

Strategic Modernization Plan

2021-2022



Approved by Membership

December 3, 2020

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Background

Every two years, the PCSAO membership discusses and approves the Association's strategic priorities. The last time membership underwent a strategic planning process was in December 2016, confirming PCSAO's priorities for 2017-2018. However, in 2017 PCSAO's members requested the Board of Trustees to convene an action planning group to develop a plan to address the barriers that were creating a significant "tipping point" in children services. Members expressed the need to respond to their challenges with accessing available, affordable, and appropriate in-state foster care and residential treatment services for children. After months of planning, the [Children's Continuum of Care Reform Plan](#) was released in May 2018 and then updated the following year. As confirmed by members, this document served as PCSAO's strategic plan for 2019-2020.

In May 2020, the PCSAO Board of Trustees launched a workgroup to discuss how the children services system should be modernized and to develop a strategic plan for membership consideration. Workgroup members discussed opportunities to modernize the system, with much thought on how to transform county PCSAs.

Moving forward, PCSAO's traditional two-year strategic plan, which primarily focuses on the Association's "core functions" with agreed-upon priorities, will serve as the platform for this modernization plan.

What We Do

PCSAO's previous mission statement was: *PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies that **advocates for and promotes child protection program excellence and sound public policy** for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.*

A critical core function that PCSAO provides is building public value for the work of PCSAs, the needs of children, families, communities, and the overall children services system. Therefore, members approved revising PCSAO's mission to include this core function of focus.

PCSAO'S new mission statement is: *PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies that **advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value** for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.*

What We Value

Ohio's PCSAs share a set of values that must be supported by sound public policy. These include:

- **No child should live in fear or chaos in the home.** Ohio's **children deserve to grow up in families** and communities that assure their safety and basic human needs, without abuse or neglect. Protecting children from abuse and neglect is the community's responsibility, and that of every public and private service that reaches children and families, from schools and hospitals to community- and faith-based service providers.
- **Ohio's children and families deserve affirmation of their identities and diversity,** including race, color, national origin, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. A robust set of community supports grounded in equity must be in place to prevent abuse and neglect before it happens.
- When child abuse and neglect do come to the attention of a PCSA, **children deserve a timely response based on best practices** that reflect cultural humility. At the same time, families deserve an opportunity to stay together, as children's long-term outcomes will improve if they can remain with their families, with effective services designed to support families' strengths.
- When removal from the home is necessary to ensure safety, **children deserve to be placed in the least restrictive environment possible** that will limit any further trauma. That means placing them with relatives or friends (kin) first and placing them in family foster care only if kin placements are not available. Placement in a residential treatment center or group home (congregate care) should be rare and of short duration. Every effort must be made by PCSAs, the courts, caregivers, and other stakeholders to reunify children with their families as swiftly as possible.
- **Foster and kinship families deserve to be well trained and supported,** trauma informed, committed to reunifying children with their families, and genuinely engaged with PCSAs, birth parents, and the courts as partners in supporting the best interests of the children in their care. While in care, children's physical and behavioral health care, educational, and other well-being needs must be met with robust community services and coordination grounded in equity. Consideration must also be given to the needs of the caregiver family, whether kinship or foster.
- When reunification is not possible, and parents' rights are terminated, **children deserve swift legal permanency** so that they do not linger in foster care and age out of (emancipate from) the system without meaningful permanent connections.
- Children and families deserve a **caseworker who is well trained, supported, and not overburdened** to ensure the best outcomes for that child and family.
- **Emancipated youth and young adults deserve to be supported,** connected to positive mentors, and offered assistance with postsecondary education, employment, housing, and other meaningful supports as they transition to adulthood.

Our Core Functions

As PCSAO’s revised mission states, the four core functions that guide our work are:



These four core functions are fluid, overlap when needed, and build on each other to effectively carry out priorities, strategies, and activities. The primary efforts under the four core functions are highlighted below. Many of these efforts are considered PCSAO’S “ongoing commitments” to members such as holding an annual conference, promoting children services on social media, advocating for legislation, providing timely updates, and convening membership to share pertinent information. Updates to these commitments are reported in PCSAO’s Executive Director monthly reports.

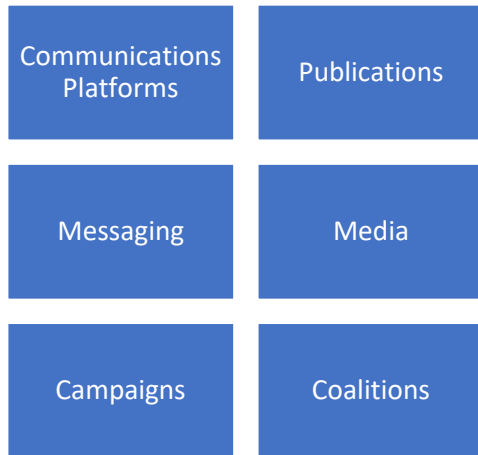
Public Policy

State Legislation	Administrative Rules
State Biennial Budget	Policy Initiatives
Federal Policy	Partners & Coalitions

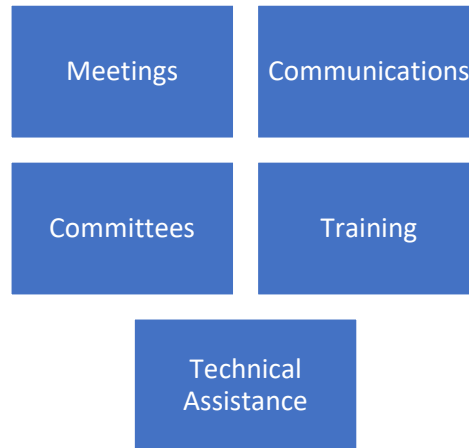
Program Excellence

Ohio START	Annual Conference
Permanency Roundtables	OCWTP
Center of Excellence	Human Resource Management

Public Value



Member Services



Core Functions Strategic Plan

For efforts that are new, changing, or being adjusted, the strategic plan captures these strategies below. As aforementioned, for efforts not being changed, they will continue as “ongoing commitments” to PCSAO’s work.

Public Policy

Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Advocate for the SFY20-21 investments in children services to be maintained in the SFY22-23 budget so that Ohio’s children services system can continue to stabilize.
- B. Advocate for new resources in the SFY22-23 budget to support the transformation of Ohio’s children services system including non-federal match for new prevention services, support for increasing placement costs, ongoing training and technical assistance for successful Family First implementation, and support to PCSAs with policy changes related to the [Children Services Transformation Report](#).
- C. Advocate for continued support and more efforts and resources to stabilize the children services workforce in SFY22-23.
- D. Advocate for the development of a state-county response to *D.O. v. Glisson* in SFY22-23.
- E. Pursue proactive policy opportunities in the biennial budget and through other legislative opportunities.
- F. Pursue proactive administrative requests with ODJFS for implementation to occur in the next biennial budget.



- G. Continue leadership on key policy initiatives and provide information and technical support to members. These policy initiatives include Family First, Continuum of Care, Children Services Transformation recommendations, [OhioRISE](#) and Medicaid managed care, Multi-System Youth, early childhood and CARA, and COVID-19.

Program Excellence

Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Continue to lead and expand the [Ohio START](#) program by adding one or two more cohorts, providing training and technical assistance, building it into the first phase of prevention services, growing fidelity to the model, and serving as its fiscal manager.
- B. Advocate for and support the creation of a [Center of Excellence for Children Services Best Practice](#) to focus on Family First prevention services, best PCSA practices, and future evidence-based programs that meet the needs of children and their families.
- C. Support the transition of the [OCWTP](#) from its current vendor to a new one.



Public Value

Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Develop and implement an internal communication plan that builds upon existing platforms and publications and expands PCSAO's reach, focuses on proactive and reactive messaging around key issues, enhances media relations, and leverages campaigns and coalitions to share information and achieve PCSAO's policy goals.
- B. Implement the transition of the biennial [Factbook](#) to state and county data template pages with more frequently updated data; produce annual state and county data pages and publish on PCSAO website.
- C. Release at least two research briefs on priority issues.



Member Services

Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Maintain current member services and look for opportunities to enhance services via technology such as using Teams and additional virtual learning opportunities.



Modernization Focus Areas

The modernization planning identified four critical areas of focus that need to be addressed if Ohio's children services system is to transform. These four areas are:



Similar to the PCSAO Core Functions, these four critical areas of focus are fluid, overlap when needed, build on each other, and leverage the four core functions to effectively carry out the strategies.

Modernization Strategic Plan



Safety Culture

Goal: *Applying safety science as learned from other disciplines to move from a culture of blame to one of accountability, to learn from undesirable outcomes, and to address systemic issues to improve outcomes including recruiting, retaining, and stabilizing the children services workforce.*

Shorter-Term Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Advocate for solutions to the children services workforce crisis, including continuation of the Governor’s workforce stabilization fund, critical incident response, worker safety (including during the pandemic), loan repayment and housing opportunities, and other strategies for recruitment, retention, training, and recognition.
- B. Conduct a research project on Ohio’s children services workforce crisis that collects data and information on such issues as turnover, exit reasons, compensation, racial demographics, and comparison with other states, collaborating with partners such as ODJFS, JFS HRA, and OCWTP and making recommendations for addressing the crisis.
- C. Support ODJFS in its development of an onboarding framework that PCSAs can implement as it meets their needs and grow over time.
- D. Create learning opportunities for PCSAs and external stakeholders on safety culture approaches within children services as a step toward better understanding safety science, and support PCSAs that want to do this work, including advocating for adequate resources.
- E. Provide PCSAs (including the JFS HRA) with information and best practices to recruit, retain, and develop leaders of color within their agencies.

Longer-Term Strategies (beyond 2022)

- A. Support ODJFS efforts to scale success of [Coach Ohio and Resiliency Alliance](#), once evaluated, merging with CQI, safety culture, and learning organization best practices.
- B. Advocate for OCWTP to revise current trainings and create new trainings that explore issues of equity and racial justice for children and families.
- C. Work with members and the state to identify, scale, train, and manage technology to achieve efficiencies including ongoing, systematic trainings; better broadband access for

clients and agencies; standardized platforms across public and private agencies including ability to share data among programs and with other agencies; and document signature authority.

- D. Advocate with ODJFS and other stakeholders to develop a continuum of caseworker recruitment and retention supports, throughout all parts of the hiring and onboarding process, including creating an environment where workers are supported, are safe, and stay in the job longer.



Shared Practice Model

Goal: *Defining Ohio's shared practice model that addresses the underlying strengths and needs of children and families and ensures PCSAs have the guidance and support for effective assessment, engagement, teaming, interventions, and decision-making.*

Shorter-Term Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Advocate for a new evaluation of Ohio's 10-year Differential Response model to inform Ohio's children services shared practice model moving forward and work with ODJFS on finalizing such a model.
- B. Work with ODJFS and PCSAs to ensure that CAPMIS policy, tools, and training lead to excellence in children services practice and promote critical decision making.
- C. Support policies and practices that strengthen and enhance engagement with families throughout their involvement with children services, including best practices for ensuring quality and use of virtual visits as a supplement to face-to-face visits, motivational interviewing, expanding peer mentors, team decision making, team meetings, and effective family finding.
- D. Work with ODJFS and PCSAs to support best practices for screening, including support and review at the agency level, and develop a proactive process for consultation and technical assistance for screening issues.
- E. Continue to advocate that Ohio's CARA approach be community-based rather than children services-driven.
- F. Review and revise policies, practices, and behaviors of the system that perpetuate disproportionality and other disparities based on the findings from the ODJFS human-centered design and data project on race and equity and other research findings and sources.

Longer-Term Strategies (beyond 2022)

- A. Work with ODJFS and PCSAs on developing a regional screening support approach that could include consultation, training, coaching, CQI, and clearer definition of what information can and cannot be used to inform the screening decision.
- B. Explore with ODJFS how Ohio’s current one-size-fits-all regulatory framework could move toward a system that is more responsive to the individual needs of the case participants (such as age), while maintaining accountability.
- C. Work with ODJFS to enhance data analysis within ODJFS and across counties to improve outcomes and support CQI efforts.



Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI)

Goal: Addressing systemic, root-cause reasons for children and families coming into care; and reducing racial disproportionality and disparities in Ohio’s children services system.

Shorter-Term Strategies (2021-2022)

- A. Develop and implement a REI learning agenda for PCSAs that creates a safe space to support learning; develop peer learning opportunities and/or cohorts to advance REI strategies, including guidance on how to use data; and identity a continuum of actions each participating county could take regardless of where they are in this journey (beginning, developing, sustaining).
- B. Work with REI experts on developing an assessment tool for PCSAs to gauge where they are in their equity work, identify gaps and areas for improvement, and determine where to begin with the learning agenda.
- C. Support research and analysis on disproportionality and inequities within the Ohio children services system by partnering with ODJFS on its human-centered design project, and ensure that key decision points are analyzed, the impact of race and equity on the outcomes for children and families is studied, and a research brief with recommendations to address findings is produced.
- D. Work with the ODJFS CQI team to support learning around REI data including data across counties and within counties of similar size.

- E. Support the learning and action agenda of Casey Family Programs' convening of a metro cohort and share lessons and opportunities with other PCSAs.

Longer-Term Strategies (beyond 2022)

- A. Use the findings of the REI research work with PCSAs and ODJFS on amending policies and rules and making practice recommendations to address disproportionality.
- B. Work with ODJFS and PCSAs on creating a messaging campaign to improve how communities, including mandated reporters, view and interact with the child protection system.
- C. Research and develop recommendations for establishing a mechanism to utilize an equity frame when reviewing OAC and ORC policies.



Continuum of Care

Goal: Embracing children do better with families and preventing unnecessary traumatic experiences through a comprehensive, integrated continuum of strength-based, family-centered, and community-focused resources.

Shorter-Term Priorities (2021-2022)

Prevention, Intervention, Crisis and Diversion Services

- A. Advocate for and support a [Center of Excellence](#) for cultivating evidence-based practices that PCSAs can use to intervene, divert, and address family crises and reduce existing disparities in service delivery.
- B. Support the design and launch of the [OhioRISE](#) program that will provide intensive care coordination (High Fidelity Wraparound) for youth with complex needs to prevent unnecessary custody relinquishment and assist those in custody.
- C. Advocate to fund and expand capacity and availability of evidence-based, intensive, in-home behavioral health treatment and parenting skill-building via Family First Act implementation and within OhioRISE.

- D. Advocate for the prevention of custody relinquishment by ensuring communities approach youth needs through multiple systems with joint accountability.
- E. Support the establishment of a statewide, multi-agency data exchange housed within OhioRISE that will identify and track outcomes for multi-system youth and their families.

Resource Family (Kinship, Foster) Services

- A. Work with ODJFS and PCSAs to implement [recommendations for a statewide tiered treatment foster care system](#) that can adequately meet the needs of children and is well supported and outcome focused.
- B. Advocate for and support the development of statewide, targeted foster parent recruitment and retention assistance that utilizes best practices.
- C. Advocate for the establishment of childcare support for more kinship caregivers and possibly foster caregivers.
- D. Advocate for the expansion of [grandparent power of attorney and caretaker authorization affidavit](#) to relatives beyond grandparents and remove language that prohibits changes to child support.
- E. Support and expand policies and best practices for identifying kin resource families early and throughout a family's involvement with children services (30 Days to Family, etc.).
- F. Advocate for a state response to *D.O. v. Glisson* that may include establishing the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program, incorporating recommendations from the [2013 ODJFS report](#).

Residential Services

- A. Work with ODJFS and ODM to study the impact of OhioRISE's development of psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTF) and any disparities in accessing the treatment, and ensure availability and accessibility to such treatment when needed.
- B. Work with state partners to ensure that Ohio's residential treatment programs transition to meet the required quality standards (QRTP) and advocate for resources if/as placement costs shift due to delays in meeting QRTP requirements.
- C. Support Medicaid's development of mobile crisis response service and ensure availability and accessibility to such treatment when needed.

Longer-Term Strategies (beyond 2022)

Prevention, Intervention, Crisis and Diversion Services

- A. Advocate for the expanded use of peer mentor/parent partner models to keep families together in children services and through state funding and Medicaid.
- B. Advocate for the expansion of Juvenile Court diversion and community programs to deep-end/crossover youth.
- C. Work with state partners to expand community-based supports that can meet families' basic needs, assist in stabilizing them, and navigate cultural differences, including the benefits bridge and specific support around cultural humility and safety.
- D. Work with partners to ensure that evidence-based, intensive, in-home behavioral health treatment and parenting skill-building via Family First are widely accessible, available, and culturally responsive to diverse communities.
- E. Work with ODJFS and ODM to study the impact on OhioRISE's ability to divert multi-system youth from children services and to assist PCSAs in securing appropriate placements and services for eligible youth in custody.

Resource Family (Kinship, Foster) Services

- A. Continue to partner with ODJFS and Ohio Children's Alliance to grow the tiered treatment foster care network and study opportunities to enhance it, including professionalizing caregivers and establishing common outcomes.
- B. Advocate to reduce financial and other barriers that kinship caregivers face so that they can provide a stable home for kin children without jeopardizing their own financial security; assistance should support and incentivize permanency.
- C. Create a tool for the systemic review of policies and practice around adoptive/kinship/foster licensing to assess the extent to which policies are supportive of diverse resource homes.
- D. Review Ohio's kinship policies to ensure that they do not reinforce inequities or unnecessarily exclude families from being considered as kinship caregivers (licensing standards, paternal relatives, *D.O. v. Glisson*, and so forth).
- E. Review and advocate for revisions where necessary in the language and guidance that workers are using in recruiting resource families to ensure that language fosters relationships with families and reflects cultural humility.
- F. Advocate for enhancement of the support available to resource families to navigate cultural differences, including specific training and support around cultural humility and safety.

Residential Services

- A. Work with ODJFS and ODM to study the impact of OhioRISE's implementation of psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTF) to discern if custody relinquishment and out-of-state placements have been reduced, including any impact on reducing racial disparities.
- B. Work with ODJFS, OMHAS and ODM to study the impact of implementation of QRTPs to determine if there is an appropriate network of providers that offer a range of residential services, the effectiveness of providing aftercare services, and any impact on reducing racial disparities.



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