in concurrent planning from the beginning of their involvement with child welfare. The caseworker may refer to concurrent planning using different words such as permanency planning, support networks, and alternative caregiving.



WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

- Parents
- Youth and siblings
- Maternal and paternal relatives
- Kin – people with whom family or young person has strong family-like connections
- Resource families (Kinship and foster caregivers)

IT'S A TEAM PROCESS

Families, caregivers, and caseworkers work together as a team. Young people have the right to talk about permanency and their future, including where they will live if they are unable to stay with their parents. Kin can be involved in many different ways to support the young person.

Support examples in addition to caregiving include:

- Community activities
- Respite care/childcare
- Phone/virtual conversations
- Transportation support
- Mentoring
- School support
- Emotional support
- Visitation
- Sibling connections



CONCURRENT PLANNING DISCUSSIONS CAN TAKE MANY FORMS

- During concurrent plan development and reviews
- Home visits
- Permanency planning
- Meetings with caseworkers
- Placement decisions/moves
- Team meetings with support networks
- Family case plan development and changes
- Court hearings
- Genograms to identify kin and permanent connections
- Semi-annual reviews (SAR)
- Caregiver information and training

Resources

More information related to concurrent planning and reunification can be found at [Concurrent Planning for Timely Permanence \(childwelfare.gov\)](https://childwelfare.gov/concurrent-planning-for-timely-permanence/)

More information for youth and their rights when in foster care can be found at [Ohio YAB | fosteractionohio](https://fosteractionohio.org/)

More information on Ohio specific code related to concurrent planning, foster care, and youth involvement can be found at [ODJFS eManuals > Families and Children > Family, Children and Adult Services Manual \(ohio.gov\)](https://odjfs.eManuals.org/Families-and-Children/Family-Children-and-Adult-Services-Manual)



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C.A.R.E. GUIDE

Co-Parenting and Reunification Efforts Guide



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Job and Family Services



Introduction

Welcome to the Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts (C.A.R.E.) Guide. This guide is intended to be used as an implementation guide to support all parties involved with strengthening the relationships between primary families and resource families. By using this guide as a means to implement Ohio's Key Steps Approach to strengthening relationships, Public Children Services Agency (PCSA), Private Children Placement Agency (PCPA), Private Non-custodial Agency (PNA) agencies and Resource Providers have the tools and resources to act as a facilitator to developing a co-parenting approach, supporting the needs of the child, the parent, the resource families, the caseworker, and ultimately guide for the reunification of the child's family. In this guide you will find best practices and suggestive activities that will support the co-parenting and reunification efforts. We recognize there are some families with extenuating circumstances that due to violence or other safety implications, the co-parenting and reunification efforts may not be in the child's best interests. In those limited circumstances, we would be mindful to follow policies and practices that promote the safety of the child. While implementing these best practice strategies, always keep in mind the individual needs of THIS child, THIS family, THIS relationship. Each child's journey deserves a partnered relationship rather than a power relationship between their primary family and resource family. **We must always be reminded every child and teen deserves to keep everyone they love in their life. Every child and teen deserve a voice in their safety. Every child and teen deserves to be physically and emotionally safe. Every child and teen has rights and it matters if those rights are violated. Above all, we must be reminded that youth and teens need to be asked and heard when adults are making decisions about their lives.**

Background

Ohio is one of nine states with a state-supervised, county-administered children services system. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services oversees the delivery of children services across the state and provides training, technical assistance, and supervision to each of Ohio's local public children services agencies (PCSAs). Each county has their own PCSA, which is responsible for providing direct services to children and families in their county to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being. Upon coming into office, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine committed to comprehensively reviewing Ohio's children services system and prioritizing needed reforms. Just moments after being sworn in as Ohio's 70th Governor, Governor DeWine signed Executive Order 2019-04D, elevating the priority of children services within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). From its inception, the Office of Children Services Transformation has been committed to re-envisioning Ohio's children services system, in partnership with Ohio's PCSAs, to ensure that every child who connects with it is afforded the same services and opportunities for lifelong success. In November 2019, Governor DeWine created the Children Services Transformation (CST) Advisory Council to conduct a comprehensive review of the children services system. Twenty-one members were appointed to carry out this work, spanning families, foster youth, and subject matter expertise from across the state. Members were tasked with: Traveling the state to better understand local barriers and best practices, promoting a shared state and county

vision for agency purpose and practice, reviewing data, trends and policies regarding the foster care system, providing recommendations and strategies to strengthen all areas of the system, including kinship, foster care, adoption, workforce and prevention. The Children Services Transformation Advisory Council prioritized 37 recommendations to improve Ohio's children services and foster care system. The recommendations align with seven core action areas identified during the 10 forums as needing to be addressed. The seven core action areas are prevention, workforce, practice, kinship, foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice.

Within the foster care core action area, the CST recommendation titled "Strengthen relationships between birth families and foster parents" was developed. This recommendation specifically states to "refocus foster care recruitment, training, and rules to develop relationships between birth families and foster parents." Throughout this guide, you will see terminology for primary families (birth families) and resource families (foster parents). A recommendation workgroup was then created to help identify and develop training, rules, and best practices to support all populations involved with Ohio's approach to strengthening relationships between primary families and resource families. Through enforcement of the rules and training and implementation of this tool, recruitment and retention efforts will naturally grow as well. The workgroup was formed consisting of both internal and external subject matter expert partners, with feedback and input provided by the Ohio Youth Advisory Board.

Working with Primary Families is always a risk, but of the very best kind. When you reach out and strive for an open, honest relationship with them, you risk a child being connected to multiple caregivers who will fight for them. You risk being a part of a story of continued relationships that were once threatened. You risk your own family being exposed to a person instead of just "the problem" and that makes your own fight against adverse circumstances in your community intensely personal. You risk a new perception of what it means to be a family and expanded family boundaries far greater than you could have ever dreamed. Our own family's experiences with primary families have profusely changed the way we will forever serve and be a part of our local community. I'm so thankful we took the risk.

-Emily O.- Summit County foster and adoptive parent

Committee Members

A collaborative effort from the following individuals was instrumental in developing the intent and purpose of the recommendation. ODJFS appreciates the partnership involved from these professionals, especially the Ohio Youth Advisory Board members who offered feedback and input.

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Melinda Winegardner, Foster Care Licensing Specialist, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Hello, my name is Jennifer Furay. My husband, Jeff, and I have been treatment foster-parents through House of New Hope Foster Agency for 8 years. We have fostered around 25 children. I believe many foster parents are moved with compassion for children in the "system" and become foster parents to "Save the Children." This is a noble cause but a bigger picture for foster parents is that we should want to "Save the Families."

The children that have been placed in our home (most cases) have biological parents that love them very much but have no parenting skills. I've observed these parents struggling to meet their own basic needs without direction or role models. They need mentors to help them learn life skills including parenting, child development needs, time management, communication and basic people skills.

Coming alongside of the biological parents, of the children we fall in love with, helps these families to have the best of both worlds. They have someone to care for their basic needs, possibly getting them on track educationally, medically and with therapies (speech, OT, PT) that may have been delayed because the parents didn't have the experience to seek out these resources. While also building lasting relationships that will help to recreate a more productive family for the children. It is amazing when you can look at the biological parent with compassion and respect and help them, they learn to trust and respect you. They want to learn what it takes to be a great parent when they see that role modeled for them.

One parent that I worked with would become very aggressive when she was upset about a decision made about her case with the children. The case worker, viewing her as noncompliant would shut down whatever plans were being worked on for her to have time to cool down and think logically. Working with her on speaking truth with kindness and respect was paramount in her case. The parent was able to practice on the phone with me as if I was the case worker. Then call the case worker and work out a reunification with her two girls for that week, instead of being delayed a month because of her anger. She was so proud of herself that she called me back and said, "IT WORKED! I can't believe it worked." This was such a special moment for her. The family was reunited, and the parent had valuable skills that she learned during their time apart that will hopefully last her a lifetime.

- Jennifer Furay, resource parent

Importance of Youth and Teen Involvement

Before we begin introducing the content of the guide, we must first remind ourselves that the largest and most important voice in the co-parenting approach is the youth or teen's voice. When understanding the co-parenting approach, the primary families and resource families are the adults communicating, planning, and strategizing the initial and ongoing connections to benefit the child or teen, and all parties involved. However, those strategies cannot be planned or executed without first involving the youth or teen in the decision making. We know and recognize that due to the youth or teen's own personal experience, engaging and connecting with the primary family, or specific members of the primary family, may not be of comfort or healing for the youth or teen. We must listen and hear the youth or teen's personal choice in this space when age and developmentally appropriate. The youth or teen should have a voice, the most important voice, in those primary family members and community members they choose to continue having in their lives, including the youth or teen's siblings. The trauma also experienced by the youth or teen's siblings is of importance for the healing of the youth or teen and the primary family unit. By allowing the youth or teen to continue ongoing connections of their choice with their siblings, the sense of family and belonging may remain, even while outside of the home. This is especially important if the siblings have also been removed from the primary family and separated in multiple settings. In these circumstances, connecting the siblings through all resource caregivers and primary family members of their choice is vital to reducing the trauma and anxiety experienced by all the youth and teen siblings. Only through the efforts by the adults in their lives will the siblings be able to remain connected, an integral part of their experience.

In my three years of being a foster parent, I have had the opportunity to work closely with one biological family over the course of two years. From the very beginning it was my goal to be sure the bio family knew I was there to support them as a family unit, and not just their child. When I met the biological mom for the first time, I asked her questions about her daughter. I wanted to hear and support what the child's mom knew about her and wanted to share with me. I welcomed advice on eating and hair and skin care, naps and clothing so she could feel heard. When visits were established, I wrote short letters to the biological mom from the child's perspective and left them in the diaper bag for her each week. The child was an infant, so this gave the child a "voice" to share things with her biological mom and the milestones she was reaching. I printed pictures and sent text messages through an approved method to keep mom updated when allowed if she did not have visits. Each time I interacted with bio mom I wanted her to know that I support her as a mom, and I was there to love her daughter just during the "in between." I attended court and meetings, we always chatted while waiting. Even when it was hard, I tried to find some small thing we could connect and relate to so that she could feel the relationship. Overall, it was my goal to be sure that the biological mom felt loved, supported, and that she was a person of value too.

-Lindsey P.
resource parent

Utilizing the C.A.R.E. Guide

The committee researched a large number of similar co-parenting approaches promoted by such entities as Birth and Foster Parent Partnership (BFPP) through the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI), Casey Family Programs (Casey), as well as other advocacy groups and state practices. Through this research, the C.A.R.E. Guide was developed, keeping in consideration Ohio's already established rules and practices for Resource Providers, PCSA, PCPA, and PNA agencies. The C.A.R.E. Guide was written to support current practices and to allow for long-term sustainability. The committee read and heard a large number of testimonials in the co-parenting approach and selected four specific key steps that will help transform Ohio's commitment to strengthening relationships between primary families and resource families.

The four key steps in Ohio's Approach are:

- (1) Survey the resource family by utilizing the questionnaire in the JFS 8106 or creating a similar questionnaire regarding their level of comfort in co-parenting with the primary family. This questionnaire is to be completed at initial certification and at each recertification thereafter.**
- (2) Orchestrate and facilitate the opportunity for the primary family and the resource family to initially connect within seventy-two hours of removal. This may be completed by telephone, in-person, video conference or any other method of live communication.**
- (3) Orchestrate and facilitate a connection between the primary family and resource family within seven days of removal for the purpose of building a relationship between families and allowing the primary family to share information with the resource family about the child to reduce anxiety for all participants. This connection may be completed during the initial contact in paragraph (A)(2) of this rule.**
- (4) Support ongoing connections. These connections are to address at a minimum:**
 - (a) Activities for the child to engage with important family and community members.**
 - (b) Activities to help maintain a familiar routine and schedule for the child.**
 - (c) Activities to promote reunification.**

These key steps can be found throughout the C.A.R.E. Guide, supported by best practices, benefits, suggestions, and opportunities for agencies to blend these four approaches in their existing practices. Because all of Ohio's 88 counties are structured uniquely and individually, there was great intention on the committee's part to allow for flexibility, while still committing to the true intention of the recommendation. At the core of every decision should be the best interest of the child. The commitment to a co-parenting approach is the commitment that every single child deserves to know and engage and be supported by every person important in his or her life.

There are three distinct phases during the co-parenting relationship between the primary family and the resource family. Before a resource caregiver becomes a certified foster parent, conversations with the applicant need to occur. These conversations help identify the comfort level of the applicant in ways they are willing and able to engage in a relationship with the primary parent. During this conversation, the certifying agency has opportunity to help strengthen the resource caregiver's comfort level and ensure appropriate matching is occurring when placing children. The Resource Family Questionnaire, or a similar version developed by the licensing agency, would be completed prior to initial certification and every certification thereafter to help the resource caregiver in their own professional development. We'll call this phase the **PRE-CARE Phase**.

The second distinct phase of the co-parent relationship is after the child has been placed with the resource family. This phase of the co-parent relationship is especially designed to reduce the anxiety and traumatic feelings for the child, the primary parent, the resource family and even the caseworker. By implementing the C.A.R.E. Guide during this phase, the primary family and the resource family are offering the child a comfortable, relaxed, less anxious transition to the resource family's home, further building a relationship that promotes support, trust, and reunification for the child and his or her family. This co-parenting approach also supports a consistent schedule and routine for the child post-reunification. We'll call this phase the **CARE Phase**.

The third, and equally important, phase of the co-parenting relationship is following the reunification of the child with his or her family. This phase supports the child for a transition back to his or her family through shared celebration and partnership, as well as supports the primary parent in self-improvement and sustainability. We'll call this phase the **POST CARE Phase**.

Benefits for All Parties

There are many benefits for everyone involved when we strengthen the relationship between the resource caregiver and primary family. With the child as our priority and a willingness to work together for their benefit, we can reduce the trauma of placement and separation. Some of these benefits include the following:

Child

- Provides additional support to the child, reduces sense of loss and separation anxiety
- Reduces trauma and anxiety, leading to a reduction in negative behavior and possible reduction in prescribing medication
- Provides better continuity for the child, reduces disruption in their life
- Increases psychological and physical comfort for the child when entering placement
- Better care of the child because of communicating needs directly between resource caregiver and primary family. This could mean more and better information for medical providers, therapists, and schools
- Increased sense of self- worth for the child
- Enhances chance of reunification and timeliness of reunification
- Easier transition home
- Improves meaningful visitation and connections between child and primary family, which is the most important activity leading to reunification
- Provides continued support and connections after reunification
- Expands child's adult support system and a united support system while parenting the child
- Reducing placement moves for the child
- Enhances acceptance of diverse lifestyles, cultures, and individuals
- When paired with family counseling and/or individual therapy, can reduce generational trauma and re-entry into care

Primary Family

- Provides additional support to the primary family, reduces sense of loss and separation anxiety
- Enhances chance of reunification and timeliness of reunification
- Easier transition home
- Improves meaningful visitation and connections between child and primary family, which is the most important activity leading to reunification
- Empowers the primary family, allowing them to continue to be the expert on their child
- Opportunity for primary parent to strengthen parenting skills
- Remaining actively involved in the life of the child
- Enhances parents' self- esteem
- Better care of the child because of communicating needs directly between resource caregiver and primary family. This could mean more and better information for medical providers, therapists, and schools.
- Encourages engagement in case plan activities and with court and agency requirements
- Provides continued support and connections after reunification
- Enhances acceptance of diverse lifestyles, cultures, and individuals
- When paired with family counseling and/or individual therapy, can reduce generational trauma and child's re-entry into care

Resource Family

- Provides resource family with better understanding of the primary family and their opportunities
- Reduces anxiety and judgements possibly perceived from information on placement documents
- Reduces anxiety for resource caregiver
- Better care of the child because of communicating needs directly between resource caregiver and primary family. This could mean more and better information with medical providers, therapists, and schools.

- The child will have fewer physical issues and mental health issues leading to less stress for the resource family
- Resource family will have support from the primary family leading to a more unified parenting approach – coparenting.
- Gain insight into the child's behaviors and are more sensitive to the trauma the child has experienced
- Provides continued support and connections after reunification
- Enhances the development of the resource family as they are providing care to foster children. Develops resource caregiver confidence and skill set in working with future placements.
- Enhances acceptance of diverse lifestyles, cultures, and individuals

Custodial Agency Caseworker

- Reduces anxiety about separation of families
- When resource caregiver and primary family are working together, it reduces the work-load and stress of the caseworker
- Saves time for caseworker
- Enhances chance of reunification and timeliness of reunification, resulting in better outcome
- Easier transition home
- Reduces trauma of separation of the child
- Provides continued support and connections after reunification
- Helps build trust between the caseworker and primary family
- Enhances acceptance of diverse lifestyles, cultures, and individuals
- Reduces chances of re-entry of the child into care
- Initial investment into co-parenting approach for each child allows for long term reduction in placements, re-entries, and ongoing responsibilities
- Reduces the need for direct involvement on the caseworker, allowing the primary family and resource family to engage in their own communication

What happens when we do not incorporate these practices?

While there are many benefits of utilizing a co-parenting approach, there are also detriments when we do not incorporate these practices. Not using this approach enhances anxiety, which can negatively impact the child's behavior and physical health. This leads to more psychotropic medications being prescribed and difficulties with mental and physical health issues for the child. As a result, there is an increased likelihood of child maltreatment. The impact of removal and separation on the child, primary family, resource caregiver, and caseworker remains high and ultimately increases the chance for a child to come back into care. The re-entry then promotes greater responsibilities for the caseworker.

Alternate path if lack of safety is present

This guide is designed to assist resource caregivers and primary families to build strong partnerships to establish a co-parenting relationship that is beneficial to youth and teens. We also understand that some primary families, due to case plan restrictions or life choices, may be unable to participate to the extent that would be preferred. This section is to discuss how to still incorporate that primary family and other permanent adult supporters into the youth's life in a way that is still beneficial and can fit with the case plan of that primary family. Below are some suggestions to incorporate an alternate path to the co-parenting approach that supports the youth or teen if lack of safety is present.

- Limit exposure that the youth or teen have to an at-risk parent, but still provide the at-risk parent general information about the activities in which the youth is engaged. When doing so, always be mindful to not disclose personal or location information of the child, the activity, or details that would promote a risk of safety until case plan or court order allows otherwise.
- If a parent is in prison or another restrictive setting, make a plan with that parent to still keep in communication with their youth or teen (through letters, phone calls, etc.) Attempt to find opportunities within the four key steps of connections that still allow this parent to be included in communication with the youth or teen. One example is identifying one day of the week that the parent is able to communicate via phone or virtual technology, allowing the youth or teen to share their week's activities with the

Benefits for All Parties (continued)

- parent. The key to this approach is to ensure the ongoing communication continues to keep the parent engaged and informed about the youth or teen.
- If a parent is only allowed visits with the child at secure locations, select a location that promotes comfort and familiarity for the child. If the meeting location is new and unfamiliar to the youth or teen, attempt to visit prior to the scheduled parental visit to introduce the child to the meeting location, or attempt to tour the meeting location at least an hour prior to the visit. This is an opportunity to reduce anxiety and alleviate the introduction of more trauma to the youth or teen.
- Even when the primary family is not permitted to engage with the youth or teen due to safety risks, allow the child to engage in ongoing connections with other individuals that are safe and important to the child (non-risk family members, coaches, teachers, spiritual/community leaders, and other permanent adult supporters).

Foster parents, Mr. and Mrs. M, accepted placement of a six-week-old infant after he had been discharged from the hospital for having an abscess that was related to a severe diaper rash. His mother was visually impaired and had difficulty meeting his needs. The child spent two years in the home of Mr. and Mrs. M during which time they built a relationship with birth mom. She was young and had no supports in the area. They kept her up to date on her son's needs and development. He was diagnosed with the same genetic eye condition as mom and saw specialists for treatment. They remembered her at Christmas and Mother's Day with gifts such as a blanket with enlarged photos of her son or a Christmas ornament with an enlarged photo of her son that she was able to see. Reunification was a slow process, and the foster family was willing to be the child's permanency plan. They worked cooperatively with the agency in allowing birth mom to take on more responsibilities for childcare and finally transitioned him home over a period of several months. The family has maintained contact since he returned home a year and a half ago. They have mom and her son over and they have gone on outings together. The ongoing contact has been beneficial to the child and birth mom as well as the foster family. Mom has minimal supports and has been able to reach out to the foster family for guidance. The foster parents and their children enjoy seeing the child and find it reassuring to see firsthand that he is well cared for and loved by his birth mom. The birth mom had additional guidance and support from the foster family which made reunification more likely; and while the foster family had a difficult time with the emotions around the child returning home, they have a more positive outlook on reunification now. They have spoken positively about the birth mom's care and relationship with her son since he has returned home. The positive experience in turn assists the agency in retaining foster parents who can then support other foster families as they deal with the emotions around reunification. All the efforts discussed above made it so much easier for the caseworker and the agency to reunify the children with their birth mother.

-Christy H., Foster Home Coordinator, Summit County Children Services

Terminology

Throughout the C.A.R.E. Guide, we introduce and use a variety of terminology in Ohio's approach to strengthening relationships. We've included a list here for easy reference as you implement the C.A.R.E. Guide in your daily practices.

Children Services Transformation (CST) Advisory Council:

An advisory board created in November 2019 by Governor DeWine to review and provide recommendations and strategies to strengthen all areas of Ohio's child welfare system.

Connections: series of contacts aimed at bridging and fostering communication between primary family and resource family while focusing on the needs and best interest of the child.

Comfort Connection: would occur within 72 hours following the initial removal and placement.

All About Me Connection: would occur within 7 days of placement. This connection can be done at the same time as the comfort connection or at any other naturally occurring contact within 7 days of placement.

Connections Tracking Tool: This sample tracking tool, or a similar tool designed by any party involved, can be used to easily document ongoing connections between the primary family and the resource family. Once provided to the agency holding custody of the child, documentation would be entered into SACWIS Activity log.

Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts

(C.A.R.E.) Guide: A tool developed to be used as an implementation guide to support all parties involved with Ohio's approach to strengthening the relationships between primary families (parent) and foster parents (resource families). The C.A.R.E. Guide contains 3 phases: Pre-Care Phase, Care Phase and Post-Care Phase.

Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts

(C.A.R.E.) Guide Resource Tool: The Resource Caregiver's Pocket Guide to Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts, designed to serve as a supplement to the C.A.R.E. Guide specifically for resource caregivers.

Primary Family: the parent(s)/family with whom the child was living prior to placement in care, the person(s) who has been the central figure(s) in the child's life, and the person(s) with whom the child will be reunified. This could include birth family, adoptive family, kinship, or non-kinship family.

Private child placing agency (PCPA): Any association, as defined in section 5103.02 of the Revised Code, certified pursuant to section 5103.03 of the Revised Code to accept temporary, permanent, or legal custody of children and place the children for either foster care or adoption.

Private non-custodial agency (PNA): Any person, organization, association, or society certified by ODJFS that does not accept temporary or permanent legal custody of children, that is privately operated in this state, and that does one or more of the following:

- (a) Receives and cares for children for two or more consecutive weeks
- (b) Participates in the placement of children in certified foster homes
- (c) Provides adoption services in conjunction with a PCSA or PCPA

Public children services agency (PCSA): An entity specified in section 5153.02 of the Revised Code that has assumed the powers and duties of the children services function prescribed by Chapter 5153. of the Revised Code for a county.

Resource Family: the family and setting in which the removed child is placed and who is engaged in a co-parenting relationship with the primary family. This caregiver offers a wide variety of resources to help support the primary family's reunification with their child. Resource families include foster parents and kinship caregivers. While this guide focuses more on foster parents, it is important to note that any of these strategies can and should be used with kin caregivers as well

Resource Family Questionnaire: A tool designed to help the agency and resource caregiver applicant assess their level of comfort in working with primary families at various stages throughout their journey. This tool, or one similar developed by the custodial agency, would be completed by the resource caregiver at initial certification and every recertification thereafter to continue to develop and strengthen the resource caregiver's comfort level in co-parenting efforts.

Resources

Throughout the C.A.R.E. Guide you will find references to resources, website links, literature, and partners to support implementation of the guide. A list of those resources is provided here for your convenience.

Birth and Foster Parent Partnership (BFPP) | Children's Trust Fund Alliance

[Birth and Foster Parent Partnership \(BFPP\) | CTF Alliance](#)

Casey Family Program

[Home - Casey Family Programs](#)

Children Services Transformation Council Final Report

[Children Services Transformation Council | Governor's Office of Children's Initiative \(ohio.gov\)](#)

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

[Dolly Parton's Imagination Library | USA, UK, IE, CA, AU](#)

Ohio Governor's Imagination Library

[Home — Ohio Governor's Imagination Library \(ohioimaginationlibrary.org\)](#)

Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OYAB)

[Ohio YAB | fosteractionohio](#)

Quality Parenting Initiative

[Home - Quality Parenting Initiative \(qpi4kids.org\)](#)

Resource Parent Questionnaire

[Resource Parent Questionnaire](#)

I have been a Caseworker for 18 years and a Resource Parent for 8 years. My husband and I adopted a teenager, and we continue to take foster placements. In my experience the relationship that Resource Parents and Birth Families has is invaluable.

I have found, especially for older children, if children are able to have ongoing contact with their birth families and they see that their Resource Parents have ongoing contact with their birth family; it reduces the child's anxiety about what is happening with their birth family and helps reduce the unknowns about the birth family while the child resides in a resource home.

A lot of times birth families would rather connect with the Resource parents instead of the Children Services worker. Often, once a connection is made between Resource Parents and birth families, birth families give personal information to the Resource Parents that they would not otherwise give to the caseworkers. This can be helpful in ensuring the Resource Parents have accurate information regarding the child/family's health/development, etc.

Resource Parents can also become an informal support to the birth families after reunification. I have had Resource Parents utilized for emotional support, babysitting, etc. by the birth families after reunification. This also allows the children to maintain significant relationships they have formed while in their resource home and provides good support to the birth family as well.

If reunification is unable to occur and a Resource family adopts; if the Resource Family has a good connection with the birth family the child will be able to stay connected to their immediate and extended family. This helps with the child's identity in knowing where they came from, who they are, etc. as the child grows/develops and figures out their own identity.

Additionally, Resource Parents can help the children maintain strong relationships with their parents and siblings they aren't placed with and extended family members, and friends who they would not otherwise be in contact with if the Resource Parents and biological family didn't have a relationship. This in turn is good for the child's mental health and reduces the trauma children experience as they are able to maintain these connections/identity they have formed up to this point in time.

—T. Perris, Lorain County Caseworker; Resource Provider

Connections Tracking Tool

Date	Connection Activity/ Contact	Completed (yes/no)	Who was involved	Length of time	Additional notes/comments

Comfort Connection and All About Me Connection Tip Sheet

A “tip sheet” has been developed to support resource caregivers and caseworkers on important tips to be mindful of when planning and orchestrating the Comfort Connection, All About Me Connection, and Ongoing Connections

The PRE-CARE Phase

In the PRE-CARE PHASE, resource caregivers have a number of opportunities to grow in their own professional development while focusing on co-parenting approaches. In Ohio's pre-service curriculum for individuals who are seeking foster home certification, you will find an emphasis on the importance of certified resource caregivers engaging in a co-parenting approach with primary families. This approach requires collaboration, partnership, and open communication to help reduce anxiety for all involved.

Key Step #1: Resource Family Questionnaire

The licensing agency would have the foster parent applicant complete the Resource Family Questionnaire, or a similar version developed by the licensing agency. The purpose of this questionnaire is to help the agency and resource caregiver applicant assess their level of comfort in working with primary families at various stages throughout their journey. This tool begins the important dialogue with the resource caregivers as applicants and helps them start thinking about their involvement with primary families they may encounter as licensed foster parents. As they move through pre-service training,

they may begin to view these topics a little differently and this tool will be helpful to review and re-evaluate as the assessor and applicants work together through the home study assessment process. Once the resource caregiver is licensed, this tool will be beneficial as the agency is matching children in need of placement, with the appropriate resource caregiver.

It may be helpful to update this tool when a child leaves placement and when the family recertifies, to help the resource caregivers re-evaluate their comfort level of involvement with primary families for the purposes of future placements. This may help the assessor and resource family debrief, determine continuing training needs, and evaluate the placement experience.

In order to ensure the most optimal experience with the resource caregiver, suggested times to offer the questionnaire or engage in a similar conversation on their growing comfort level of the co-parenting approach include:

- Before pre-service
- Upon Completion of pre-service and during home study interviewing
- After placements
- Recertification home study interviews

[Resource Family Questionnaire](#)

The fact that it is hard means we are doing it right. [saying goodbye] One of those weird things. You have an equal amount of grief and joy. You are sad because that child is leaving your home, but you are overcome with joy because the birth parent was able to reunify as they have been healed and restored to a point where they can have their child back.

-Robb C.- Summit County foster and adoptive parent

The CARE Phase

The **CARE Phase** offers the most opportunity for co-parenting and the opportunity to strengthen the relationships between the primary family and the resource family

Key Step #2: Comfort Connection

The Comfort Connection is a facilitated connection between a primary family and resource family. This connection would occur within 72 hours following the initial removal and placement. Based on case circumstances, agency staff would initiate a Comfort Connection between the primary family, resource family, and the child when willing and/or age and/or developmentally appropriate. The Comfort Connection can occur in-person, by phone, virtual platform, or text. Agency staff engaging primary and resource families in the Comfort Connection would document efforts in SACWIS to capture the initial contact for future relationship building.

Key Step #3: All About Me Connection

The All About Me Connection between the primary family and resource family would occur within 7-days of placement. Based on case circumstances, agency staff would initiate an All About Me Connection between the primary family, resource family, and the child when willing and/or age and/or developmentally appropriate. The All About Me Connection can occur in-person, by phone, virtual platform, or text. Agency staff engaging primary and resource families in the All About Me Connection would document efforts in SACWIS to capture ongoing relationship building activities. This Connection is really an opportunity for the custodial agency to allow the primary parent and resource caregiver to lead the conversation, relinquishing the need to serve as a mediator or facilitator.

Preparing Primary Families and Resource Families for Connections

Based on case circumstances and agency practice, agency staff can prepare the primary family and resource family for these connections. At the time of the initial removal, there are naturally occurring points in which agency staff may want to introduce these connections to participants that will be involved.

Agency staff certifying a resource family can introduce connections during that process. In this introduction, agency staff can gauge the resource family's comfort level, determine best times to complete the Connection, and answer any questions.

Should a resource family declare the inability or unwillingness to engage in a connection, this will determine next steps. If the resource family cannot engage in the Comfort Connection or the All About Me Connection, this will determine how agency staff approach the primary family. This can also lead agency staff to notify the resource family's placing worker of the status of their comfort level. The placing worker can then follow-up with the resource family with ongoing support and education.

Agency staff completing the initial removal and placement of a child can introduce these connections to the primary family and child, when appropriate. This would be contingent on agency staff's assessment of the circumstances surrounding the removal. In some instances, circumstances would not support introducing these connections. In the event these connections can be introduced, agency staff can gauge the primary family's comfort level, determine best means and time for these connections, and answer any questions. In the event these connections cannot be introduced at the time of the initial removal and placement, agency staff could follow-up with the primary family to introduce and arrange a connection within 7-days following placement.

Agency staff conducting the initial removal and placement of a child can assess the child's willingness to participate in these connections and answer any questions based on the child's age and developmental ability.

A connections tip sheet (found in the resource section of this guide) is available as a tool for the resource caregiver and caseworker. The tip sheet provides tips to help plan and orchestrate the Comfort Connection, All About Me Connection, and Ongoing Connections with both the child or teen and primary family.

Best Practice Considerations

Child welfare agencies vary in terms of size, resources, procedures, and culture. An agency may have naturally occurring processes built into their agency practice that lends itself to completing these connections. Some of these naturally occurring processes may be:

- Pre-placement meetings held in the office
- The first parent-child visitation in the agency, community partner setting, primary family home, or resource family home
- Family Team Decision Making (FTDM)/Team Decision Making (TDM) Meetings

- Semi-Annual Administrative Review (SAR)
- Court proceedings following the initial removal

Agency staff can take advantage of these naturally occurring events to complete these connections. On some occasions, it may be possible for both connections to be met together based on the time of completion.

The Comfort Connection and All About Me Connection will involve an agency staff person to facilitate the relationship between the primary family and resource family. Ideally, after these connections have been forged, a mutual relationship benefiting the best interest of the child will be underway as the two families begin to build a communication pathway working toward a partnership grounded in co-parenting. By supporting both the primary family and resource family, the agency staff person can continue facilitating the ongoing connections or allow the families to coordinate their co-parenting efforts.

Key Step 4: Support Ongoing Connections through three specific approaches

- (A) Activities for the child to engage with important family and community members.
- (B) Activities to help maintain a familiar routine and schedule for the child.
- (C) Activities to promote reunification.

The first ongoing connection within this key step is supporting activities for the child to engage with important family and community members. When planning these connections, always keep in mind custodial decision making, safety as a priority, and be respectful of the child's and primary parents' wishes. Keep the youth's and teen's voice in mind and allow the resource family to advocate the child's interest. Sometimes a youth or teen may need a minute from their parent, especially upon removal and their decisions may change based on their comfort level.

Many of these activities can be done virtually and may take additional efforts on the resource family's part if transportation or conflict in the primary family's schedule is a barrier. In these circumstances, seek opportunities to include the primary parent through providing a means of transportation. Encourage the resource family to record videos and take pictures, which can be included in the child's Lifebook and shared with the parent. In many instances live interaction, during or after the event, such as facetime should be encouraged.

(A) Suggested activities for the child to engage with important family and community members:

- Include parents in medical, dental, vision, counseling, and other child-health appointments. Be mindful of custodial decision making but the parent should be involved and even lead the conversation with the medical professional to support stability and consistency for the child. Some examples include:
 - Appointments/procedures/tests
 - Hospitalizations
 - Counseling/mental health
 - Medications
- Include parents in educational meetings or events. Both the parent and resource family should share in the engagement efforts, providing stability and consistency for the child. Some examples include:
 - IEP meetings
 - Parent-teacher conferences
- Seek opportunities to engage in celebratory/milestone events. These are events that promote the celebration and milestone achievement of either the child and/or important family and friends in the child's life. Some examples include:
 - Graduations (kindergarten, middle school, high school, bridging ceremony)
 - Birthdays/other family significant celebrations
 - Extracurricular banquets (sports, band)
 - Recognitions/Award ceremonies
 - School dances
 - Shopping for special events such as school dance, holiday gift giving, teacher appreciation, etc.
- Seek opportunities to create and share family theme nights. These could take place either at the parent's home, the resource family's home, a public location or through virtual methods. Some examples include:
 - Pizza night, taco Tuesday, etc.
 - Game nights -in person or virtually. (Many game apps and programs allow for interactive play.)
 - Movie night

- Seek opportunities to recognize and celebrate holidays, always being respectful of the child and parent's family traditions, including dietary customs. Some examples include:
 - Holiday dinners, either in a home setting or public setting
 - Religious or cultural services
 - Family and community events such as fireworks, picnics, egg-hunt, trick or treat, tree lightening, etc.
 - Gifts or cards from the child to important family and friends such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparent's Day, sibling's birthday, etc.
- Seek opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities or volunteer positions. This will look very different depending on the child's age. Some examples include:
 - Games
 - Practices
 - Plays
 - Musical shows
 - Art shows
 - Science fair
 - Open house
 - Class parties
 - Field Trips
 - Volunteer/chaperone opportunities (room-parent, coach)
 - Parent groups (PTO, PTA)
 - If child is under 5 years old, enroll child and primary parent in parent/child class such as Mommy & Me or Daddy & Me
- Seek opportunities for the families to collectively engage in summer activities. Allow the parent to guide the activity based on child's interest. Allow the parent and the resource family to jointly guide these activities, further building the relationship bond between the families. Seek opportunities to overcome obstacles such as transportation, distance, cost, and safety. Some examples include:
 - Zoo
 - Pool
 - Picnics
 - Amusement Park

- Day trips
- Camping
- Seek opportunities for ongoing connections with the child and his or her important family and community members. The child's disruption from parent involves community and friends as well. Seek opportunities to overcome obstacles such as transportation, distance, and safety. Consider mid-point meeting locations, phone calls, texts, video calls, and other ways for the child to maintain these important non-family and family relationships.
 - Neighborhood friends
 - Spiritual/community leader
 - Teacher/coach/school counselor
 - Extended family and friends (fictive kin)

(B) Suggested activities to help maintain a familiar routine and schedule for the child include:

The second ongoing connection within this key step is supporting activities to help maintain a familiar routine and schedule for the child. A schedule and routine through co-parenting efforts will help minimize the disruption with both the transition to the resource family and the transition back to the primary family when reunified. By keeping the primary parent as the child's first teacher, you're promoting a relationship that allows the primary parent the confidence to share their own observations and information regarding their own child to the resource caregiver.

- Bedtime story through virtual method – A great resource is Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Both the parent and resource family could receive copies of the same books, allowing the parent to engage in the bedtime story with the child.
- Bedtime conversation – Parent connects with the child before bedtime, allowing the parent the opportunity to ask the child about his or her day, helping the parent and child stay connected.
- Morning call to start the day – Parent connects with the child in the morning, allowing the parent the opportunity to help start the child's day.
- After-school call/check-in – Parent connects with the child after school, allowing the parent the opportunity to stay connected with the child's events from his or her school day.

| The CARE Phase (continued)

- Work on Lifebook activities – Parent participates in the development of the child's Lifebook activities.
- Homework preparations – Parent participates in homework assignments (as age appropriate), providing the opportunity for consistency during reunification as well as connection of the child's learning progression.
- Participate in bedtime routine like bath time – Parent participates in bedtime routines through physical or virtual methods, further allowing consistency of routines and schedule for the child.
- Cook dinner – Parent participates in cooking, preparing, eating dinner either at parent's home, resource family's home, or public location.
- Shopping, haircut, and other grooming appointments – Parent participates to allow opportunity to create memories and have input for younger children.
- Lunch/Ice cream outing – Parent participates in these quicker, shorter time duration activities
- Movie – Parent participates through physical or virtual methods, at parent's home, resource family's home, or public location.

(C) Suggested activities to promote reunification include:

The third ongoing connection within this key step is to support activities to promote reunification. Co-parenting connections promoting approaches to reunification are a key component of the CARE phase. Without a constant approach promoting reunification, the relational health is weakened, and trust becomes a concern. Seek opportunities to co-parent in ways that promote reunification.

- Semi-Annual Review (SAR)/case Reviews – Both families participate to promote consistency and collaboration.
- Court hearings – Both families participate to promote a united and cohesive connection.
- Assistance with case guide goals – Resource family offers assistance to support the parent in achieving success.
- Provide Transportation – Resource family provides or coordinates transportation to any guided event to help the parent overcome this obstacle.

interactions- Resource family embraces and encourages additional visitations and interactions for the child and parent to promote connection, reduce anxiety, and promote mental health for all parties.

- Support resource family with technology needs, parenting skills – Resource family provides assistance in any means providing obstacles for the parent to be successful. This could include technology needs, parenting skills, etc.
- Supporting parent with self-improvement goals -- Resource family provides assistance in helping the parent meet their own goals to better themselves, promoting reunification. These self-improvement goals may include professional goals, educational goals, sobriety, and/or physical and mental health goals. By engaging in these supports, the resource caregiver will be more educated, mindful, and aware of future primary parent's needs as well.

You have to be in it for the families, the birth families and their children. I enjoy getting to know the birth parents and mentoring them.

-JoNancy C.
Summit County foster and adoptive parent

The POST-CARE Phase

Quite possibly the most undervalued and underutilized ongoing connection is that of the primary family and the resource family following reunification, the **Post-CARE Phase**. So much effort and labor of love has been invested during the CARE Phase, the idea of not continuing to offer that support to the primary family and the child, who is now experiencing a different type of separation anxiety, would fall short of the co-parenting approach and the end goal, reducing the likelihood of the child's re-entry into care. All the ongoing connections that have made reunification possible should be encouraged to continue, at the comfort level of all parties, especially the child. An ongoing support system for both the primary parent and the child from a trusted co-parent leads to better long-term outcomes. Studies and literature can be found in the C.A.R.E. Guide Resource Links to support Post-CARE Phase activities.

Possible barriers, possible solutions

While implementing the C.A.R.E. Guide you may be faced with certain barriers. Collaboration is tough, that's why it has the word "labor" right in the middle of it. However, collaboration is the critical component to meeting these possible barriers with a growth mindset and promoting creative and imaginative problem-solving skills. When the best interest of the child is considered, it is amazing how creative and imaginative we can be.

- Some possible barriers could include:
 - Safety of the child, primary parent, resource caregiver, or caseworker
 - Removal reason, including violence or aggression
 - Distance and transportation, including lack of public transportation to and from scheduled meeting sites
 - Work schedules, keeping in mind the primary parent may have two jobs or also attend school
 - Willingness of resource family, being mindful of their own professional growth journey
 - Child's willingness/comfort/mental health/age, always keeping the child's input at the core of ongoing connections
 - Lack of trust from the primary parent that anything he or she shares with the resource
- caregiver will be shared with the caseworker or used against him or her
- Custodial agency doesn't support the primary parent and resource parent's efforts
- Natural and biased fear from the resource caregiver that any connection will put them or the child in harm's way
- Concerns about how to continue ongoing connections after the child returns home
- Some potential ways to overcome barriers could include:
 - Modifications to the location, including selecting meeting sites closer to the primary parent, within walking distance or accessible with public transportation
 - There's always a safe way to communicate and build a relationship using virtual methods
 - Time of day, being mindful of the primary parent's work schedule, school schedule, and commitment to his or her case plan and self-improvement (i.e., sobriety meetings, etc.)
 - Activity/event, offering virtual solutions such as Facetime or recordings of concerts, etc., if the primary parent is unable to attend
 - Promoting a relationship of trust and partnership, using words like, "When you get your child back" and "I'm caring for your child until he comes home with you"
 - Continue building the relationship, promoting benefits for all parties, including the custodial agency
 - Continue developing the resource caretaker's comfort level, gaining experiences and confidence in assessing true risk from their own fear of the unknown
 - Strengthening the relationship and developing a strong support system leads to better opportunities for ongoing connections after the child returns home

Reunification Safety Considerations

At the core of this approach is what is in the best interest of the child or teen. It is imperative we are mindful of this, using our powers of observation and taking time to listen to a child or teen. There will be instances in which a child or teen expresses feeling uncomfortable or unwilling to engage in this approach. The circumstances surrounding the removal of a child or teen carry varying levels of trauma. A child or teen may not wish to engage in contact with the primary parent until some evidence of change has taken place. In some cases, this could mean the primary parent has begun to access resources, such as counseling, to address the safety concerns leading to removal. It could be the primary parent has made the decision to remove an unsafe person from the home for the sake of the child or teen. Involving the child or teen in discussion about what they see as a barrier to engaging in this approach can only strengthen the process. Oftentimes, it is as simple as making sure steps have been taken to ensure the child or teen as well as the primary parent have access to needed resources or services to work toward safe reunification. Engagement and safe reunification require granting a child or teen the space to express their thoughts and feelings, accepting their position, and working with all parties to find resolution in order for the process to move forward when there are no barriers to safety.

Conclusion

The CST recommendation titled “Strengthen relationships between birth families and foster parents” was developed from the Children Transformation Recommendation Advisory Council. This recommendation specifically states, “...refocus foster care recruitment, training, and rules to develop relationships between birth families and foster parents”. By focusing on a co-parenting approach, we reduce the anxiety from the traumatic experience and replace it with cohesiveness and hopefulness for the best outcome for the child and primary family. Throughout this guide, we have outlined Ohio’s Key Steps Approach to strengthening these relationships through best practice strategies. Together, we are developing a statewide system that promotes and preserves the valuable relationship between primary families and resource families, establishing a co-parenting approach to reunification efforts. **We must always be reminded every child and teen deserves to keep everyone they love in their life. Every child and teen deserves a voice in their safety. Every child and teen deserves to be physically and emotionally safe. Every child and teen has rights and it matters if those rights are violated. Above all, we must be reminded that youth and teens need to be asked and heard when adults are making decisions about their lives.**

“There is so much anxiety, concern, and really a lot of unknown when a kiddo goes into a foster home. I think so much could be alleviated by letting the primary families know a little bit about who is caring for their children. With some reassurance that their kids are in a good place, I think it gives the primary families a little more headspace to focus on their case plans. We chose to make a photo book of our family to share with the family. It's just for that meeting so they can see what we are about and who else is in our home. We attend the visits each week, but I understand a lot of foster families cannot do that. I think at least one time to meet the primary family and have some dialog is extremely important.

My husband and I believe the biggest thing that needs to happen to make this work, is making sure the foster families are part of the team and thought of as a resource by not only case workers, but also any other workers that are part of the team. An example would be that we have a worker from Guidestone that supervises visits for our current cases. When she first came on there wasn't much of an explanation of what was happening, and some miscommunication. We had our little one who had swallowing issues and was very difficult to feed. When the worker first came, we were not welcome to help with the visits and the baby would not eat for them. We reached out to the case worker and asked to be used as a resource to help with the feedings. We ended up doing a Zoom call with everyone to clear the air and get on the same page, but we were still not welcome to come into the visits. Eventually I was able to come in and help, and after months of trying, the baby finally took a bottle from her biological mother a few weeks ago.

Really it seemed, that allowing foster parents to help with or supervise visits does not happen much, and I understand that it could be seen as stepping on a counselor's toes. Especially when it comes to infants, the foster family that is with that infant 99% of the time would know the most about the child and would be the greatest resource. On the other side, when there is an older child, the primary family could serve as a great resource for the foster family. Favorite snacks, tv shows, bedtime routine, favorite toy... they can fill you in on things that would help the child feel more comfortable and minimize trauma. I really feel that if the foster families approach the primary family with care and let them know that key point... “ I am here to help your kiddo feel loved and secure while you do what you need to do. Most importantly, I want to minimize trauma and help them the best I can and I would love it if you could help me with that.” It really comes down to empathy and the desire to minimize trauma for the child.

-The Blazek's
kinship, foster, and adoptive parents from Cuyahoga County

”

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
RESOURCE PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Your answers to these questions will help us explore your comfort level in working with primary families. We will revisit this tool during the home study assessment process and once you become a licensed resource caregiver, as we provide support and training to you on the importance of these types of activities.

Please fill out the following questions with **1 being viewed as Not At All** and **4 being viewed as Absolutely** when it comes to your feelings on the particular topics when having foster children in your care.

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

1. What is your comfort level with having direct contact with primary parents as we work toward the child and family safely reunifying?

- 1 2 3 4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. What is your comfort level with transporting the child to and from visits, facilitating visits at the agency, facilitating visits outside the agency, or facilitating visits in your home?

- 1 2 3 4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. What is your comfort level with involving the primary family in school activities (Example: parent teacher conferences, extra -curricular activities, and special events at school)?

1 2 3 4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4. What is your comfort level with including the primary family in celebrations such as birthdays, special milestones, holidays, and/or religious activities?

1 2 3 4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5. What is your comfort level with helping the child maintain important relationships and contact with siblings, relatives, new friends, non-related significant others in their lives such as friends from previous school, etc..?

1 2 3 4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

6. What is your comfort level with primary parents attending medical appointments with you and their child. (Doctor, dentist, eye doctor, specialists, psychiatry, counseling?)

1 2 3 4
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

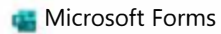
7. When appropriate, would you be comfortable allowing the primary parent to take the lead during appointments when appropriate with scheduling and consultation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. In the box below please provide feedback on this questionnaire or experience you have had with foster children and their family members.

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What is the Co-parenting and Reunification Efforts (C.A.R.E) Guide?

A tool to support all parties involved with strengthening the relationships between primary families (parent) and foster parents (resource families). The C.A.R.E Guide contains 3 Phases: Pre-Care Phase, Care Phase and Post-Care Phase.

What is a Primary Family?

The parent(s)/family with whom the child was living prior to placement in care, the person(s) who has been the central figure(s) in the child's life, and the person(s) with whom the child will be reunified. This could include birth family, adoptive family, kinship, or non-kinship family.

What is a Resource Family?

The family and setting in which the removed child is placed and the person(s) engaged in a co-parenting relationship with the primary family. This caregiver offers a wide variety of resources to help support the primary family's reunification with their child.



Positive Reunification Efforts

While implementing the C.A.R.E. Guide, you may be faced with certain barriers. Collaboration is tough stuff, that's why it has the word "labor" right in the middle of it. However, collaboration is the critical component to meeting these possible barriers with a growth-mindset and promoting creative and imaginative problem-solving skills. When we keep the best interest of the child at every decision made, it's amazing how creative and imaginative we can be.

This may not come naturally for every child's journey, but that's when we must commit to being creative and open-minded problem solvers, always asking ourselves, "What works for this child, this family, this relationship?" Shift from a power relationship to a partner relationship.

Positive Reunification Language

- When you get your child back...
- When your child comes home...
- I'm caring for your child until she comes home with you...
- We're in this together. I get to work with you and care for your child for this moment until he comes back home to his family...
- You're the expert about your child...
- I'm so proud of all the work you are doing to heal for yourself and your family...



Ohio | Department of
Job and Family Services

Every child deserves
to keep *everyone* they
love in their life

C.A.R.E. Guide Resource Tool

Resource Caregiver's Pocket
Guide to Co-parenting and
Reunification Efforts

Ohio | Department of
Job and Family Services

Mike DeWine, Governor
State of Ohio

Matt Damschroder, Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
JFS 08108 (9/2022)

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How can the C.A.R.E Guide benefit us?

There are many benefits for everyone involved when we strengthen the relationship between the resource caregiver and primary family. With the child as our priority and a willingness to work together for their benefit, we can reduce the trauma of placement and separation.

Benefits to the Child:

- Provides additional support to the child, reduces sense of loss and separation anxiety while reducing negative behaviors of child.
- Increases psychological and physical comfort for the child when entering placement.
- Enhances chance of reunification and timeliness of reunification.
- Expands and unifies a child's adult support system, reducing placement moves for the child.

Benefits to the Primary Family:

- Provides additional support to the primary family, reduces sense of loss and separation anxiety.

- Empowers the primary family, allowing them to continue to be the expert on their child.
- Communication between primary and resource families leads to better care of the child.
- Provides continued support and connections after reunification.

Benefits to the Resource Family:

- Provides resource family with better understanding of the primary family and their opportunities.
- Resource family will have support from the primary family leading to a more unified parenting approach – coparenting.
- Gain insight into the child's behaviors and are more sensitive to the trauma the child has experienced.
- Enhances the development of the resource family as they are providing care to foster children. Develops resource caregiver confidence and skill set in working with future placements.

Benefits to the Custodial Agency Caseworker:

- When resource caregiver and primary family are working together, it reduces the work load and stress of the caseworker.
- Saves time for caseworker.
- Enhances chance of reunification and timeliness of reunification.
- Helps build trust between the caseworker and primary family.

This is not an all-inclusive list of benefits, please refer to the C.A.R.E Guide for the full list.

3 Phases of the C.A.R.E Guide:

Pre-CARE:

- Questionnaire

CARE:

- Initial Connection
- All About Me Connection
- Ongoing Connections

Post-CARE:

- Efforts to support reunification



QUICK TIPS TO SUPPORT RESOURCE FAMILIES AND PRIMARY FAMILIES IN STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

Points of Connection	Custodial Agency	Resource Family
Comfort Connection within 72 Hours of Removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create the opportunities for connections between the primary family and resource family. • Allow for open dialogue. Give space for conversations to happen naturally. • Families are experts on their own families. • Do not assume that primary and resource families know and understand the PCSA language, processes, and procedures. • Be transparent when you can and share information; keep communication open. • Be mindful not to rush to judgement. This is not the time to evaluate parenting style, decisions, or rationales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful not to rush to judgement. This is not the time to evaluate parenting style, decisions, or rationales. • Allow for open dialogue. Give space for conversations to happen naturally. • Keep emotions in check to alleviate tensions throughout the connection. • Provide an update as to the child's adjustment to the placement. • Inquire about things the child likes and what they like to play with and do in their down time. • Inquire about routines and what the child is used to doing everyday/particular day.
All About Me Connection within 7 Days of Removal	<p>Use words and phrases like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're on the same team. • I want to make sure that you can meet with the resource family as soon as possible so that you know how your child is doing. • We can't go back and change all the reasons your child was removed. However, moving forward we can connect you with the person/people who are caring for your child so that you know that they are safe and cared for while you focus on resolving those things that brought us into this situation. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to formalize the meeting – allow for open dialogue • Try not to rush in to facilitate or push. Give space to allow the conversation to happen naturally. • Let the primary family share anything they want, including things you may already know (i.e. medications, allergies, etc.) – This is the chance for the primary family to remind everyone they are the child's parent, caregiver, their teacher, their primary person. They are the expert on their child. • REMEMBER: Resource families may have an unrealistic fear they are in danger of engaging in a relationship when working with primary families. 	<p>Use words and phrases like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're on the same team. • You didn't invite me into this, but we are here, and I would like for us to work together. • Let's work together to make sure your child is safe and cared for until they come home with you. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about those things that become natural for them such as sleeping in the same bed/room with parent; having a fan on at night to sleep or other kind of noise or having a light on; how they comb their hair/take care of their hair. • Be mindful not to rush to judgement. This is not the time to evaluate parenting style, decisions, or rationales. • Minimize the fear – both sides are new to each other, to the child, and both have their own anxiety to eliminate. • Remove the implicit bias – partner relationship instead of power relationship; not every primary family who has a child removed is dangerous. • Try to let the primary family lead in these situations. Primary families already feel like they have lost power and control and they will not be heard. • Take a listening approach when working with the primary family.

QUICK TIPS TO SUPPORT RESOURCE FAMILIES AND PRIMARY FAMILIES IN STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

Ongoing Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to cancel meetings with primary and resource families if they can still meet- you may not be needed. • Facilitate and encourage building the relationship by supporting both the resource and primary family, providing opportunities for contact, connection, and decision making. • There is a natural point in time that the relationship will continue to evolve without the presence of the custodial agency. No one needs permission to have a relationship with another human being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathize that it is a difficult situation to navigate but work toward a solution. • Find a connection/something in common to talk with the primary family about. • Be transparent in your role – not keep secrets, set boundaries, etc. • Ask how you can help with their personal goals, case plan, etc.
Ongoing Connections with the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being mindful of child's feelings, input, and navigate accordingly. • School/Work items they need/or left behind • Things at home that they would want with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being mindful of child's feelings, input, and navigate accordingly. • Comfort items that they don't have or would like. • School/Work items they need/or left behind • Favorite family time activities; wishes/wants • Nighttime routine • Things at home that they would want with them.



Mike DeWine, Governor
State of Ohio

Matt Damschroder, Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

JFS 08107 (9/2022)

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JFS 08110 (9/2022)

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