



**Richland County Children Services  
2016  
Report to the Community**

# Our Mission

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

## From the Director's Desk

By Patty Harrelson  
Executive Director

There are no easy answers when it comes to child welfare. In fact, it gets more complex each year.

During my career, we have gone from the proverbial dirty home, truancy, lice and minor parenting challenges to serious mental illness and trauma in both adults and children, youth with serious delinquency challenges, and drug addiction. Mounting research and evidence on the impact of maltreatment on both our children and our economy is staggering. One study estimated the annual cost of child maltreatment to be over 124 billion dollars each year. Think about that. One hundred and twenty four billion dollars.

We work daily to be good stewards of the public's money, regardless of the source. But we have seen dramatic increases in child placements that are often outside our ability to control. These increases have come despite the agency's successful Kinship program, recognized around the state as a model for other counties. Via Kinship, many children who cannot remain safely at home have been taken in by grandparents and other relatives, reducing the growing need for foster care. This of course places a burden on these kin families and there is little state support to help. Research by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Child Welfare League of America and others support this direction of utilizing Kinship care.

Our agency does not receive funds from the county's general fund. We utilize services such as the County Risk Sharing Authority (CORSA) and payroll, but we do not ask for, nor receive, general fund monies. The county (not the agency) receives any interest accrued on our reserve fund, which presently is enough to operate the agency for about six months if no other revenue was available. This is prudent fiscal management.

We are blessed to have the support of local residents in terms of two 1-mill, 10-year property tax levies that generated \$3.6 million in 2016, about 37 percent of our annual revenue. We also received about \$5.7 million in federal funding last year, accounting for another 57 percent. The local funds are essential in allowing the agency to draw down a significant portion of the federal money. A major change to one federal program called ProtectOhio means that RCCS now must spend one dollar of local taxpayer money when we spend one dollar of federal money earmarked to this program. This change in policy meant that starting on October 1, 2016 we had to begin to use approximately \$600,000 per year from our reserve fund to pay for services. It does not take a financial wizard



**Richland County commissioners and mayors in four local communities proclaimed April as Child Abuse Prevention Month during 2016.**

to understand that we cannot sustain this level of operation over the long haul. This comes as other costs for caring for children have increased.

The agency's total paid days of care have increased 59 percent in the last five years, mirroring a national trend due in large part to drug use by parents. How badly are children affected by adult drug abuse? A recent state survey found half of children taken into custody in 2015 had parental drug use identified at the time of removal, and 28 percent of children removed that year had parents who used opioids, including prescription opiates, heroin and fentanyl.

That means nearly a third of children in custody are there because of the epidemic, and that number doesn't count many children who continue to be served in their homes or who are placed with kin.

That was in 2015 — the situation has only gotten worse. Total placement costs have jumped 154 percent in the same time, hitting \$1.4 million dollars in 2016.

These local and federal dollars are even more essential given the fact that the State of Ohio remains last in the nation in terms of funding child protective services. This lack of state funds comes as the state also ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality, 45<sup>th</sup> in drug deaths, 34<sup>th</sup> for high school graduation, 44<sup>th</sup> in

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# RCCS: Involved in our community



(Top) RCCS employees and family members participated in the Mansfield Halloween Parade. (Far left) A youngster from Shelby won the agency's annual billboard contest. (Left) Tim Harless from RCCS is interviewed by local media during the annual Wear Blue Day public event.

## Ground broken for transitional foster youth housing

New transitional housing is being constructed in Mansfield for foster children aging out of care.

The eight-unit apartment complex will house young people as they transition into adults, learning skills they may not have gained during childhood.

Ground was broken in September for the facility, being built with funds through the Richland County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board.

"This has been a missing piece in our community for a long time," RCCS Executive Director Patty Harrelson said during the ceremony.

It's a partnership involving MH&RS, RCCS, Catalyst Life Services, the North End Community Improvement Collaborative and Richland County Juvenile Court, among others.



Richland County Children Services Executive Director Patty Harrelson (third from right) and Richland County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board Executive Director Joe Trolan (fourth from left) were among those in attendance in September when ground was broken for a new transitional housing facility in Mansfield.



# Richland County Children Services: For Your Information

## 2016 Revenues, Expenses

Revenue sources	Amount*	Expense area	Amount*
Federal	\$5,756,558	Personnel	\$6,396,018
Levy income	\$3,694,697	Placement	\$1,853,446
State	\$531,747	Purchased services	\$487,695
Other revenue	\$44,485	Operations/overhead	\$399,968
Parental support	\$3,036	Adoption subsidy	\$209,752
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$10,030,523</b>	Capital replacement	\$95,515
	<b>*Unaudited</b>	<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$9,442,394</b>
			<b>*Unaudited</b>



## HOPE, SUCCEED

During 2016, the agency continued to recruit potential Helping Ohio Parent Effectively (HOPE) candidates.

These are parents who have successfully completed case plans within the agency ongoing units. The potential parents are then asked to attend training and participate as a support person in our Family Team Meetings.

The mission of HOPE is to utilize parent partners' experience to engage and advocate for parents currently involved with the child welfare system ensuring they have the knowledge and support to achieve the best permanency plan for their children.

Additionally, in 2017, Richland County Children Services is implementing the SUCCEED pilot program.

SUCCEED is both a formalized training for potential HOPE parents and the development of a monthly support group meeting for all HOPE parents.

Once trained, the HOPE parents will run these meetings with assistance of a designated staff person from Community Outreach. This support group pilot project was funded by the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services out of a desire to support the previously established HOPE program.

HOPE is currently active in six counties, including Richland. SUCCEED support groups are designed to work hand-in-hand with the HOPE program.

## Community Involvement

Richland County Children Services employees participate in a myriad of community events each year. We believe it's a great way to give back to the residents and communities that support the agency each day.

During 2016, employees:

- Walked in the annual Miss Ohio Parade and the Downtown Mansfield Halloween Parade.
- Participated in the annual Richland County Fair, Downtown Mansfield Children's Festival, the Bellville Street Fair and the Ontario 4th of July Festival.
- Participated in the annual 24-hour Swim/Bike/Run and Wear Blue Day events during national Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Helped to host the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner and the Foster Family Holiday Dinner.



During national Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, the Richland County Board of Commissioners, as well as mayors from Mansfield, Ontario, Shelby and Lexington issued proclamations in support of the work being done by Richland County Children Services.

# RCCS helps OhioHealth expand safe forensic space

A collaborative effort in 2016, initiated jointly by Richland County Children Services, led to an expanded forensics department at Ohio Health Mansfield.

It began as an idea between RCCS supervisor Holly Fritz and Ohio Health Mansfield forensic nurse coordinator Tammy Robertson.

The expanded space, including three interview rooms for victims of child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence, is located near the Ohio Health Mansfield emergency room.

Ohio Health Mansfield President Jean Halpin said the new expanded Forensics Department acts as the liaison point between medical and law enforcement processes in a sexual assault case. Instead of a patient being transported between the hospital and the police department or Children Services, everything will happen in the new expanded space.

The rooms are equipped with audio and video recording equipment to allow employees to utilize recordings of abused children that may support the successful prosecution of offenders. Richland County Children Services paid for all of the equipment, with the vision of the Executive Director being such to eventually share the space with local survivor advocates at the Shelter and with local law enforcement agencies.



Ohio Health Mansfield Hospital President Jean Halpin (left) and Richland County Children Services Executive Director Patty Harrelson watch as Forensic Nurse Coordinator Tammy Robertson officially cuts the ribbon to open the hospital's Forensics Department expansion.

## RCCS: Who we are

### 2016 Board members

Renee Bessick, board chair  
James Kulig, vice chair  
Pamela Siegenthaler, secretary  
Robert Kirkendall, treasurer  
Lynn Friebe  
Stacy Jackson-Johnson  
Michelle Kowalski, Ph.D.  
David Leitenberger/Richard Grega, Esq.  
Jason Murray, Esq.



### 2016 leadership team

Patricia Harrelson, executive director  
Nikki Harless, assistant director  
Marsha Coleman, clinical director  
Kevin Goshe, director of finance  
Tim Harless, community outreach/programming director  
Edith Gilliland, legal services manager  
Chris Zuercher, human resources manager  
Amy Gosser, executive assistant

## New member joins board in 2016; former member returns



Deanna West-Torrence



Richard Grega, Esq.

Richard Grega joined the Richland County Children Services Board in September of 2016, replacing David Leitenberger. Former member Deanna West-Torrence rejoined the board in January 2017, replacing Robert Kirkendall.

Jason Murray was elected board treasurer for 2017. Other board officers remain the same, including Renee Bessick, chair; James Kulig, vice chair; and Pam Siegenthaler, secretary.

Other 2017 board members are Lynn Friebe, Stacy Jackson-Johnson and Michelle Kowalski. Board members are appointed by Richland County Board of Commissioners.

# Placement expenses keep rising

Costs associated with the placement of children continue to rise for the agency.

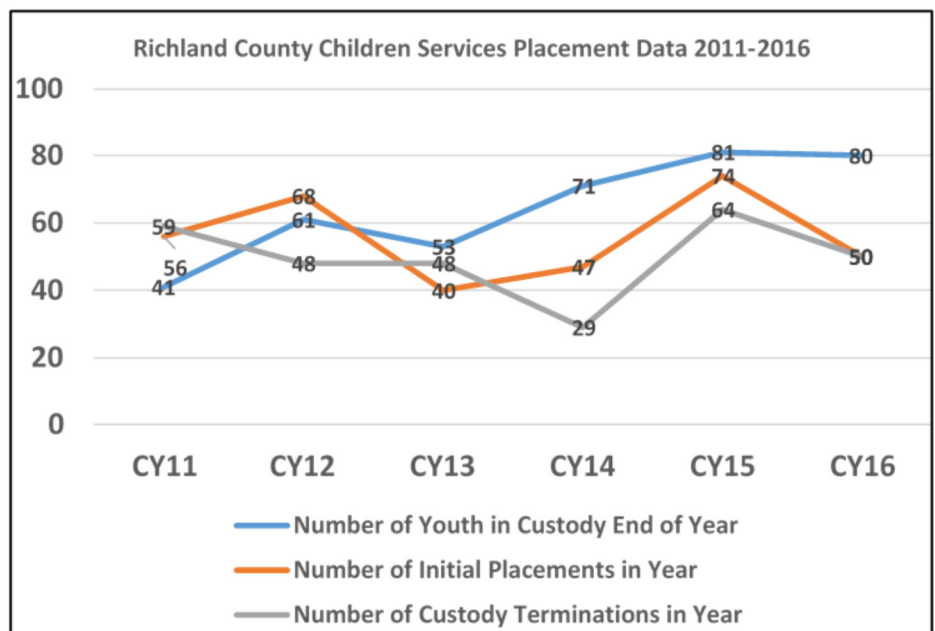
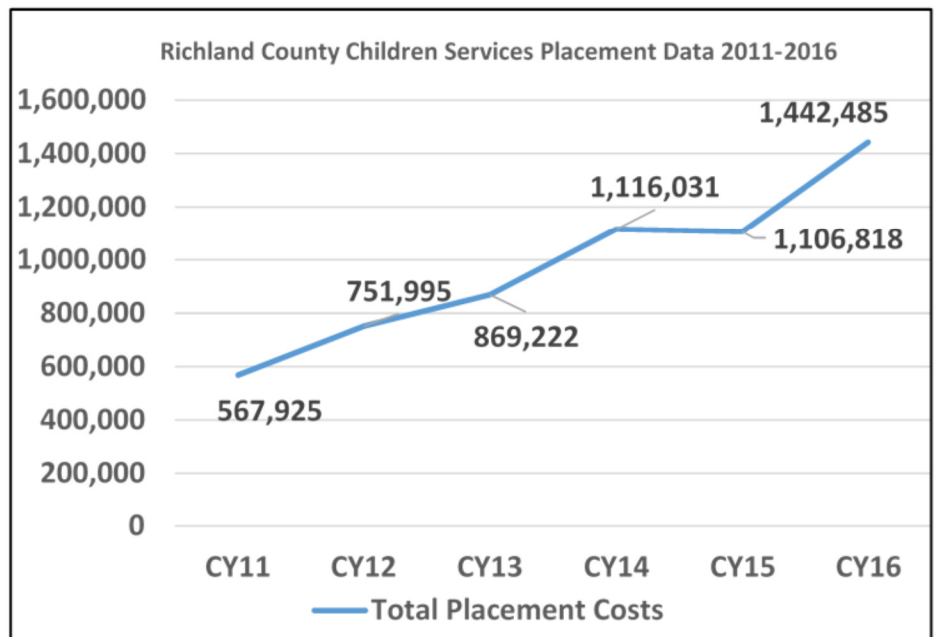
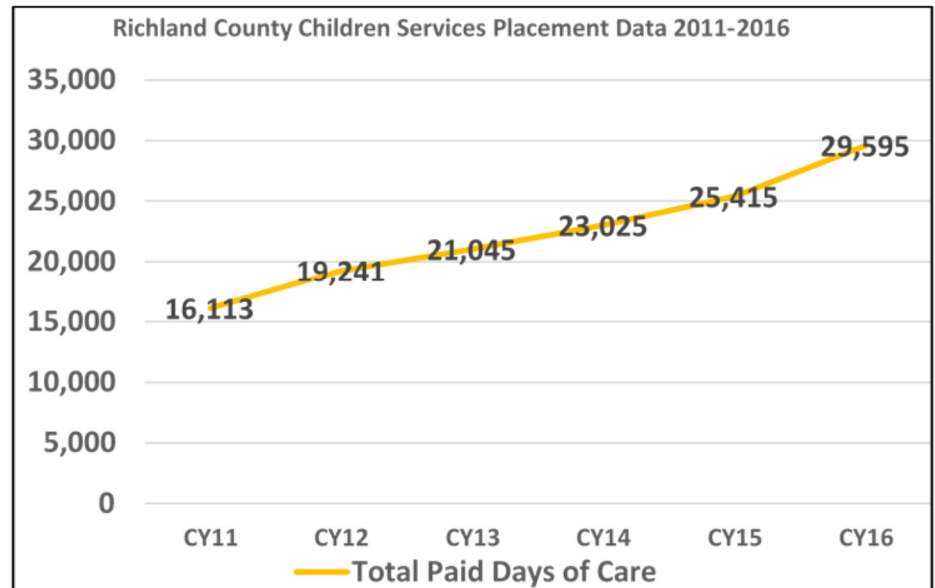
It mirrors a national trend that is in part due to an increased use of heroin and other drugs by parents.

At right, the top chart shows the increase in the number of paid days of care for local children from 2011 through 2016. Total paid days have increased by 59 percent in the past five years, to 29,595 in 2016 compared to 16,113 in 2011. This is in part due to the larger number of sibling groups being brought into care.

The chart in the middle shows the increase in total placement costs during the same period. Total costs have risen to \$1.4 million in 2016 compared to \$567,925 in 2011, an increase of 154 percent. This is primarily due to the rising costs associated with foster care agencies and residential treatment facilities.

The bottom chart shows various aspects of child placement. The number of children at the end of each calendar year almost doubled over the last five years, to 80 at the end of 2016, compared to 41 in 2011. This is in part due to the increased number of sibling groups being brought into care, coupled with the long turnaround time for case resolutions.

Although the number of initial placements and the number of custody terminations both vary from year to year, both experienced a significant decrease in 2016, down from record highs in 2015. More children have been taken in by family members and kin, which has reduced the need for placement within the foster care system and/or termination of custody.





# From the Director's Desk

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smoking, 46<sup>th</sup> in air pollution, 37<sup>th</sup> for children living in poverty, 38<sup>th</sup> for premature deaths, 36<sup>th</sup> for frequent mental distress, 43<sup>rd</sup> for preventable hospitalizations and 45<sup>th</sup> for public health funding. These numbers are staggering in what they mean for the health of our citizens and especially our children.

Despite these statewide problems, the governor's proposed budget this spring includes no increase for additional funding for child welfare. State funding for child welfare in Richland County has declined almost 34 percent in the last six years alone.

The same state budget offers no real additional funds for adult mental health and substance abuse treatment. The governor's proposed Medicaid expansion, which may become more difficult as national leaders debate repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, will not help many parents whose drug addictions destroy their ability to regain parental rights in the time allowed by law. Still, we hope for their continued ability to be eligible for treatment, and hopefully still regain a part of their lives.

Even if the state doubled its planned child welfare funding, Ohio would remain last among all states in terms of its support for children services.

According to the Akron Beacon Journal, just nine other states share the model used by Ohio to deliver care to vulnerable children through county controlled agencies. All of these other states send substantially more money to their local agencies to do the job.

In Ohio, the state share is just 5 percent with local and federal funds picking up the rest. The national average for the state's share? It's 40 percent.

I am thankful to our agency's nine-member all-volunteer board for their knowledge and perspective. They are appointed by the Richland County Board of Commissioners. I am also grateful for other key stakeholders including the Commissioners, Juvenile Court Judge Ron Spon, Domestic Relations Court Judge Heather Cockley, JFS Director Sharlene Neumann, Sheriff Steve Sheldon, Chief Ken Coontz Youth and Family Council Director Teresa Alt. I am especially grateful to Jean Halpin, CEO and President of Ohio Health for the collaboration on the forensic interview center and Mental Health Board Director Joe Trolan for the vision to build Transitional Youth Housing to serve 8 young adults at one time here in this community.

We also continue to work in partnerships with other local government entities, agencies and businesses. We welcome Prosecutor Gary Bishop to his new role in our community as well.

Our financial impact on the Richland County community is also significant. While we are paid using taxpayer dollars, it is easy to forget that these same government employees also spend money.

Our employees earned about \$6.3 million dollars last year and spent many of those dollars locally. We also paid about \$2 million dollars to foster and adoptive families and spent \$487,695 on purchased goods and services. Much of it locally.

Despite the funding challenges, RCCS continues to find ways to protect local children and assist local families.

During 2016, the agency continued to recruit and utilize former client parents via the Helping Ohio Parent Effectively (HOPE) program. These parents, who have successfully completed case plans with the agency, are trained to assist current families as support in Family Team Meetings.

Agency caseworkers conducted 2,054 assessments of alleged abuse, neglect and/or dependency during 2016, an average of more than five new cases each day. These intakes came from every zip code in Richland County.

At the end of 2016, RCCS was involved with 366 open and ongoing cases involving 786 local families. It also finalized nine adoptions during the year and ended 2016 with 19 children in the agency's permanent custody.

The agency has two caseworkers assigned as Kinship Navigators, assisting local families caring for relatives. These services were initially paid for via a federal grant, but the agency's board opted to continue this valuable program when the grant expired. On average, the agency works formally with more than 100 Kinship cases, totaling more than 180 local children. In addition, the agency works informally with more than 240 additional local families.

There are no easy answers when it comes to child welfare, and no one quick fix to solve these issues once and for all. While child abuse and neglect will, unfortunately, never go away completely, Richland County Children Services continues to strive toward that goal, one family at a time. Thank you all for your continued support.





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