

From the Director's Desk

Nikki Harless



2019 was a year of many changes, both within our Agency and throughout our community. One thing that has remained constant, however, is our commitment to serve others with grace and humility.

Child welfare is an incredibly difficult profession. It is often a thankless job with long hours and traumatic experiences. We are lucky that we have a staff who is able to persevere through adversity and who strive every day to make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve. As an Agency, however, we have discovered that we must do more to help our workers thrive. Moving forward in 2020, we have developed new committees focused on the recruitment and retention of staff and foster parents. We are testing new techniques for recognizing hard work, and we have adjusted our compensation structure to make our Agency a more competitive employer within the community. We brought back a tuition reimbursement program to encourage higher education among our employees, and we have created a flexible work schedule to help line staff maintain a better work/life balance. While this job is not for everyone, it can be rewarding for anyone who is willing to take on the challenge.

Our foster parents are also a vital part of our commitment toward serving others within the community. Keeping children nearby in familiar surroundings can often help these kids to thrive in spite of their circumstances. We are so thankful whenever individuals choose to open their heart and their home to a child in need. However, we are constantly in need of more people willing to fill this important role.

If anyone is interested in serving our community, either as a caseworker or a foster parent, please give us a call at (419) 774-4100.

Kinship Team Offers Help and Hope



The Kinship Team received funding from Ohio's Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI) Program for 2019/2020 and PRC (Prevention, Retention and Contingency) Program from Richland County Job and Family Services for kinship caregivers who have youth placed in their homes.

The agency's three kinship navigators work with families to locate and obtain community services for which they are eligible. The resources may include Medicaid coverage, food stamps, child care subsidies, Ohio Works First, and utilities assistance. The kinship program may also be able to assist with Power of Attorney, legal custody, legal guardianship, Caregivers Authorization Affidavit and other general legal questions. In 2019, the kinship team assisted 207 caregivers and 334 children.

Recruitment, Support and Retention a Top Priority

Richland County Children Services is committed to attracting and retaining frontline heroes - child welfare case workers. In 2019 the Agency increased starting wages for these critical positions. In addition, we instituted 4-day work weeks to promote a healthy work-life balance and have incorporated a tuition reimbursement program for ongoing professional development.

Through these initiatives, we are training and developing a team of professionals committed to the welfare of our families and community. In 2019, RCCS hired 12 diverse caseworkers to protect and advocate for children and families. In addition, RCCS filled four positions that support our mission in other ways, including paralegals and Family Support Specialists. Our team exemplifies a "go the extra mile" spirit, and we couldn't be prouder of their achievements!



RCCS Community Supports & Funding

Richland County Children Services facilitated the disbursement of over \$2.2 million in 2019 for various programs to help support our clients, foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship families in caring for the children in their homes. Three of these programs (Court Liaison, PRC, and Kinship Daycare) were funded through contracts with the local Job & Family Services agency (for a total amount of \$780,068). An outline of our local community support programs and their associated expenditures is below:

- * KPI (Kinship Permanency Incentive) - **\$295,950** - Paid directly from the State to kin families to help with the costs associated with the child(ren) living with them
- * PRC (Prevention, Retention & Contingency) - **\$197,198** - Paid to kin families to help with the costs associated with the child(ren) living with them
- * Court Liaison - **\$577,000** - Paid for casework services to families of children involved with Richland County Juvenile Court
- * ESAA (Emergency Services Assistance Allocation) - **\$114,424** - Paid to families for things such as rent, utilities and furniture in an effort to keep children in their own homes or return them to their homes
- * Kinship Care - **\$45,068** - Paid to kin families for things such as rent, utilities and furniture in an effort to help them care for the child(ren) in their home
- * Foster Parent Training - **\$31,310** - Stipends paid to foster/adoptive parents or prospective foster/adoptive parents for attending training
- * Adoption Subsidies - **\$897,152** - Paid to parents who adopted children in Agency custody
- * In addition, the Agency paid **\$5,870** in childcare payments for children placed with kin and **\$84,618** in childcare payments for children placed with foster parents who work outside the home.

2019 Board Members



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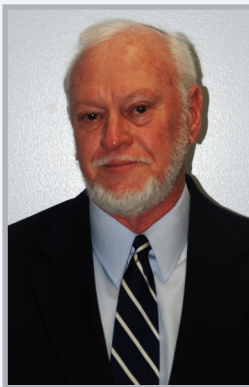


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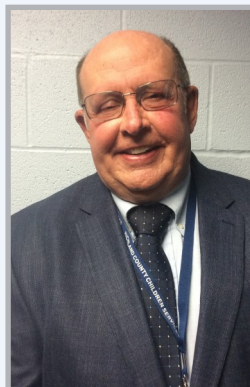
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2019 Leadership Team

Nikki Harless, MSW LISW-S, Interim Director

Marsha Coleman, MSW LISW-S, Clinical Director

Kevin Goshe, MBA, Director of Finance

Nicole Foulks, MSW LSW, Program Manager

Tim Harless, MSW, Community Outreach/Programming Director

Edith Gilliland, JD, Legal Services Manager

Chris Zuercher, JD, Human Resource Manager

Amy Hackedorn, MBA, Executive Assistant

Richland County Children Services

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Our Kids, Our Future 2019 Annual Report



Children Services in 2019

Provided services to 1,954 alleged child victims. On average, 140 cases were worked every month by 46 caseworkers.

Screening/Assessment Investigations

Calls into the Agency Screening department: 7,117. Of those, 261 calls were information and referrals. Conducted 1,260 screened-in intakes. Of those, there were:

- 415 Neglect
- 268 Physical abuse
- 118 Sexual
- 54 Emotional maltreatment
- 110 Dependency
- 295 FINS

Forensic Center Interviews

Conducted 42 interviews at Ohio Health Forensic Center in 2019 for sexual and physical abuse.

Protective Ongoing Services

Average ongoing case per month 332.

Number of children receiving ongoing services per month: 665.

Agency Visitation Center

Supervised visits at the agency: 1,966
Transports: 804

Kinship Care

Children in kinship care per month: 223
Kinship cases per month: 118

Foster Care/Institutional Care

Children in Agency custody: 90
Total days in care: 33,167
Total placement costs (residential, institutions, and foster care): \$1,847,932
At the end of 2019, the Agency had 60 licensed foster homes.

Adoption Services

Number of children placed in adoptive homes: 42

Number of adoptions finalized: 21

FTM's/TDM's

Held 392 Team Decision-Making meetings and 1,355 Family Team meetings in 2019.

Independent Living Support

Agency prepared 58 children for emancipation from foster care, with 9 aging out of care.

A PARTNER IN THE COMMUNITY

Richland County Children Services actively participates in a myriad of community events that support children each year. We believe it's a great way to give back to the residents of Richland County. But we couldn't do this work all by ourselves. We have so many community partners (Job & Family Services, NECIC, local law enforcement, the Prosecutor's office, the court system, various mental health agencies, Richland Public Health, Richland Newhope, and numerous private companies and religious organizations) who all help us in assisting others in various ways. We are honored and humbled to serve alongside of these entities for the betterment of our community.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS



Coca-Cola provides Christmas gifts for kinship families



Wear Blue Day Support from Richland Public Health



RCCS Billboard/Calendar Contest Winners

Our Mission

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

Family Support Specialist Team Provides Visitation and Safe Reunification

Family Support Specialist (FSS) staff supervise parenting time between parents and their children and provide transportation for children to and from visits, appointments, school and other functions as required. FSS staff work in homes with families and assist them during visits by teaching, coaching and supporting positive parenting knowledge and skills. FSS staff also assist kinship families in these activities or with other needs.

During 2019 FSS staff completed 1,966 supervised visits with parents and children. FSS staff work in partnership with parents by assessing and documenting parents' timeliness, consistency of visits, personal appearance, behaviors, communications skills, physical space and relationship needs regarding their children, conflict exploration resolution skills, and understanding of their child's developmental stages in order to help parents achieve successful visits with their children.



Ohio START Team Helps Families Impacted by Addiction



Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma) is an evidence-informed children services-led intervention model that helps public children services agencies (PCSAs) bring together caseworkers, behavioral health providers, and family peer mentors into teams dedicated to helping families struggling with co-occurring child maltreatment and substance use disorder. This model contains procedures for identifying families with potential substance use disorders during the Child Protective Services (CPS) intake/referral triage and during the investigation or assessment phase of the CPS response to allegations of child abuse/neglect. This strategy also includes improving the knowledge base and expertise of child welfare staff in understanding, identifying, and responding to parental substance use. Ohio START counties added screening for trauma and training in trauma assessment as important for identifying the service needs of families.

RCCS has partnered with Family Life Counseling to provide peer mentoring for parents struggling with addiction. In 2019, the team assisted a total of 9 families, including 10 parents and 19 children.

A LONG ROAD TO PERMANENCY

“Our family bond is stronger than we could have imagined”

In 2019, young siblings Gabe and Bella were adopted after about 4 years in the foster care system. Through their caseworker's hard work, Richland County Children Services was able to find a family willing to give these two the loving and permanent home that they deserve.

During their four years in foster care, a lot of people expected that Gabe and Bella might never be adopted. An unfortunate truth in foster care is that the chances of adoption decrease exponentially as children get older. The odds were also high that even if they were to be adopted, likely the siblings would be split up into two separate adoptive homes and potentially lose contact with one another. The children came into the foster care system as a result of parental drug use, neglect of their basic needs and then finally dependency due to lack of resources to care for them. All of this led to two kids with an understandable lack of trust in most adults due to the traumatic nature of their childhood up until that point. Luckily, however, the Agency connected Gabe and Bella with potential parents Nick and Greg.

With their realistic perspective about what they could expect and what the kids needed, Nick and Greg took on a task that so many others were unable to achieve: establishing permanency for this brother and sister. Now, a year later they are in a permanent home with parents who love them. Because of the efforts of their caseworker and the great attitudes of these adoptive parents, the kids not only gained a permanent family but also retained their sibling relationship.

Greg and Nick sum up their experience this way: “The kids are pretty steady on honor roll, and they love participating in church. No one has a clue that this journey is just a year and a half old. Some people are bold enough to ask which of us is the father and when we tell them it always ends in a shock. When we said we have a great extended family to support us it was understated.

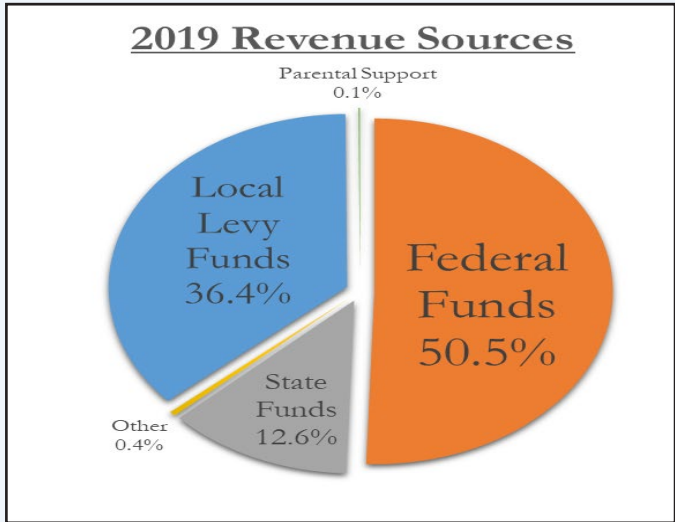


Gabe and Bella have had week long camping trips with their grandparents, gone kayaking, had sleepovers with cousins, went on shopping trips with Aunt Amy, and participated in every holiday/birthday celebration gathered together as one big family. I know from your end you see what we have accomplished with the kids, but I don't think you know what the kids have accomplished for us. Our family bond is stronger than we could have imagined. The four of us were meant to be together and they bring out the best in us all. It's not always sunshine and roses, but as a family we make it through every storm no matter how big or small.”



From Left to Right: Greg, Bella, Gabe and Nick

2019 Revenues and Expenses



Revenue Sources (unaudited)

Federal Funds - \$5,070,225

State Funds - \$1,260,355

Local Levy Funds - \$3,646,362

Parental Support - \$10,873

Other - \$42,433

Total - \$10,030,248



Expense Categories (unaudited)

Personnel - \$6,770,812

Placement Services - \$2,470,675

Adoption Services - \$230,321

Purchased Services - \$267,385

Operations / Overhead - \$379,844

Maintenance & Equipment - \$566,200

Total - \$10,685,237