



Cuyahoga County
Together We Thrive

Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services

August 2018 DCFS Community Newsletter

News and Updates

DCFS Announces Changes Following Independent Panel Report:

On Friday, July 27th County Executive Armond Budish announced a series of actions being taken following the recommendations of a panel of local and national child welfare experts. The panel was assembled following the death of Aniya Day Garrett. Because of the pending criminal case regarding Aniya Day Garrett's mother, Sierra Day and boyfriend Deonte Lewis, the Prosecutor has advised the County to not discuss any details of the case, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Sections 5153.171, 172. However the recommendations have been reviewed by the County Executive and DCFS leadership. We agree with the recommendations, believe they reflect sound child welfare practice, and will immediately begin work on implementing them. ([Read the full release and list of actions here.](#))

Community Listening Tour Supports Dialogue Between Community and DCFS:

Following the death of Aniya Day Garrett, DCFS scheduled community listening tour sessions to give residents and families an in-person opportunity to share their concerns with us, ask questions, and offer suggestions. Throughout the six session series, DCFS staff sat with concerned residents and parents, listened to community feedback, and kept an open mind to find ways we can improve our work. Thank you to members of our community who helped us plan the forums, spread the word, engage in constructive dialogue, and offer genuine suggestions for improvement. Notably, Kimberly Brown, Rev. Lorenzo Norris, and Shari Thomas.

Several Listening Tour participants completed a survey, providing feedback on their experience. The survey asked the following questions: 1. DCFS personnel heard my/our concerns; 2. DCFS personnel presented information that provided a better understanding of their work and their decision-making process; 3. I leave this "Listening Tour" session feeling better about the way DCFS personnel plan to respond to community concerns; and 4. This "Listening Tour" session was helpful. According to survey results:

- More than two-thirds of listening tour participants strongly agreed or agreed that DCFS personnel heard their concerns;
- More than two-thirds of listening tour participants strongly agreed or agreed that DCFS personnel heard their concerns;
- Two-thirds of listening tour participants strongly agreed or agreed that DCFS personnel heard their concerns;
- More than half of listening tour participants strongly agreed or agreed that DCFS personnel heard their concerns.

[You can read the full survey summary report here.](#)

The DCFS leadership team will continue to review the feedback and recommendations received from the listening tour and determine how they can be incorporated into our agency improvements. The listening tour is just the beginning of our reengagement with community. We are currently working on more opportunities for DCFS presence in the community, along with community information and training sessions.

DCFS works with many different agencies and with hundreds of thousands of residents. In each newsletter we will highlight a different agency and a story about someone we have helped.

DCFS and Community Partners Launch AFFIRM.ME Program to Help LGBTQ2S Youth in Foster Care

Children and youth with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE) are often at greater risk for abuse, mental health concerns, drug use, suicide, harassment, and discrimination. When they enter the child welfare system they are likely to have more foster care placements and less likely to be reunified with their families of origin.

The AFFIRM.ME program is a set of services developed specifically to improve the lives of LGBTQ2S youth in foster care. DCFS collaborated with Kinnect and Case Western Reserve University to design services that will improve placement stability, well-being, and permanency for children and youth with diverse SOGIE. Services include:

- Safe and Confidential Identification – DCFS staff and partners will work to create a safe and welcoming environment for children and youth to self-identify as LGBTQ2S so they can receive the support and affirming placement services they need, while keeping their SOGIE confidential if they choose to.
- Pride Caregiver Network – DCFS is seeking foster parents and kinship caregivers who are open and eager to care for a young person who identifies as LGBTQ2S to provide a safe and supported experience while in foster care. These caregivers will receive additional training, attend support groups, and act as mentors to other foster parents.
- Chosen Affirming Families – DCFS and Kinnect will work to identify permanent families for LGBTQ2S youth so they can have a forever family that loves and supports them for who they are.

For more information on the AFFIRM.ME program contact Kathleen Sullivan at Kathleen.Sullivan@jfs.ohio.gov or our recruitment department at 216-881-5775.

Success Story

King first came into DCFS custody in October 2011. He was 8 years old and weighed approximately 200 lbs. DCFS was concerned about his health and thought it posed a serious risk. There was criticism and backlash to the decision which drew media and legal attention. Despite efforts to improve King's condition, his health problems worsened and King came back into custody in 2015.

Today King is an extraordinary young man with a bright future, including an amazing adoptive mom. This is truly a story of how an entire system came together around a child and changed his life. DCFS, both mothers, medical professionals, schools, a foster care network, and a neighborhood collaborative all played a part in making this possible.

Read his amazing story and see the moving adoption video on Cleveland.com.

DCFS Facts and Figures:

Custody data as of July 30, 2018

Court Ordered Protective Supervision (COPS) Children	698
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In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Children	2,918
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Custody Type

Emergency Custody/Ex-parte/Officer Acceptance/Agency Authority	746
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Initial Voluntary Agreement for Custody	2
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Permanent Custody/Surrender	526
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Planned Perm. Living Arrangement (PPLA)	53
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Temp. Custody 1st Extension	104
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Temp. Custody 2nd Extension	38
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Temporary Custody/Court Order	985
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Total	2,454
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[More details here.](#) *This report is updated weekly every Monday.

[Read the DCFS Yearly Statistical Report here](#)

Events

Family Fun Day

Tuesday, August 7, 10 am – 2 pm

Cleveland Public Square

To help our children and families start the school year off prepared for success please direct any family involved with DCFS to Family Fun Day. DCFS will have a table with a list of all children and families involved with DCFS. Families are asked to come and check in at our table to receive a backpack full of school supplies. No need to register, families just need to show up! If you know a DCFS family that is unable to attend the Family Fun Day, they should contact their caseworker and arrange a backpack pickup.

This event is free and open to the public. Other Cuyahoga County agencies will be there with great information on how your Cuyahoga County government helps families and residents thrive and stay safe.

- Fun activities, games, giveaways, and prizes, including Back-to-School supplies.
- Balloon and bubble entertainment.
- You'll meet members of our safety forces, see Bearcat a massive armored vehicle, and meet one of our K9 officers.
- Cool off in the splash pad, enjoy a cold drink, purchase lunch from one of the Food Trucks around the square.

Resources

[Online Resource Guide](#)

[Neighborhood Collaboratives](#)

[Mandated Reporting](#)

[Quality Parenting Initiative](#)

[Online Caregiver/Parenting Videos](#)

[Foster Parent Training Schedule](#)

[Adoptable Kids](#)