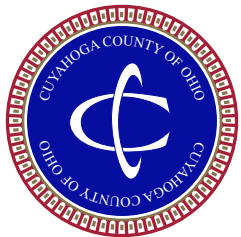


# What Every Child Needs... *Family.*



*Children & Family Services*



**CUYAHOGA COUNTY  
DIVISION OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**



## *Mission Statement*

The purpose of the Division of Children and Family Services is to assure that children at risk of abuse or neglect are protected and nurtured within a family and with the support of the community. To support the accomplishment of the Mission of our agency, we have developed the following imperatives to inform our decisions, drive our work and guide our steps.

## *Vision Statement*

We improve the lives of children as a result of our attention, care and support.

## *4 Imperatives:*

1. Children who cannot be protected within their own home must be removed.
2. We must reduce the number of children who come into custody unnecessarily.
3. Children must be placed in the most family-like setting which meets their needs.
4. All children must have a time limited permanency plan.

## Contents

<i>Protecting At-Risk Children</i> .....	2
<i>Calling the Kids Hotline</i> .....	3
<i>Investigating Allegations</i> .....	3
<i>Keeping Families Together</i> .....	4
<i>Family to Family</i> .....	5
<i>Doing What's Best for Every Child</i> .....	6-7
<i>Foster Parenting</i> .....	8
<i>Preparation Creates Parenting Opportunities</i> .....	8
<i>Adoptive Parenting</i> .....	8
<i>Community/Family Services and Resources</i> .....	9
<i>Supports &amp; Services</i> .....	10
<i>Recruiting Good Parents is an Ongoing Effort</i> .....	11
<i>Scheduling a Speaker for Your Group</i> .....	11
<i>Championing Staff Training and Professional Development for Positive Outcomes</i> .....	12
<i>Important Phone Numbers</i> .....	Back Cover



## *Protecting At-Risk Children*

The most difficult situation occurs when a child has been abused or neglected by a parent, guardian, caregiver or sibling. Oftentimes children are unable to defend themselves. Depending on their age, they may not realize the behavior imposed is not normal or right or they may be afraid. Together, we can protect at-risk children.

A temporary weak moment, lapse in judgment, learned behavior or deficient parenting skills is all it takes to scar a child for life. Harming a child physically, mentally or sexually is considered abuse. Neglect is the failure to provide basic child care over a period of time (e.g. food, housing, clothing, healthcare, education and safety) which can hinder a child's healthy development.



### ***Possible child abuse indicators may include:***

- Bone/skull fractures (old unexplained fractures or breaks)
- Bruises/Cuts/Lacerations/Welts/Wounds (multiple and/or repeated)
- Burns and scalding
- Disruptive and violent behavior (ongoing)
- Expresses verbal or nonverbal fear of adults and/or siblings
- Human bite marks
- Internal injuries
- Poisoning
- Rape
- Blood or body fluid stains on diaper/underwear
- Rashes, itching lesions of the genital or anal area
- Symptoms of venereal disease such as vaginal/penile discharge
- Pregnancy
- Painful defecation, constipation
- Frequent vomiting without organic cause
- Sprains/dislocations

### ***Neglect indicators may include any one or more of the following:***

- Child abandonment
- Constant poor personal hygiene
- Dirty/Soiled clothes worn consistently
- Dangerous, unsanitary living conditions (e.g. exposed wires, bug infestation, garbage accumulation, etc.)
- Young child(ren) frequently left at home alone
- Frequently says he or she is hungry or starving (picks through garbage or begs for food from friends)
- Inadequately/Improperly dressed for weather conditions
- Repeated school absences (without notification)

## Calling the Kids Hotline When You Believe a Child is in Danger

If you believe a child or children are at risk for abuse or neglect, please call the **KIDS HOTLINE** at **(216) 696-KIDS (5437)** and speak confidentially to a social service worker directly or leave a message. When speaking to a social service worker or leaving a message, please provide the following information:

- The name and address of the alleged victimized child(ren)
- Describe the alleged abuse or neglect
- The name and address of the person that is responsible for the alleged abuse or neglect
- If we have additional questions and if you are comfortable with us contacting you, please leave your name and number and the best time of day to reach you.

Certain professions (e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers, etc.) that interact with children are required to make a report if they suspect abuse or neglect. Another equally important referral source comes from caring family members, neighbors or citizens who observe questionable actions or inactions. Remember, callers can remain anonymous and all calls are kept in strict confidence. Our trained professionals will ask a series of questions to better assess the allegation and to determine the best course of action.

The 24/7 hotline is designed to protect children and keep them safe. If you or someone you know is faced with a crisis situation, involving the safety and protection of a child call **(216) 696-KIDS (5437)**.



## Investigating Allegations

Children and Family Services established criteria for intervention through an investigative process. Actions and response times are determined by safety factors. If the referral meets our criteria, we open a case within 24 hours and have the next 30 days to determine whether or not the allegation is true.

If the allegation is not supported by proof or evidence then no further action is taken. If the allegation is supported by proof or evidence, a caseworker/social worker are assigned to the family within the family's own community. A team approach is utilized to develop a plan of services and supports for the family to either resolve or reduce the safety and risk factors.

Depending on the allegation, one or more specialized units may become involved during the investigation process.

**START** (Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams): an intensive program for birth mothers that test positive for drugs or alcohol or newborns with drug addictions.

**Sex Abuse Unit:** interviews children when suspected of sex abuse cases and provides ongoing services as well to families affected by interfamilial sexual abuse.. Police involvement may be required.

**Medical Investigations Unit:** investigates children with untreated or unexplained complex or chronic conditions and/or children admitted to hospitals or emergency departments with questionable injuries.

**Special Investigations Unit:** investigates harm inflicted by another adult such as a teacher, bus driver, babysitter, minister, foster parent, day care professional, etc.

## Keeping Families Together

Whenever possible, our goal is to reunify the family—that is, return the child to his or her natural family. When a child’s safety cannot be remedied immediately, looking to the extended family when appropriate as the first option is preferred. Extended family being considered will go through an approval process. The agency’s placement services are used temporarily while efforts are made to correct problems at home. To minimize the child’s trauma, we make every effort to keep his or her routine as normal as possible. We attempt to find a temporary and viable solution within the child’s neighborhood. If placement with the extended family is not available or appropriate, CCDCFS explores alternative living arrangements for the child. We believe that our first placement is the best placement.

### ***There are many reasons why children sometimes need to live away from their family such as:***

- Family Crisis: substance abuse dependency, incarceration, homelessness
- Abuse or neglect
- Unwilling or unable to resolve family conflicts or issues

### ***When a child is removed from his or her home:***

- The child can take some of his or her belongings (e.g. clothes, pillow, family photos, etc.)
- Maintain family visitation
- Caregivers should provide a happy and positive environment for the child from both the biological family and foster family

Even though we refer to a single child, there are numerous situations where siblings are involved. We prefer to keep siblings together; however, depending on the unique circumstances, this may not always be possible. For example, it usually takes longer to try to find housing for large sibling groups of six or more and if none is available, then we look for homes that can take at least two of the children to keep them close together within a community



## Family to Family

The **Family to Family** Initiative was created by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to reform and improve child welfare practices across the nation by advocating for children to remain safely with their own families in their own neighborhoods. The initiative was also created for public and community agencies to collaborate to protect those children in their communities and provide services and supports to their families close to their homes. Lastly, the goal is to ensure that all children have permanency in their lives.

**Family to Family** was adopted by Cuyahoga County in 1992 in consultation with national experts in child welfare.

### **Family to Family** believes:

- Children belong in families
- Children's safety is paramount
- Families need strong communities
- Public child welfare agencies need to partner with the community and its sister systems to achieve strong outcomes for children and families

**Family to Family** is about building bridges that will enhance the lives of children and promote stability in families through community partnerships.

**Family to Family** is committed to recruiting, developing and supporting foster/adoptive/kinship families in the communities from which children are removed.

**Family to Family** ensures that all children who come into foster care including teens and siblings be routinely placed together with families.

**Family to Family** involves birth parents, foster parents and kinship families as part of the decision making team.



## Doing What's Best for Every Child

A child's well-being is first and foremost in everything we do. Depending on the parent's needs and their motivation to keep their family together, we offer a variety of ongoing services that supports reuniting families as the preferred outcome.

**Case Review:** When a case is opened, all decisions concerning the safety and risk to the child(ren) are made during a Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings which initially may include a child's removal from home, relocating a child after placement and/or subsequently determining a child's permanent home. A team comprised of a CCDCFS social service worker, parent(s), the parent's support system, a community partner and other professionals participate in the decision making process. The goal of the TDM is to develop a plan which protects the child(ren), supports the child's placement, reunifies families and/or promotes permanency for the child(ren).

**Independent Living:** if a child is under CCDCFS' care when they turn 15½, we begin preparing them for living on their own when they turn 18. Each teen takes an independent living assessment which evaluates five key areas in order to allow for a smooth transition.

- Housing (maintenance, utilities, laundry, cooking, daily living issues, etc.)
- Education (GED, college, technical or trades school)
- Employment (applications/resumes, personal presentation and interview preparation)
- Personal Finances (creating a monthly household budget, banking and credit resources)
- Mentoring

**Visitation:** if a child was removed by CCDCFS, visitation between the parent(s) and the child is coordinated. Services can include scheduling visits, transporting children and providing supervision if needed.

### System of Care and Service

**Coordination:** county agencies work together in developing an overall care plan based on a child's individual needs:

- Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS)  
<http://cfs.cuyahogacounty.us>
- Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities  
[www.cuyahogabdd.org](http://www.cuyahogabdd.org)
- Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services of Cuyahoga County Board  
[www.adamhsc.org](http://www.adamhsc.org)





**Community Partnerships:** geographically located throughout the county, CCDCFS partners with child-centered family focused neighborhood agencies to provide solutions-focused services and resources that help stabilize and strengthen families to help keep them together. Services might include food, daycare, tutoring, counseling and home improvements to name a few. Please refer to page 9 for a complete listing of neighborhood collaboratives in your community.

**Customer Service (216) 432-CARE (2273):**

listens to callers' questions and concerns and provides responsive assistance such as:

- Educating the community about agency services
- Connecting people to the right resources
- Fielding positive feedback
- Creating a positive experience for each and every caller
- Assisting with the resolution of case-related issues and concerns

When a complaint, concern or issue is registered, a written finding is made. A parent can review the finding and ask for arbitration in which the finding can be upheld, dismissed or changed. No other appeal is available.

A written disposition is registered on a statewide system for 5-7 years.



## *Foster Parenting*

Families that choose to foster or adopt children have big dreams and bigger hearts. Newborns, toddlers, siblings, teens and special needs children are precious gifts and every child deserves a safe, loving family. Foster parents provide full-time care for children temporarily until they can return home or are adopted.

Minimum requirements include:

- Must be at least 21 years old
- Good overall health (physical, emotional and mental)
- Verify sufficient income to provide basic needs
- Single, married, separated, divorced or in a stable relationship for at least 1 year
- Receive foster home license and remain in good standing

## *Preparation Creates Parenting Opportunities*

Successful families are those that are well prepared for the joys and challenges of foster/adoptive parenting. Out-of-state placements are permissible under certain circumstances. Highlighted below are the four steps to becoming a foster parent.

- 1. Training Classes**
- 2. Application**
- 3. The Home Study**
- 4. Placement**

**Relative Caregivers can also become foster parents. Interested? For more information, please contact us at (216) 881-5775 to receive a training schedule and family handbook.**

## *Adoptive Parenting*

Adoption is the permanent legal transfer of all parental rights and responsibilities from one family to another. In Cuyahoga County, the majority of children waiting to be adopted are African American. Highlighted below are the 10 steps to becoming an adoptive parent.

- 1. Training Classes**
- 2. Application**
- 3. The Home Study**
- 4. Approval**
- 5. Matching Process & Introductions**
- 6. Presentations**
- 7. Pre-Placed Visits**
- 8. Moving Day!**
- 9. Finalization**
- 10. Post Finalization**

**Relative Caregivers can also adopt. Interested? For more information, please contact us at (216) 881-5775 to receive a training schedule and family handbook.**



## Community/Family Services and Resources

### Division of Children and Family Services Sites

#### Jane Edna Hunter Building

(216) 431-4500 and Toll Free 1-800-321-0322  
3955 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44115

#### Old Brooklyn Neighborhood Family Service Center

(216) 635-3893  
4261 Fulton Parkway, Cleveland, Ohio 44144

#### Fatima Family Service Center

(216) 391-7457  
6600 Lexington Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44103

#### Quincy Place Neighborhood Family Service Center

(216) 391-5253  
8111 Quincy Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44104

### Neighborhood Collaboratives

#### West Side / Far West Side – (216) 771-7297

West Side Community House  
9300 Lorain Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44102

#### Lakewood – (216) 529-6873

City of Lakewood Department of Human Services/Youth  
12900 Madison Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio 44107

#### Glenville – (216) 268-3909

Catholic Charity Services/St. Martin DePorres  
1264 East 123 Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44106

#### East Cleveland – (216) 283-4400

Murtis H. Taylor Human Services  
1862 Noble Road, East Cleveland, Ohio 44112

#### Euclid – (216) 731-7454

YMCA of Greater Cleveland  
631 Babbitt Road, Euclid, Ohio 44123

#### Hough – (216) 361-1244

Catholic Charities Services Fatima Center  
6809 Quimby Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106

#### Cleveland Heights/University Heights – (216) 320-9520

The Centers  
1941 South Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

#### Garfield Heights – (216) 365-3336

Word of Righteousness Family Life Center  
13455 Dressler Avenue, Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125

#### Harvard/Union Miles – (216) 991-8585

Harvard Community Services Center  
18240 Harvard Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44128

#### Fairfax/Woodland Hills – (216) 707-6003

East End Neighborhood House  
2749 Woodhill Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44104

#### Miles-Union-Broadway – (216) 441-2907

University Settlement  
4800 Broadway Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44127

#### Parma – (440) 887-4873

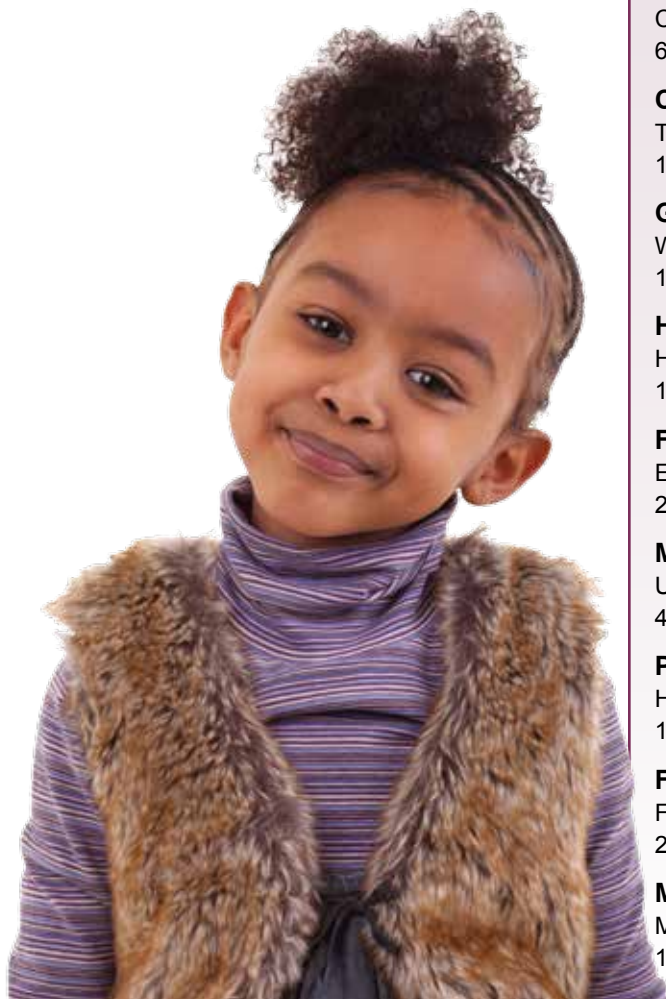
Hanna Elementary School  
11212 Snow Road, Parma, Ohio 44130

#### Friendly Inn Settlement – (216) 431-7656

Friendly Inn Settlement, Inc.  
2386 Unwin Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44104

#### Mount Pleasant – (216) 283-4400

Murtis Taylor Multi-Service Center  
13422 Kinsman Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44120



## Supports & Services

Community resources address a variety of pre- and post-foster/adoptive topics and are oftentimes considered the day-to-day problem solvers on behalf of many families. With adoption, this is a lifelong process and getting off to a good start helps all involved.

**Cluster Support Groups** are close-to-home support networks for foster parents (including relative caregivers) seeking answers, advice or information about their real-life situations. Two-hour meetings are held 10 times annually and the structure of the meetings can be casual such as a Q&A format or more formal if a guest speaker is scheduled. For your convenience, there are 6 cluster support groups located throughout Cuyahoga County.

The benefits of joining the group include:

- Peer Support
- Encouragement
- Resources
- Education
- Networking Opportunities

*NOTE: Attending foster parents qualify for a 1-hour training certificate. For more information contact Crystal Evans (216) 881-5306 or Shelley Brown (216) 561-5470*

**Healthcare** is provided for all children in the custody of Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services. A sample of healthcare services are listed and provided by The MetroHealth System and/or Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital.

- Routine doctor visits including annual check-ups, vaccinations/inoculations and sports physicals
- Consent for medications
- Consent for medical/surgical tests and/or procedures
- Dental and eye care
- Emergencies
- Nutrition services
- Therapy and/or rehabilitation care
- Mental health counseling
- IV therapy and medical equipment needs
- Assistance with home ADA conversion and equipment installation
- Coordinates transportation as needed



## Recruiting Good Parents is an Ongoing Effort:

- Engaging Foster Parents
- Foster Parent referral incentives
- Community Events
- Foster Parent Recognitions
- Foster-Ware Parties
- Moving Hearts Gallery
- Digital Me Presentations
- Adoption Mixers: invite parents with approved home studies to meet and interact with children
- Virtual Mixers: approved families invited to mixers that view children on “Digital Me’s.” (PowerPoint presentations of children available for adoption)
- Information/Adoption Fairs: coordinate with community partners and private providers
- Child-Centered Recruitment: specialized adoption staff recruiting specific families for specific children/youth
- Mentor Programs: work with other adoption agencies such as Wendy’s Wonderful Kids or Adoption Network Cleveland to help children or youth build permanent connections
- Out-of-Town Adoptions: out-of-town relatives or adults can adopt children living in Cuyahoga County AND relatives or adults living in Cuyahoga County may seek to adopt children from other parts of the country.

Cuyahoga County:

[www.cfs.cuyahogacounty.us](http://www.cfs.cuyahogacounty.us)

Adopt US Kids:

[www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)

## Scheduling a Speaker for Your Group

CCDCFS’ Speaker’s Bureau Program delivers request-driven informational sessions to the general public on child welfare-related issues. The most frequently requested topics include:

- Overview of Child Abuse/Neglect
- How to Report Child Abuse/Neglect
- Overview of Child Sexual Abuse
- Mandated Reporters

To request a speaker for your upcoming meeting, please contact Sharita Jackson at (216) 881-3567 or email her at [jackss09@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:jackss09@odjfs.state.oh.us) and include the following information:

- Organization’s Name
- Contact
- Address
- City, State, Zip
- Phone (and best time to reach you during the day)
- Email
- Requested Topic
- Meeting Date, Time & Place
- Expected Attendance

This public service is provided free of charge to groups located within Cuyahoga County. Please allow a 2-month lead time when submitting your request.



## *Championing Staff Training and Professional Development for Positive Outcomes*



Helping others to be successful is the foundation to creating CCDCFS as a world-class learning organization. The Council on Accreditation (COA) partners with human service organizations that recognize organizational excellence. In 2008, CCDCFS was named a COA accredited member in the Human Services field. Staff training and professional development plays an integral role as a catalyst for positive change by instilling best practice standards agency-wide. A combination of university and agency-based educational programs inspires staff to develop to their full potential. Under the supervision of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP), CCDCFS is a Regional Training Center (RTC) that provides training to meet agency needs, state mandates and licensure requirements.

Program offerings are also extended to retired staff, juvenile court staff and staff at county agencies.





***Important Phone Numbers*** (subject to change without notice)

Main Number	(216) 431-4500
Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline (24-hours)	(216) 696-KIDS (5437)
Customer Service	(216) 432-CARE (2273)
Recruitment Department	(216) 881-5775



**Division of Children & Family Services**

3955 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
(216) 431-4500

