



# **Richland County Children Services**

## **2014 Annual Report To Our Community**

**Our mission: To lead our community in assuring the safety, well-being and permanency of children at risk of abuse and neglect.**

## Dear Richland County Community,

The purpose of this annual report is to tell you what was accomplished in 2014 and look forward to our child welfare plans for this year.

When I arrived in Richland County in 2013, our focus was initially outward – repairing relationships, clarifying expectations and building bridges.

We passed a much needed replacement tax levy in 2013 and I again thank our community for its support. It's never easy asking taxpayers for assistance, but child protective services in Ohio gets less than 9 percent of its funding from the state. That makes local dollars critical to leverage needed federal funds for our efforts. Ohio remains last among all 50 states in the percentage of child protection funds provided to child welfare. This leaves our agency dependent on our local community to value, step up and help provide resources to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens – our children.

We completed a Community Leaders Survey with favorable results in 2014. We also launched a Community Stakeholders' Survey, learning things that will allow us to improve this survey when we do it again in 2016. We will do both these surveys every two years and are looking for more ways to gain community feedback and to make our agency more transparent. I have been fortunate to chair the Richland County Youth & Family Council during the past two years, allowing me to learn a great deal about our community. I will turn these duties over to Richland Public Health Commissioner Martin Tremmel in July this year.

During the second half of 2014, our agency turned inward in terms of working toward best practices in child welfare, including team decision making (we have secured an off-site meeting space near the intersection of West Fourth Street and Home Road); Signs of Safety, an innovative approach to ensure the safety of children in conjunction with families; and the beginnings of a new Trauma Informed Initiative. We have also significantly reduced employee caseloads without increasing staff size.

## *FROM THE DESK OF THE Executive Director*

Our board members met in October 2014 to establish a new mission statement for our agency, a new vision and guiding principles for our work, all of which can be found in other pages of this report. It will take time to achieve these principles and consistently live by them, but that is our goal. We ask your patience as we grow together.

In 2015, we will provide significant training and coaching to our team, especially our supervisors and managers, using funds we received from an Innovation and Efficiency grant from the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services. We will also conduct an employee organizational climate survey.

We have our sights set on unfolding into a true learning organization where we: Build a culture encouraging and supporting continuous employee training, critical thinking and risk taking with new ideas; Allow mistakes and value employee contributions; improve with experience and experimentation; Spread new knowledge over the organization for use in daily operations.

We do these things while focusing on our mission statement: "To lead our community in assuring the safety, well-being and permanency of children at risk of abuse and neglect."

As Nelson Mandela once said, "Safety and security don't just happen; they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."

**Patty Harrelson, Executive Director  
Richland County Children Services**

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The Richland County Children Services Board adopted a new mission statement, as well as a new vision statement and guiding principles, during 2014. The board and agency leadership feel the new mission and vision statements, and accompanying principles, better reflect the goals of the county's public child welfare agency.



### **We envision:**

- The community invests in the future of its children by providing opportunities to develop their social, emotional, physical, cognitive and cultural skills;**
- Every child has a permanent, emotionally and economically stable family;**
- The community values and supports the work of Richland County Children Services through its funding, provision of board leadership, and excellence in county governance;**
- A committed staff that is supported by the Board and the community.**

### **Our employees**

Richland County Children Services ended 2014 with 109 employees, including caseworkers and others involved in administrative roles, including operations, legal, human resources, communication/public education, finance, clerical and support. Agency employees constitute one of the most well educated workforces in Richland County. There are 93 employees with bachelor's degrees. 37 of whom also have masters degrees. Eighteen have earned LSW or LISW status.

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# Richland County Children Services Guiding Principles

**Respect for Families:** Everyone has a right to be treated with respect regardless of the circumstances that may bring them to our attention;

**Safety:** The primary goal of our work is child safety;

**We Value our Employees:** The safety, knowledge, skill, support and accountability of our team members is critical to our mission;

**Focus on Underlying or Root Cause:** Determining underlying reasons for the behavior which places children at risk of abuse or neglect is necessary to assist parents in changing these behaviors;

**Focus on Behavior:** Behaviors which place children at risk of abuse or neglect or which caused abuse or neglect must change for children to be safe;

**Permanency:** A safe and permanent home is a birth-right of every child.

**Focus on the Best Child Welfare Practices:** We strive to use proven and tested state-of-the-art approaches and knowledge to guide our work with a constant emphasis on continual program quality improvement;

**Planning and Accountability:** Planning the most timely and efficient way to protect children is by design. We plan achievable goals and hold families, service providers and ourselves accountable for the outcomes;

**Communication and Collaboration:** Open, continual, productive communication, internally and

ers and ourselves accountable for the outcomes;

**Communication and Collaboration:** Open, continual, productive communication, internally and externally, increases collaboration which supports the success of all social service providers in Richland County in protecting children from maltreatment;

**We Never Give Up:** Families and their children are important to our community and therefore we will never stop working in service to them;

**Transparency:** We believe transparency is important in all of our operations where the public has a right to know and understand what we do;

**Professionalism and Ethical Practice:** We hold to the ethical principles of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and believe that professional conduct is expected from every employee;

**Fiscal Responsibility:** We believe in the importance of being a fiscally sound and responsible organization that manages its resources for this and future generations;

**We are a Learning Organization:** We work to build a culture encouraging and supporting continuous employee training, critical thinking and risk taking with new ideas and we allow mistakes and value employee contributions. We improve with experience and experimentation and spread new knowledge over the organization for use in daily operations;

**Prevention:** Prevention of child maltreatment is the responsibility of the entire community. We see ourselves as leaders in these efforts.

## Agency leadership

### Board members

Pamela Siegenthaler, chair  
 James Kulig, vice chair  
 Renee Bessick, secretary  
 Robert Kirkendall, treasurer  
 Dr. Michelle Kowalski  
 David Leitenberger  
 Jason Murray  
 Lynn Friebel  
 Stacy Jackson-Johnson (2015)  
 Deanna West-Torrence (left board at the end of 2014)

Patricia Harrelson, MSSA, LISW-S  
 Executive Director

Nikki Harless, MSW, LISW-S  
 Assistant Director

Marsha Coleman, MSW, LISW-S  
 Clinical Director

Kevin Goshe, MBA  
 Director of Finance

Tim Harless, MSW  
 Director of Community Outreach and Programming

Kevin Wharton, MSCJ  
 Manager, Intake and Assessment Services

Scott Basilone, MSCJ  
 Manager, Ongoing Family Services

Lori Feeney, MSW  
 Manager, Placement and Kinship Services

Edith Gilliland, JD  
 Manager, Legal Services

## Richland County Children Services 2014 finances\*

Revenue		Expenses	
Federal	\$ 5,816,861	Personnel	\$ 6,643,488
State	\$ 528,851	Placement	\$ 1,515,963
Levy income	\$3,013,054	Adoption	\$ 220,807
Parental support	\$ 2,620	Purchased serv.	\$ 241,398
Other revenue	\$ 66,475	Admin	\$ 428,976
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$ 9,427,861</b>	<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 9,050,632</b>

\* = Unaudited

RCCS strives to be a fiscally responsible and transparent public agency. Anyone wishing to review the agency budget or financial reports can call RCCS at 419-774-4100. We set aside funds for capital improvements, including the 2014 replacement of our secure building entry system and the 2015 replacement of a vital fire suppression system.

## 2014 By the Numbers

Total calls: 25,894	Foster homes added in 2014: 15
Calls to screeners: 6,296	End of year placements: 71
Investigations: 2,118	Total initial placements: 47
Adoptions: 8	Agency visitors: 6,306
Foster homes end of 2014: 63	



RCCS workers march in many area parades.

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## ProtectOHIO renewal key to continued success

Richland County Children Services is a member of the ProtectOHIO consortium, a group of counties that have used the Title IV-E child waiver program since its inception in 1997. That waiver, created in five-year increments, expires in September this year and the state has asked it be extended for another five years. The waiver allows participating counties much more freedom and discretion in how they use federal dollars, rather than tying the money to the number of children with deprivation factors taken into agency custody. It allows RCCS and other consortium members to better address current needs of local children and families and gives the agencies greater ability to respond to trends in child welfare. ProtectOHIO, through efforts such as Family Team Meetings and Kinship, helps provide creative, cutting-edge services to the most needy of Ohio's citizens.



## RCCS part of Primary Parent Partner program

Richland County Children Services is part of a pilot program seeking to identify families who have successfully completed case plans with the agency and partner them with families who are struggling.

The local program — a spin-off of the national Primary Parent Partner Program — is called HOPE, short for Helping Ohio Parent Effectively. Richland, Cuyahoga and Trumbull counties are the three taking part in the state initiative.

With families who are struggling, Children Services hosts team meetings and plans to include prospective partner families who will undergo training before beginning their efforts.

Families struggling with their case plans might be more receptive to working with mentors rather than agency employees, according to child welfare experts.

Children Services has property on Fourth Street that will serve as an additional space for the agency to conduct family team meetings. Some family team meetings will be held at the agency as well.

The local initiative is made possible through a grant. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is the lead agency. Casey Family Programs and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio are part of the leadership team to give guidance to the three pilot counties.

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# CARE team takes the agency mission to the public

One of the agency's new initiatives in 2014 was the formation of a new Community Awareness Resources and Engagement team.

The team, comprised of any agency employees who wish to participate, has one simple mission: Get the word out to the public about what Richland County Children Services does .. and doesn't do.

The team began work on a new educational video that will premiere this spring at speaking engagements and other community activities.

The CARE team also developed a billboard contest for local third-grade students and created a special calendar from the best entries.

It also staged the first "Spaghetti Bowl" for the Mansfield Senior-Madison football game last fall that raised more than \$3,000 for charity.

More is planned in 2015 as RCCS proves it CAREs.



RCCS employees are participating in a new agency educational video.



The RCCS CARE team worked with Mansfield Senior and Madison Comprehensive high schools to raise more than \$3,000 for charity last fall with the first "Spaghetti Bowl." The team also staged an art contest for third-grade students with the winner going on a billboard.



**Richland County Children Services**

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

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