



CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND THE COURTS



Ohio BULLETIN

Vol. 4, No. 2

2008

Ohio Summit on Children

Hunter Hurst IV, NCJ

More than 500 community leaders at the first Ohio Summit on Children (Summit) were asked by Governor Ted Strickland and Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer to affirm their shared goals, view differences as strengths and collectively harness community resources for children. The top executive of the State of Ohio and the judicial leader of the Supreme Court of Ohio had a noticeable presence throughout the May 1 and 2, 2008 proceedings, convening the gathering with a challenge to refresh or begin planning efforts to improve child safety, well-being and stability in their home communities. Summit participants were also asked to provide specific suggestions for how the State can support this important work.

Each of Ohio's 88 counties received a Summit invitation jointly issued by Governor Strickland and Chief Justice Moyer and addressed to the Administrative Juvenile Judge and the Executive Director of the Public Children Services Agency. Their letter extended invitation for a five-person delegation that was to utilize Summit time to initiate local plans to improve child safety, well-being and stability and to make recommendations for state-level improvements. Generous funding from PEW Charitable Trusts and federal discretionary grants, the Court Improvement Program and Children's Justice Act, enabled the State to absorb most of the costs of each delegation's participation. Summit materials acknowledged that a number of counties already were engaged in local planning activities, many activities having evolved from prior state-sponsored events. The Ohio Beyond the Numbers and Case Flow Management Courses primarily focused on topics related to timely process. Local leaders at the Summit were challenged

to include broader considerations of child well-being, especially as related to educational issues, into their examination of system mechanics.

Participation was robust, with 79 county jurisdictions sending delegations to the Summit.¹ Local juvenile court and public service agency officials were asked to assemble other key local stakeholders and to provide leadership in strategic planning sessions scheduled as part of this conference. Expanding on previous collaborative efforts, the result typically had diverse local composition and often included representation from the mental health, substance abuse and other components of the service provider communities, as well as education, local Families and Children First Councils, county commissioners, and local prosecutors. In some instances, members of the community-at-large also were included in local delegations.

Delegates collectively worked on developing initial county-level planning agendas/priorities and recommendations for state-level reforms. These delegations also established local working groups (who were charged with providing more detailed final plans by August 1st) and designated primary points of contact for post-Summit activities.

This edition of the Ohio Children, Families, and the Courts Bulletin briefly examines the Summit, highlights some of the planning tools developed for the conference and their online availability, summarizes detail reflected in counties' initial planning agendas, and categorizes the recommendations for state-level improvements. The bulletin concludes with the next steps for the local planning teams.

Summit Format and Speakers

The overarching goals of the Summit were to increase local interagency collaboration and to identify ways that the state could support county efforts to work effectively together. Partnership, both locally and state-county, begins with understanding issues from varied perspectives. Summit planners formatted plenary events to ensure that multiple perspectives and voices were featured throughout in discussion.

Inspiration for local planning was provided with three special Summit videos.² The video series was custom-produced for the Summit by the Ohio Channel, the Supreme Court of Ohio, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and local partners throughout Ohio, with Columbus news personality Colleen Marshall introducing and concluding each video with summary remarks. The first video in the series, *Voices of Ohio Children*, preceded local planning sessions. In the video, the children of Ohio's foster care system—past and present—spoke through interview vignettes of the issues they individually found most meaningful. Their

words covered a broad expanse of experiences, but their common message was captured in one child's advice: "Don't take us lightly...listen to what we say."

The *Voices of Ohio Children Video* also featured children describing the legal and social services systems through their eyes. Participants heard of the damage of uncertainty, the difficulty of both finding friends and keeping up educationally in an unstable environment and the consequences of missing a sense of belonging. Children interviewed for the production also described examples of adults who made a positive difference in their lives and the characteristics that set those professionals apart.

Cedric Riley, the keynote speaker for the first morning, built upon the *Voices of Ohio Children*—many of whom were in attendance—by challenging Summit participants to become the adult who fosters success in children. He reminded each person in the room that, as individuals, "you *do* work for these people."

Mr. Riley, a successful college student and motivational speaker who grew up in foster care as a client of the Cuyahoga County Children Services System, asked Summit participants to not view his achievements as an exception. He reminded participants that foster

Come Visit!

Ohio Summit on Children website
<http://www.summitonchildren.ohio.gov/>

The Ohio Summit on Children website adopts a conference theme of *working together for our future* and assembles much of the conference content with downloadable video recordings of Summit speakers and additional resources. Summit-specific video presentations include:

- Voices of Ohio Children
- Voices of Ohio Communities
- Promising and Proven Approaches
- From a Child's Perspective, Cedric Riley
- Through the Eyes of a Child, Hon. William Byars Jr.
- Teamwork Counts, Jim Tressel

Several of the Summit planning documents discussed in this bulletin and the data forms used to summarize Summit outcomes are available on the *resources* portion of the site and include:

- Summit Agenda
- County Data Sourcebook
- County Team Report Form
- Participant Manual
- Ohio Program Guide



Ohio Summit on Children
Working together for our future

children are knowledgeable and capable people who have been asked from an early age to handle life experiences often reserved for adults. He pointed out that foster children frequently are regarded in the aggregate with a negative predisposition, but “they all are ‘able’ to the extent that we allow them to harness capabilities.” To become the adult who makes a difference, Mr. Riley asked the audience to “Develop a relationship that allows you to move this child forward, always asking “Where would you



Cedric Riely delivering first morning keynote address.

like to go and how can I get you there?” His words echoed those of the children in the video, all who recommended that professionals in each discipline give children in foster care a greater voice in their own future. The audience was reminded that the greater each child’s role, the greater their ability to make life happen.

Mr. Riley’s personal experience and stories related to the responsibility of each of the primary groups represented at the Summit. The

The Promising and Proven Approaches Video
Available at <http://www.summitonchildren.ohio.gov/resources/videos/>

Some of the programs in the Program Guide were featured in the *Promising and Proven Approaches* video at the Summit. The video provides examples from the Muskingum County Care Team Collaborative (please see the program guide excerpt below), Juvenile Court Child Protection Mediation (Lucas County), Adopt Cuyahoga Kids, Reclaiming Futures’ Natural Helpers Program (Montgomery County) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) as it is implemented in Hancock County.

Excerpt from the Ohio Summit for Children Program Guide

COUNTY/GEOGRAPHIC AREA	Muskingum County (fully imbedded)
PROGRAM NAME	Care Team Collaborative
TARGET POPULATION	Youth enrolled in public schools who are demonstrating risk factors such as: lack of school success, social/emotional dysfunction, and delinquent behaviors.
ISSUES ADDRESSED	Increasing school success and decreasing involvement in juvenile justice system.
DESCRIPTION 	Care Team Collaborative is a community-based partnership among several child-serving agencies and institutions that is focused on promoting school success by building Developmental Assets and providing a comprehensive system of learning supports (academic and non academic) to children and families. The collaborative includes representatives from schools, health and mental health agencies, child protection services, juvenile court, law enforcement, child development services, and county planning boards, including Family and Children First Council (FCFC).
CONTACT	Michele D. Timmons, Director Care Team Collaborative, a division of Muskingum Valley ESC 205 N. 7 th Street Zanesville, Ohio 43701 (740) 452-4518 mtimmons@mvesc.k12.oh.us www.ohiocareteam.com

morning's message was clear: participants were reminded to consider the children in their care to be individuals with personal goals and dreams; to enable each child to help determine his or her own future; and, to recognize and nurture the strengths and experiences that enable children in foster care to succeed.

While commonality of mission and intent can be readily apparent to professionals who work with families and children, different perspectives can make the "right" approach more difficult to identify. Three spokespersons, whose role each provided a view of the issues from a different perspective—national, state and local—next presented. As can be expected, each stressed a different element as essential to making the most of the time spent during the Summit and resulting activities.

Commissioner Joan Ohl of the federal Administration for Children, Youth and Families emphasized leadership and transparent planning. Her remarks underscored the importance of local planning and the need for local leaders to commit to plan in an open forum.

The ability to speak freely without pre-judgment was the message of Helen Jones-Kelley, Director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Co-Chair of a state Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts. She encouraged participants to be open to the outlook and suggestions of team members, to allow honest discourse, and to consider new approaches during Summit planning.

Both speakers emphasized the importance of empirical data to guide local strategic planning and collaboration efforts. The Pew Commission on Children in Foster



Judge Byars inspires delegates to view their work through a child's perception and experiences.

Care 2004 report and recommendations were cited by both Commissioner Ohl and Director Jones-Kelley as a benchmark to utilize in planning.

The Honorable David Basinski, Administrative Judge of the Lorain County Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court and Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts urged planners to reflect on how discord, delay and dysfunction in interpersonal or group relations directly impacts children by creating team turmoil, distorting perceptions of one another's behavior and, eventually, clouding team members' optimism for the future. His challenge to the delegates focused on sacrificing some control and setting aside differences—accepting compromise to accomplish more in the long-term interest of children. Judge Basinski also reinforced the Summit's intent to be a dialogue between state and county, encouraging participants to include discussion of what changes could be made at the state level to improve the supports for children.

Additional Summit videos helped set the tone and provide inspiration for opening the second day of planning activities. Delegates, for example, were asked to record their hopes for children of their community and their greatest challenges during the speaker sessions. *Voices of Ohio Communities* helped delegates relate their personal aspirations and ideas with those of community members. A common thread in the video and among delegates was the funding required to help children and families overcome barriers and challenges.

After considering *Voices of Ohio Communities*, local teams quickly moved to the intensive local planning activities of the Summit. All teams were supported with



Coach Tressel prepares the delegations for community teamwork.

a facilitator to help review county-specific data related to state and county-level CFSR³ indicators and to map local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and resources.

The incentive for collaboration was sustained through completion of draft local plans with the final video of the Summit series, participation and encouragement from top-level State officials in attendance and additional speakers.

The final video of the Summit series, *Promising and Proven Approaches*, reminded participants that collaborative programs are not a new concept. Many counties already had undergone similar exercises to address local problems by building upon their strengths to create new resources that effectively serve children and families. Some of the video-highlighted program examples required funding, but others did not. All of the program examples emphasized that the planning process is not one-time but ongoing and continually evolving as possibilities expand.

The strong presence of Governor Ted Strickland and Chief Justice Moyer and other state officials during the evening’s activities left little doubt to the sincerity of the statement, **“We can think of no issue more important than the well-being of Ohio’s children and families.”**

The sentiment was further advanced by the Honorable William Byars, Jr., Director of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, as he urged participants to keep the needs of children front and center by seeing the system “through the eyes of a child.” He reminded each participant that their sole obligation was not to the system, but to each child. Throughout work at the Summit and at home, participants need to challenge one another to step outside established roles to see the world as seen by the children before them; “It’s a different world.”

The essence of the Summit was the time teams worked to address the issues set forth in the planning tools. Support for this work by the state membership organizations was emphasized by Kelly Lynch, President of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, and Judge Nancy Hammond, President of the Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges. Jim Tressel, Head Football Coach of The Ohio State University, shared the importance of finding a group of people who are willing to serve whatever role is best for the good of the team. Coach Tressel seeks members for his teams who understand that outward signs of success are achieved by meeting the team’s mission and the team’s definition of success. He shared the belief that success is that “inner satisfaction, peace

Effective Ohio Programs Guide
Available at <http://summitonchildren.ohio.gov/resources/>

The Ohio Summit on Children Program Guide organizes technical assistance from the Summit participants concerning effective programs in their jurisdiction. The Guide organizes dozens of programs into 17 categories (below) and profiles the program name, county/geographic area it serves, target population, issues addressed, description and a program contact (please see example on page 3).

<i>Adoption</i>	<i>Mentoring</i>
<i>Agency Custody</i>	<i>Multi-Need Youth Placement Prevention</i>
<i>Alternative Dispute Resolution</i>	<i>Parent and Child</i>
<i>Child Welfare and Protection</i>	<i>Parenting</i>
<i>Education and School-Based</i>	<i>Parent Programs - Divorce</i>
<i>Health and Development</i>	<i>Parent Treatment Programs</i>
<i>Job Skills</i>	<i>Substance Abuse Programs</i>
<i>Juvenile Justice</i>	<i>Truancy Programs</i>
<i>Mental Health</i>	

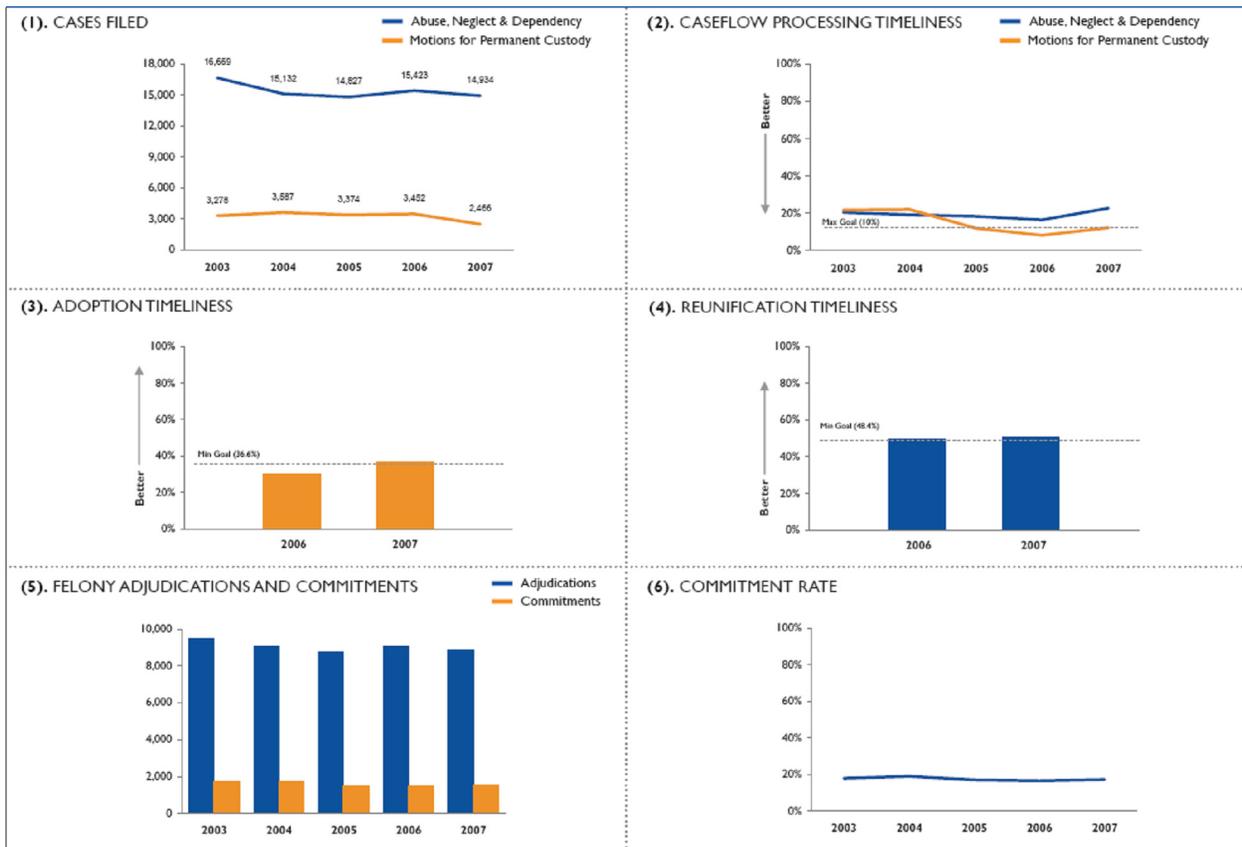
of mind; making sure we did the best that we could do for the team.”

Throughout the Summit’s conclusion, Governor Ted Strickland and Chief Justice Moyer listened to the reports of county teams as they identified the tasks they would be addressing at home and items they would like to see occur at the state level. Supreme Court of Ohio Administrative Director Steven Hollon reminded teams to complete Summit County Action plans before leaving, submit expanded versions before August 1, 2008 and earmark the fall 2009 to reconvene for status updates.

Team Resources and Tools

Planning tools prepared in advance of the Summit included a sourcebook of state and county statistical and program data related to the well-being of children.⁴ The *Ohio Summit on Children County Data Sourcebook* assembled information from diverse sources, including the Children’s Defense Fund, the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the

Excerpt of State Process Indicators Compiled in the Ohio Summit on Children Data Sourcebook



STATEWIDE DATA

SOURCES: Supreme Court of Ohio (1&2) Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (3&4) Ohio Department of Youth Services (5&6)



COUNTY DATA SOURCEBOOK
May 2008



Ohio Department of Youth Services. The sourcebook included a two-page profile for the State and each county that highlighted selected child well-being indicators and key service and court process indicators (please see excerpt for the State of Ohio on page 6). These data provided an empirical reference that delegations reviewed in their deliberations as they examined their respective county strengths and challenges.

Summit participants also received a compilation of Ohio programs (please see Effective Ohio Programs Guide on page 5), a directory listing the contact information for each member of the 79 delegations participating in the Summit and a Participant Manual supporting each step of the planning process, including:

- Team Introductions
- Initial Assessment of County Strengths and Challenges
- County Data Discussion
- Initial Planning
- Issue and Needed Services Identification
- Team Composition and Logistics
- Team Report Form

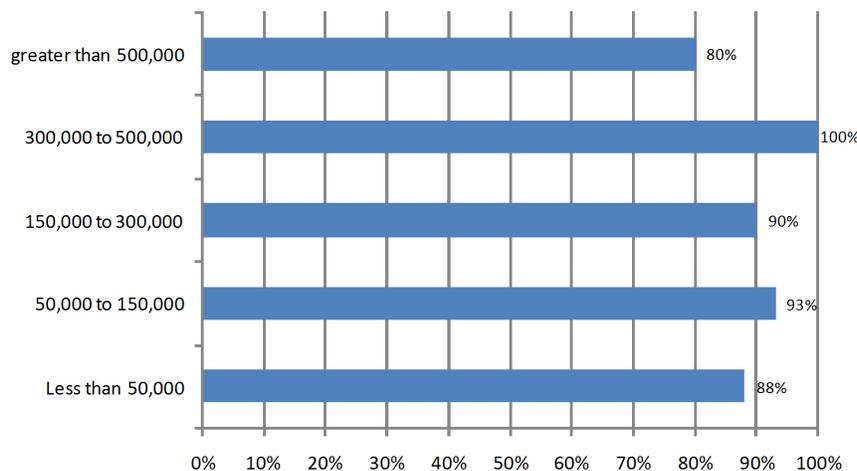
The planning manual also contained a framework for Summit follow-up, including contacts for post summit planning and a template for a final planning document explored in greater detail in the final section of this bulletin.

Summit Participation

As indicated earlier, 79 of Ohio’s 88 counties participated in the Summit. This included:

- Three of Ohio’s four largest jurisdictions. Each of these jurisdictions have county populations of 500,000 or more. (see below)
- All counties with populations between population of 300,000-500,000 sent delegations, and 90% of Ohio’s medium sized counties (150,000-300,000 total population) also participated.
- Participation from smaller counties was also high—93% of counties with populations between 50,000 and 150,000 and 88% of the state’s smallest counties (less than 50,000 total populations) participated in the Summit.

Ohio Summit on Children Representation by County Population (n=88)



Sources: Ohio Children’s Summit draft plan responses tabulated and summarized into categories by author and **2007 Population Estimates**, U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, downloaded June 19, 2008.

A Summit goal was to expand the collaborative framework reflected in Ohio’s Beyond the Numbers initiative to include representatives from county government, Family and Children First Councils, public schools as well as the mental health and substance abuse service provider communities.

Virtually all of the participating jurisdictions included stakeholders from these entities in their delegation teams (please see below). Almost all delegations included juvenile court and PCSA representatives and typically included representatives from the mental health service community (84%). About two-thirds of the delegations included representatives from education and over half included representatives from the substance abuse treatment system and local Family and Children First officers or staff.



Delegation at work during the planning phase of the Summit.

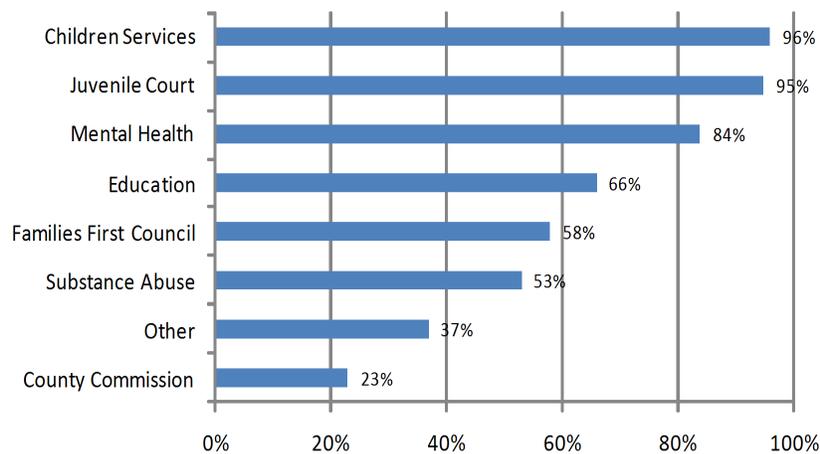
Summary of Preliminary Plan

Each of the 79 delegations submitted a draft plan at the Summit’s conclusion and committed to refining and finalizing these plans by the end of summer. The delegations submitted a brief summary report (please see page 10) that listed their top two planning concerns and the two most important areas for state level action.

As summarized on page 9, increasing collaboration was the most prevalent local planning concern with 41% of the delegations referencing this concern in their draft plan. A number of delegations also highlighted concerns related to improved case and placement management services (15%), transitional services for youth aging-out of care (13%), availability of mental health services (13%), expanding school based services (11%), and/or establishing very early assessment and intervention services (11%).

Improving local public relations was listed as a planning priority for 10% of the delegations. Some local delegations also highlighted expanding/improving foster

Agencies Represented in Local County Delegations (n=79)



Source: Ohio Children’s Summit, draft plan responses tabulated by the author.

care placement resources (9%), parent education and accountability programs (9%), and research/assessment support as one of their local planning priorities (8%).

Issues warranting state action were also highlighted in the county draft plans/report. The two most prevalent state-level issues identified by the local delegations (please see page 11) were increasing the amount and flexibility of funding resources to better align these with local priorities (39%) and the provision of best practices technical assistance (38%). Other state-level planning priorities referenced by local delegations included a recommendation to create new policy/procedural mandates and to revise/enforce existing ones (mentioned by 18% of the delegations), and a recommendation to expand technical assistance on existing rules and regulations (15%).

Aligning state policy with local realities, and reducing regulations and paperwork were each mentioned by about 10% of the delegations as state-level action priorities. Five percent of the delegations requested a summary of summit findings or access to the plans of other counties. The issue of adequate and equitable school funding was also raised by a couple of delegations.

Next Steps

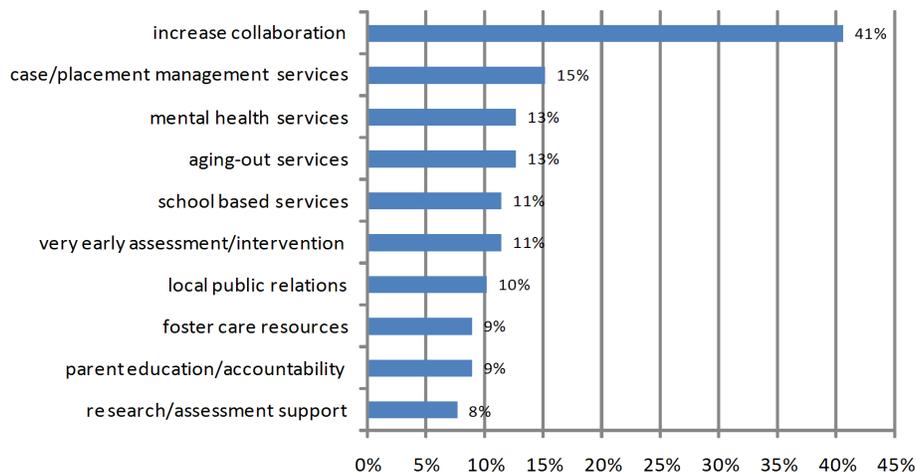
The Ohio Summit on Children represents an ongoing commitment to planning change. The Supreme Court of Ohio and the Governor’s Office have made a commitment to:

- review the action plans submitted by each county
- post responses to specific suggestions for state-level action on the Summit for Children website
- sponsor a 2009 Summit on Children
- present observations on the status of county action plans at the 2009 Summit.

In turn, county delegations left the 2008 Summit with the draft action plans and a request to:

- develop/submit final community action plans by August 1, 2008
- implement community action plans
- submit status reports by September 30, 2008 for the 2009 Summit on Children
- participate in the 2009 Summit.

The Top 10 Planning Issues Mentioned in the Initial Plans (n=79)



Source: Ohio Children’s Summit, draft plan responses tabulated and summarized into categories by author.⁵

Note: Delegations could register more than one category, therefore the issue detail exceeds 100%

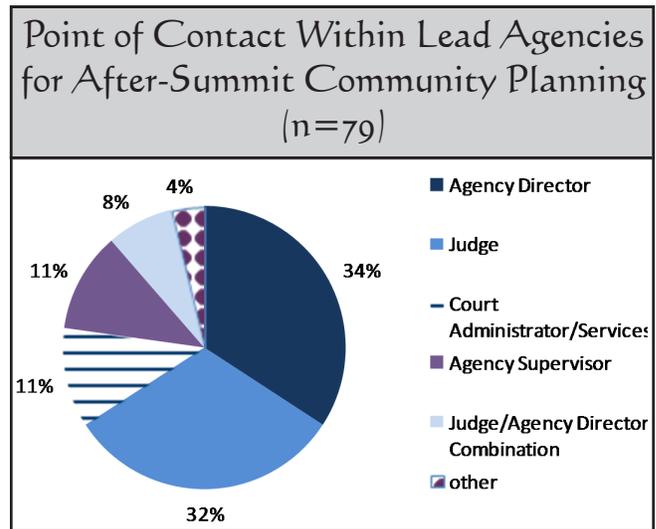
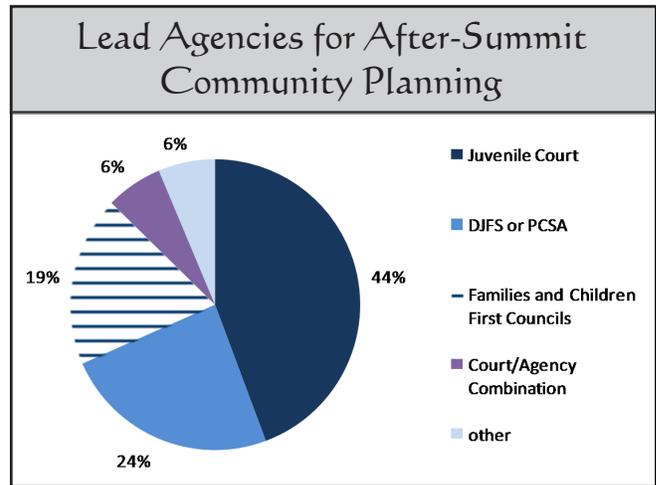
**OHIO SUMMIT ON CHILDREN
TEAM REPORT FORM**

1. What organizations participated on your team during the Summit on Children?
Refer to Team Exercise I, question 1.
- Juvenile Court
 - Children Services
 - Board of County Commissioners
 - Education
 - Mental Health
 - Substance Abuse
 - Family First Council
 - Other _____
 - Other _____
-
2. Please list your priority planning issue(s).
Refer to Team Exercise V, question 1.
- 1.
- 2.
-
3. Please identify the priority actions needed from the state (beyond funding) to assist your the county. Refer to Team Exercise V, question 3.
- 1.
- 2.
-
4. Who will be your County Team primary contact?
Refer to Team Exercise VI, question 1.
-
5. What is the date for your planning team's post-summit meeting?
Refer to Team Exercise VI, question 4.
-
6. Will post-summit planning be conducted by a new or existing group?
- New
 - Existing

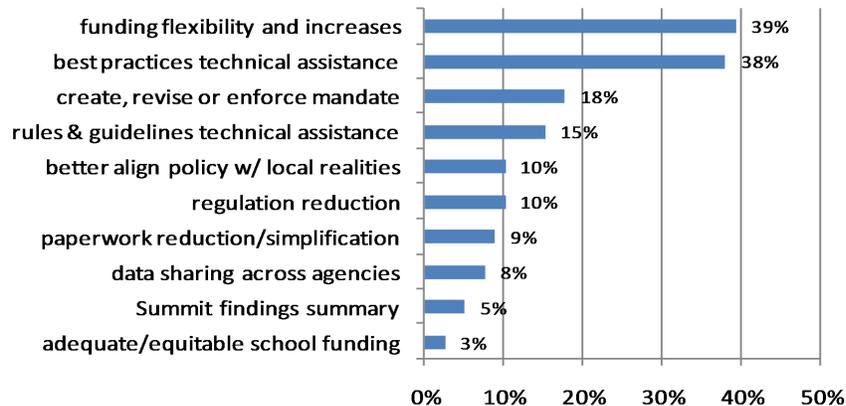
Most of the delegations left the 2008 Summit having identified a lead agency and a specific agency representative to take on the responsibility of convening local stakeholders to continue in the development of the community action plan and its implementation (please see next column). About half of the 79 delegations designated the juvenile court as the lead entity, either alone (44%) or in partnership with another agency (6%). Almost one in five of the delegations designated the local Families and Children First Coordinating Council as the lead agency followed by the Department of Job and Family Services or PCSA (24%).

The eight participating counties with a total population of 300,000 people or greater, with one exception,⁷ designated the local juvenile court as the lead convener of the local action committee. Delegations from communities with less than 300,000 total population, on the other hand, were more likely (54% of the time) than the larger counties to designate a lead agency outside of the juvenile court—most often the local Family and Children First Coordinating Council (20% of the time).

A judge or juvenile court magistrate was designated in about a third of the delegations (34%) as the person taking on leadership responsibility for post-summit strategic planning activities and a court administrator was designated by 11% of the local delegations (please see next column).



The Top 10 Overall Areas for State Action Mentioned in the Initial Plans (n=79)



Source: Ohio Children's Summit, draft plan responses tabulated and summarized into categories by author.⁶

Agency directors were appointed as the county leader going forward in almost one third of the delegations and in a few instances were placed in a co-leadership role with the local judge (8%).

Conclusion

The Ohio Summit on Children was an opportunity for county delegations to step away from the time demands of “real work” for an activity that often is considered a luxury or “fluff”: team collaboration and planning. For county delegations for whom this was a new or infrequent experience, it is hoped that the Summit revealed teamwork as an essential part of the daily job. For those Ohio counties that already regarded collaboration as a platform essential to achieving positive outcomes for families and children, it is hoped that the Summit provided occasion to reassess and revitalize relationships. The voices of speakers and participants each carried wisdom, experience and opportunity to view work through new eyes; it is hoped that every delegate found at least one item that resonated on a personal level and inspired something new in their work with Ohio’s children and families.

Teams have submitted 18-month planning agendas. Counties are encouraged to utilize the resources of the Summit website, state-level contacts identified on the Summit website, and the informal network of community teams across counties to advance the progress of their plans. Counties that were unable to attend the May 2008 Summit have convenient access to Summit tools and resources and are encouraged to develop and submit an action plan and recommendations for state support.

State-level officials will be using this time to assess the recommendations of Summit delegates and to incorporate priorities into state-level action plans. Governor Strickland and Chief Justice Moyer have committed to reconvene and actively participate in a **November 12 and 13, 2009** Ohio Summit on Children. The 2009 Summit will again be held in Columbus. Both county- and state-level teams will use this time to report back on their progress.

Endnotes

- ¹ Adams, Auglaize, Clinton, Defiance, Franklin, Geauga, Highland, Jefferson and Medina counties were not in attendance.
- ² Plenary speakers and prepared videos can be viewed on www.ohiosummitonchildren.com through the “Resources” tab. Each participant received a DVD set of all Summit speakers and videos for local use.
- ³ Child and Family Services Review, the federal review process to monitor states’ compliance with state plan requirements for Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. See Ohio Bulletin, Volume 4, No. 1, 2008.
- ⁴ All Summit Planning Tools and Resources are available on www.ohiosummitonchildren.com through the “Resources” tab.
- ⁵ The detailed responses organized into this summary were at times general, and other times specific. For example the six detailed responses characterized as organize local summit were as follows:
 1. County summit on children—mental health and substance abuse treatment
 2. Organize local summit for our county
 3. County child summit
 4. County summit to raise awareness/ collaboration
 5. Hold local summit on children
 6. Hold local summit of community leaders and decision makers
- ⁶ Action areas could also be general or quite specific. The seven issues grouped into the paperwork simplification/reduction category included:
 1. Simplification and reduction of mandated paperwork
 2. Streamline Medicaid billing
 3. Case plans simplified and more family friendly paper work reduction
 4. Reduce state bureaucracy and get social workers back to direct services with clients
 5. Reduction of paperwork to increase client/community work
 6. Remove restrictions and huge paperwork requirements for funds we do have so we can focus on direct services
 7. Reduce/streamline paperwork requirements for direct care work
- ⁷ The one exception at this level designated the local Family and Children First Coordinating Council as the lead entity.

Summit Funding and the Pew Charitable Trusts

The Ohio Summit on Children was funded by a combination of discretionary federal grant funds awarded to the Supreme Court of Ohio and to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services through the US Department of Health and Human Services and the generous support of Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent nonprofit, is the sole beneficiary of seven individual charitable funds established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew.

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems, and applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. Since 2003, Pew has worked with many partners at the state and national level to advance policies to keep children from languishing in foster care.

In 2004, the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, a nonpartisan, independent commission comprised of leading child welfare experts from across the nation, issued recommendations to reform our country's foster care system. It urged a restructuring of federal financing for foster care to provide states with greater flexibility and to increase accountability. The commission recommended that state courts be given the tools to better track and oversee foster care cases, and that children and parents be allowed a stronger voice in court. The 2004 Report can be downloaded at www.pewfostercare.org/research/docs/FinalReport.pdf.

Significant progress has been made to date, including the investment by Congress of \$100 million over five years to track and manage cases, provide training and increase collaboration between courts and child welfare agencies. Across the nation, state court systems and child welfare agencies have created and are implementing reform action plans. More than one-third of all states have formed or are in the process of creating their own high-level commissions such as Ohio's Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts to promote change. For additional information please visit the Advisory Committee website at www.sconet.state.oh.us/Judicial_and_Court_Services/family_court/.



Ohio Summit on Children

65 South Front Street Columbus, Ohio 43215-3431

Each Ohio Summit on Children participant has received a three DVD set of the event's various plenary presentations. The purpose of this wide distribution is not only to offer a reminder of what was intended to be an informative and inspirational event, but also to provide each participant with a resource for drawing additional community members into local collaborative planning processes.

Requests for copies of the set can be made by contacting Steve Hanson of the Supreme Court of Ohio (tel. 614.387.9387 email: hansons@sconet.state.oh.us) or Kristin Gilbert at the Department of Job and Family Services (tel. 614.752.0236 email: Kristin.Gilbert@jfs.ohio.gov).

Contents of the three disc set are as follows:

DISC ONE:

- Charge to County Teams
 - Hon. Ted Strickland, Governor of Ohio
 - Hon. Thomas J. Moyer, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio
- From A Child's Perspective
 - Cedric Riley, Founder, Science in Motion Group, LLC
- Through the Eyes of A Child
 - Hon. William Byars Jr., Director, South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
Former Trial Court Judge
- Teamwork Counts
 - Jim Tressel, Head Football Coach, The Ohio State University

DISC TWO:

- A National Perspective
 - Joan Ohl, Commissioner, Administration for Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- A State Perspective
 - Helen Jones-Kelley, Director, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- A Local Perspective
 - Hon. David A. Basinski, Lorain County Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court
- Ready, Set, Go!
 - Hon. Nancy D. Hammond, Fayette County Probate/Juvenile Court
President, Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges
 - Kelly Lynch, Director, Guernsey County Children Services Board
President, Public Children Services Association of Ohio

DISC THREE:

- Ohio Summit on Children Video Presentations
 - Voices of Ohio Children
 - Voices of Ohio Communities
 - Promising & Proven Approaches

Ohio Updates

Ohio Child Support Guidelines Advisory Council

In January 2008, the fifth quadrennial Child Support Guidelines Advisory Council (Council) convened in Columbus to assist the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in its review of the basic child support schedule set forth in ORC §3119.021. This four-year review is mandated (ORC §3119.024) to determine whether child support orders issued in accordance with the schedule and worksheets adequately provide for the needs of the children subject to child support orders. The Council's work forms the basis of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' recommendations to the Ohio General Assembly. The Department's report is to be submitted by March 1, 2009.

The judicial community is represented on the Council by Judge Jim James from Stark County, Magistrate Ann Snyder from Licking County, and Magistrate Odella Lampkin-Crafter from Franklin County. Others on the Council include individuals from the Ohio House and Senate, the Ohio State Bar Association, the Ohio State Legal Services Association, Child Support Enforcement Agencies and the Ohio CSEA Directors Association, as well as interested members from the Association for Children for Enforcement of Support and the Community Endeavors Foundation.

Among its tasks, the Council will review: the results of an economic study of the cost of raising children; the results of a study of deviation factors being undertaken by several Child Support Enforcement Agencies; and, the recommendations of previous Child Support Guidelines Advisory Councils.

The Council is conducting ten public forums across the state throughout July and August 2008 to gather community input. Opportunities also exist to register comments through the website the Council has established at: <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/csguidelines>.

Individuals are encouraged to utilize the website to participate in the review process by offering written remarks. The Council will be reviewing all posted comments for consideration prior to the development of final recommendations.

For further information about the Council or Ohio's Child Support Guidelines contact David Fleischman at David.Fleischman@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio Updates

Alternative Response

The Spring 2007 Ohio Bulletin focused on Alternative Response, including a description of the Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency's (Subcommittee) intent to oversee the Alternative Response pilot project authorized in Ohio Senate Bill 238 (26th). Subsequent issues of the Ohio Bulletin have provided Alternative Response project updates (Volume. 4, No. 1).

Since the update in the last Ohio Bulletin, Alternative Response went "live" and now is an option for caseworkers in Ohio's Alternative Response Project sites. AIM (American Humane Association, Institute for Applied Research and Minnesota Consultants) is facilitating various venues for ongoing communication between project sites to promote cross-fertilization of ideas and peer problem-solving. Project sites report the customary mix of excitement and challenge that accompany the realization of any new program. The most prevalent expression is appreciation that the planning time is done and doing time has come! Since the last issue of the Ohio Bulletin:

- Pre-implementation training in all ten pilot sites was completed. Four separate instruction modules were conducted by AIM. The modules are Overview, Procedures, Pathway, Assignment and Practice.
- Each site received a supply of communications materials and templates. Materials were developed by a national consultant secured by Casey Family Programs to work with the Design Team.
- A SACWIS Work Flow was developed and deployed to permit project sites to capture alternative response case reporting data within SACWIS in a manner that is consistent with the principles of alternative response.
- SACWIS mapping was initiated to ensure that Ohio alternative response data is accurately reported to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in compliance with federal requirements.
- A variety of informational avenues were utilized to provide SACWIS support to pilot sites and acclimate non-pilot counties to the appearance of the alternative response designation within the SACWIS screen.
- Rules and forms specific to Alternative Response were enacted through the Ohio Administrative Code.
- A random assignment and evaluation process was implemented within the project counties. Random assignment will be in effect for 15 of the 18 month project period.
- Funding was awarded from the Ohio Children's Trust Fund to support the development of services that support families through this new approach.
- Project sites and ODJFS received funding from Casey Family Programs to support flexible funding of program priorities. Alternative Response is consistent with Casey Family Programs' goal to reduce the number of children who enter foster care since other states' implementation have resulted in families' needs being quickly resolved more often within their own home and a decrease in the likelihood of a return to the child protection system through subsequent reports.
- A schedule for an ongoing mix of technical assistance and skill development formats was established, as well as a system for requesting and responding to site-specific technical assistance needs.

Understanding the Principles of Alternative Response

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued this definition of Alternative Response: A formal response of the agency that assesses the needs of the child or family without requiring a determination that maltreatment has occurred. If this definition of Alternative Response (AR) is deconstructed, it describes the following:

- Formal:** AR happens within the designated child protection system; it is not a diversion program.
- Response:** AR is a method of responding to a report of alleged child maltreatment. AR is an option to be considered after a report of alleged child abuse or report has been accepted. AR is not a screening methodology.
- Assess:** This response is an assessment of the overall family circumstances, rather than a traditional investigation of an event. The purpose of the assessment is not to determine if a child was maltreated, but how a child can be kept safe within the home.
- Needs:** The assessment engages the family to jointly determine what the family needs to enable safety of the child(ren); the investigation gathers evidence to determine if child maltreatment has occurred. Both responses evaluate the current safety and level of future risk to the child.
- Determination:** Since this is not an incident-driven response, there is no determination of whether abuse or neglect occurred. This eliminates the categories of “substantiated,” “unsubstantiated,” and “indicated,” as well as “alleged perpetrator” and “victim.”

Working from the federal definition, Ohio’s Design Team developed principles to guide all decision-making in their work of framing Ohio’s Alternative Response Project. Since Alternative Response operates within Ohio’s child protection system and shares the goal of child safety with the traditional investigation, there are many principles that are common to both approaches. These are:

- Child safety comes first, and all policies, guidelines and practices are child-centered and family focused.
- Child protection emphasizes engagement of families in strengths and needs discovery while attending to root causes and behaviors which interfere with child safety.
- Child safety is best achieved through active, collaborative and respectful engagement of parents, family community and all other child protection stakeholders.
- When families cannot assure child safety, it is necessary for the agency, court, community and/or extended families to provide protection.

Principles that are unique to Alternative Response:

- *Families who are screened into the child welfare system and are eligible for Alternative Response have the opportunity to make an informed decision to participate in Alternative Response or to be served by the Traditional Response.*
- *Families are more easily engaged in a partnership when the labels of perpetrators and victims have been removed.*
- *Alternative Response systems are designed to identify family needs and find creative solutions, including informal supports and formal services.*

Ohio Updates

Ohio Children's Trust Fund (Trust Fund)

In June 2008, the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (Trust Fund) voted to invest \$1 million in Ohio's Alternative Response Pilot Program.

The money will go directly to counties to support flexible services for families. The Alternative Response model is consistent with the mission of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. It targets at-risk children and families and provides valuable services and resources that are family focused in order to strengthen families. Alternative Response Project participants are currently examining the services provided through this funding stream for the purpose of identifying the service categories that families and caseworkers find most useful and effective.

More About the Trust Fund

The Ohio Children's Trust Fund is the only State-dedicated public funding stream for primary and secondary child abuse and neglect prevention. Ohio's dedicated dollars for prevention are derived from fees on birth and death certificates and divorce and dissolution filings. These local fees amount to approximately \$4.5 million per year and are used to leverage an addition \$1.2 million in federal dollars. Approximately 85% of the Trust Fund annual revenues are reinvested in primary and secondary prevention programs at the local level. In addition, the Trust Fund is supporting the statewide implementation of the Stewards of Children sexual abuse prevention program, local support for fatherhood programs and the expansion of the Incredible Years curriculum.

Upon the completion of board appointments in September 2007, the Trust Fund has been in a period of growth and revitalization. The Board immediately established an aggressive monthly meeting schedule and continues to move forward in establishing itself as Ohio's premier abuse and neglect prevention programming entity. In addition to establishing and rebuilding federal, state and local partnerships, the Trust Fund Board is taking primary responsibility for updating board infrastructure and redefining prevention programming in Ohio. Over the next year, the Trust Fund Board will initiate strategic planning efforts to identify prevention priorities for State Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011.

The Trust Fund is excited to be a partner in a pilot program that has the potential to create a systemic prevention framework in Ohio. For more information on the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, please contact Candace Valach, Executive Director, at 614.466.7675 or Candace.Valach@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio Updates

The Advisory Committee on Children, Families, and the Courts

The Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts, Co-Chaired by the Honorable David A. Basinski of the Lorain County Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court and Director Helen Jones-Kelley of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, continues its work on a variety of issues through subcommittees.

Subcommittee Updates

The ***Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency*** continues its work to examine the feasibility of a second, “alternative” to the currently codified response to reports of child maltreatment (see Ohio Update: Alternative Response) and to statutorily move Ohio to a “child in need of protective services” (CHIPS) model. The Subcommittee has established an aggressive timeline that helps to establish benchmarks for progress, while activity continues to focus on ensuring that constituency groups understand the impact of the proposed statutory change. The Subcommittee hopes to complete groundwork in advance of legislative introduction, which includes identification of issues that need to be addressed as well as conceptual support.

The Subcommittee agreed to review an assessment of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). The report, a required component of Ohio’s Court Improvement Program, is intended to examine the federal process and it’s functioning within States; it is not an appraisal of Ohio’s ICPC implementation. Ongoing information regarding this Subcommittee is available on the website: ohiochildlaw.com.

The ***Subcommittee on Legal Representation*** has continued its work to increase the availability of quality legal representation in family related proceedings. The attorney Standards of Practice Project continues in six counties (Delaware, Hamilton, Harrison, Lake, Mahoning, and Perry). During the summer, CLE courses are being offered in each pilot county on the American Bar Association’s Standards of Practice for Lawyers Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases and the Ohio Public Defender Commission’s Standards of Representation of Clients in Juvenile Delinquency Cases.

The ***Subcommittee on Rules and Statutes*** sent a survey to each juvenile court asking for data on attorney representation in felony, misdemeanor and status offense cases. The surveys were due on August 1st and will assist the subcommittee in making recommendations regarding a juvenile defendant’s right to be represented by an attorney in juvenile court proceedings and the circumstances where a juvenile defendant may waive that right.

The ***Subcommittee on Adult Guardianship*** has completed its draft recommendations on standards of practice, data collection and monitoring protocols. These draft recommendations are being submitted to the full Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts for discussion and action at its September meeting.

Ohio Updates

National Governors Association Policy Academy on Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care

In May 2008, Ohio was one of six states selected to participate in a Policy Academy on Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care (Academy) hosted by the National Governor's Association. The Academy is being conducted in partnership with Casey Family Programs, a Seattle-based foundation committed to safely reducing nationwide the number of children in foster care by 50 percent by 2020. Ohio will be working with national and state experts to improve outcomes for children and youth who come to the attention of the child welfare system (Ohio is joined by Arkansas, Florida, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina in the initiative).

During the course of the Academy, states will develop a two-year strategic plan to reduce the number of children in foster care while ensuring that safety remains paramount. The plans are to focus on reducing the number of children entering care, shortening the length of stay for those in care and/or improving permanency outcomes to reduce returns to care, as well as strategies for sustaining effort over time.

Ohio's strategic plan will focus upon three elements:

1. aligning leadership for change (state and local)
2. constructing a child welfare framework that enhances system prevention through a reinvestment and reallocation of resources
3. enhancing policies and procedures to safely reduce the number of children in the foster care system.

The initiative has two phases: 1) six month Academy work with the National Governors Association that includes two "Policy Academy Meetings," and 2) implementation of the two-year plan.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Director Helen Jones- Kelley serves as the state Team Sponsor. She is joined by six "Core Team" members: Yvette McGee Brown, President of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Nationwide Children's Hospital; Robin Harris, Executive Assistant for Health and Human Services with Governor Strickland's Office; Kelly Lynch, Director of the Guernsey County Children Services Agency and current President of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio; Steve Hollon, Administrative Director of the Ohio Supreme Court; Judge Anthony Capizzi, Montgomery County Juvenile Court; and Adrian McLemore, who brings his experiences as a youth who aged out of foster care to serve as President of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board.

The "Home Team," a larger advisory body of approximately 25 child welfare professionals representing a wide range of disciplines from both the state and local levels, has been established to assist the Core Team in identifying strategies, benchmarks and outcomes to achieve established goals.

Candace Valach, Executive Director of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, serves as the Project Manager for this exciting initiative. Please contact Candace Valach for more information at 614-466-7675 or Candace.Valach@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ohio Updates

Adoption & Child Welfare LawSite

Add the Adoption & Child Welfare LawSite to Your Favorites List at
<http://www.adoptionchildwelfarelaw.org>

The National Center for Adoption Law and Policy at Capital University Law School, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, has established the **Adoption & Child Welfare LawSite** (LawSite). The *LawSite* is a single online source of child welfare and adoption law information for adoptive and foster parents, biological parents, child and family lawyers, juvenile and family court judges, agency personnel and child advocates of all kinds. It is the nation's only comprehensive searchable site for statutes, regulations, key cases, and leading articles from all 50 states, all available at no charge to the user.

LawSite features home pages specifically tailored to family members, legal professionals and child welfare practitioners, and includes a strong search functionality. Since *LawSite* is used by non-legal professionals as well as legal practitioners, it includes plain English summaries of most of the legal source documents hosted on the site.

LawSite is intended to inform, educate and provide access to adoption and child welfare legal and policy-related materials and information. The authors of the site content clearly caution, however, that LawSite information is not a replacement for professional legal advice.

Visit *LawSite* at <http://www.adoptionchildwelfarelaw.org>.

**NOVEMBER 12-14, 2008
COLUMBUS, OHIO**

SAVE THE DATES

3rd Annual Conference on Differential Response in Child Welfare

What is “differential response”?

Differential response, also referred to as “dual track,” “multiple track” or “alternative response,” is an approach that allows child protective services to respond differently to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect. While there is great variation among the states’ implementation of differential response, the assessment pathway is generally applied to low- and moderate-risk cases with no immediate safety concerns. The families in these cases receive a family assessment and are offered timely, strengths-based services without a formal determination or substantiation of child abuse and neglect. The investigative response is typically reserved for accepted high-risk reports that may involve egregious harm to children.

The American Humane Association will hold its *3rd Annual Conference on Differential Response in Child Welfare* this November.

In 2007, over 400 delegates from 27 states, Washington D.C., and four Canadian provinces explored the implementation of differential response as a way to transform how families cooperate with child welfare systems. Conference participants have included public and tribal child welfare administrators, supervisors, direct line practitioners, policymakers, state and regional program specialists, community-based agency representatives and researchers.

Their ideas and energy and the international conference planning committee serve as a strong foundation for the 2008 conference. The 3rd annual conference will build knowledge and skills, and provide an exchange of ideas on implementing and sustaining differential response in child welfare.

**3rd Annual Conference on
Differential Response In Child Welfare
November 12 - November 14, 2008
Hyatt on Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio**

- **stimulating Keynote & Plenary sessions**
 - **workshops & discussion groups**
 - **half-day skills building sessions**
- **networking opportunities with professionals from around the world**

Call for Presentations and Conference Information
www.americanhumane.org

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND THE COURTS - Ohio Bulletin

is a copyrighted publication of the National Center for Juvenile Justice in conjunction with the Supreme Court of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. This bulletin is a publication that refers to a constellation of activities jointly administered by the Supreme Court of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to improve both the interaction between child welfare and judicial systems, and the effectiveness of intervention in cases involving families where judicial action is required. This collaboration is supported by a blend of federal Court Improvement and Children's Justice Act grant funds.

The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) is a non-profit organization that conducts research (statistical, legal, and applied) on a broad range of juvenile justice topics and provides technical assistance to the field. NCJJ is the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

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