

Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services

2019 Overview



Together We Thrive

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Introduction

In 2019 the leadership and employees of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) focused on our mission to transform lives at every age and stage through collaboration, innovation, and service; connecting people with the opportunity to live their best lives. HHS serves the most vulnerable county residents who may be in crisis and in need of multiple immediate services to meet basic needs. From babies to older adults, HHS services and programs are adapting to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. This report highlights some of our efforts to address the immediate needs of individuals and families, provide stability, and improve their opportunity for long-term success.



Children

30 Days to Family

When a child or teen must be removed from their home due to abuse or neglect, the Division of Children and Family Services tries to find suitable relatives who can take care of them before placing the child in foster care. In some cases, this means performing exhaustive family searches which can be a significant challenge for Child Protection Specialists with heavy workloads. That's when partnership delivers benefits for both children and DCFS workers. DCFS has a special 30 Days to Family team dedicated to diligently searching for a child's relatives and kin and helping the primary Child Protection Specialist identify potential placement options and supports. With guidance from Kinnect (formerly the Waiting Child Fund), the team searches for parents, grandparents, and siblings with the goal of finding up to 80 maternal and paternal relatives. They look for relatives who will keep siblings together, maintain children in their school of origin, and preserve the child's important relationships with friends and supportive adults. It's the team's philosophy that all families include members who are willing and able to care for children. They also know that youth who live with relatives while in foster care have better long-term outcomes. 30 Days to Family® Specialists are relentless in their search for relatives of children in care. Kinnect originally brought the program to Ohio with funding from the Ohio Attorney General and is now funded by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Because of the success in Cuyahoga County this program is being replicated by agencies across the country.



Success Story:

In November 2019, 6-year-old Leo found himself entering foster care. His dad had just been arraigned on federal charges, and his mom was unable to provide consistent care for him. Leo is autistic, is not verbal, and has sleeping and behavior difficulties. After dad was arraigned and headed towards prison, the 30 Days to Family® Specialist was able to engage with the dad and found out that he has other children. Dad has a 16-year-old daughter, Elle, that lives with her mother. The 30 Days to Family® Specialist quickly reached out to the mother of the 16 year old. The family was not able to take placement, but suggested calling dad's other daughter, Andi. Andi is 21 years old and lives with her mother and stepfather. Andi is also autistic and faces similar challenges as Leo. Fortunately, Andi's mom and stepdad were open to accepting Leo for placement. Leo has no relation to the caregivers, but is a half sibling to Andi. These parents understood the importance of sibling relationships and are already familiar with caring for children with autism. After talking with the parents, the Specialist found that they had been interested in becoming foster parents but never got around to signing up for the classes. Leo was placed in their home and enrolled in a special school program. His behaviors are improving with a structured routine as well as his sleeping patterns. The parents often invite the 16-year-old half sibling over for visits with her siblings. Leo's kinship placement is looking forward to the possibility of adoption if reunification does not occur.

Foster Parents and Kin - Caring for Children in County Custody

Year	Children in Custody	Children in Kinship Care	% Children in Kinship Care
2015	1,751	437	25%
2016	1,883	529	28%
2017	2,128	663	31%
2018	2,606	905	35%
2019	3,001	1201	40%

Across the nation and the state of Ohio, more children are coming into the care of child welfare agencies. Cuyahoga County now has the highest number of children in custody in the past decade with nearly 3000 children and teens in our care. Fortunately, nearly one third of young people in DCFS custody are placed with kin – relatives or close relations who already know the child.

Kinship care has many positive benefits for children and teens. They are more likely to be stable, connected to family relations and culture, have fewer emotional and behavioral difficulties, and achieve family permanency through reunification or adoption faster. These all lead to better long-term outcomes compared to youth who age out of foster care.

"What they're doing is not only a gift, but it is critical to the success of our young people," says Joe Jackson, Senior Manager, Division of Children and Family Services. "You literally are a critical component in creating a healthier adult, and therefore, a healthier community." Jackson says.

"When a child walks in my home and they're crying I cry with them, and I tell them I am so sorry that you're here, but things are going to

get better," says Marilyn Steele. Steele has been a foster, adoptive and kinship caregiver. "A caregiver is someone who's concerned about the stability of a person, who's concerned about the care of a person. You want to help that person to advance in life," says Steele. "I enjoy fostering children ... I enjoy seeing the growth mentally and physically with these kids."

For children who cannot be placed with kin the need for foster parents has never been greater. We ask foster parents to provide a safe, loving home for children and even help mentor birth parents on their caregiving skills as we work toward safe reunification.

For potential foster parents there are mandatory training and licensing requirements. DCFS also provides free training and support for kinship caregivers.

For more information on becoming a foster parent or kinship caregiver visit everychildneedsfamily.com or call our foster and adoption recruitment line at **216-881-5775**.

Finding Forever Families for Children is Worth the Wait

Hundreds of children come through our doors each year in search of a forever family. For heart-wrenching reasons, their own families are unwilling or unable to care for them, so we step in to help. We are fortunate to have incredible adoptive families who open their hearts to make many of these children their own. But sometimes, we are faced with a challenging case that lingers for years.

In 2019, we celebrated the adoption of 131 children in Cuyahoga County. Of those, 32 children were in our custody for five years or longer. The Johnson-Myers family is one example of a success story for one of our longer-staying sibling groups. The two brothers and their sister had been waiting for a forever family for eight years, when Lisa Johnson and Greg Myers reached out to us from New York. The Johnson-Myers' had grown children and an empty nest, which left them yearning for the bustle of a home busy with children. They connected with us and welcomed this trio of long-awaited siblings into their loving family.

Outcomes like this give us renewed hope for all the children in our custody. We will never stop reaching out to find forever families for every one of our children in permanent care, whether a new-found or long-staying member of our family.



Deanna and her brothers, Dequarius "DQ," and Shermon, were adopted in 2019 by the Johnson-Myers family from Warsaw, New York. After spending over eight years in County care, these youth now have two loving parents and five new siblings. The community came out in force for their adoption ceremony, with nearly 200 people in attendance, including football teams, teachers and coaches. When asked what she'd like people to know about adoption, Deanna says, "Everyone needs a forever family, no matter how old they are."

External Evaluation Demonstrates Strong Benefits for "UPK Kids"

Children entering kindergarten need a variety of early academic, and social and emotional skills to be ready to learn and keep pace with their peers. These skills are also the foundation for much of what follows in school, career and life. While supporting these foundational skills in all children is important, Invest in Children works to reduce the barriers that limit access to enhanced support for lower income families and minority children. Affordable access to a neighborhood-based, high-quality and family-centered preschool is a great place to start.

In 2019, Invest in Children's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) preschool program celebrated its 12th year. Many different factors make a preschool site a high-quality site that meets the UPK Program's higher gold standard. Attributes that are noticed by parents include, lower teacher to child classroom ratios, teachers with higher education and continuing professional development, and programs that excel in engaging the whole family.

A recent evaluation of children attending kindergarten in urban and inner-ring public school districts in Cuyahoga County documented the benefits of attending a high-quality UPK program compared to high quality, non-UPK preschool. A couple of key highlights include:

- **Sixty-six percent of children who attended at least 18 months of UPK were 'On-track' for Language and Literacy at kindergarten entry, compared to 47% of similar children in a high quality, non-UPK site.**
- **Children who attended 18 months of UPK scored higher on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee than similar children in high quality, non-UPK sites.**
- **Overall, boys tended to have lower scores on the Social Foundations subscale than girls. However, the gender gap was 7.2 points smaller among children in UPK compared to children in high quality, non-UPK settings.**

The full report by Case Western Reserve University's Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development [can be read here](#).

As we celebrate these results, we are also preparing for the future and working to make sure that the UPK program evolves and is always embracing the latest evidenced-based practices for engaging families and delivering results for kids. Our equity-focused work of preparing young children for success is as important as ever and remains our top priority.





Teens and Young Adults

Building Systems of Support for Teens Leaving Foster Care

The Division of Children and Family Services tries to find a forever family for each child. However, when that's not possible the agency is sensitive to the needs of teenagers preparing to become adults and the additional support and guidance they need. The DCFS Emancipation Services unit offers resources and support to help teens aging out of foster care, helping them navigate college visits and applications, finding work, housing, schools, and more.

For teens who do not have a housing plan, staff work with various local landlords including the CMHA to fast track housing applications.

Teens who want to continue their education in college or trade school can get financial support if they are enrolled in school full-time. DCFS also has partnerships with many local colleges and universities along with lists of scholarship opportunities.

Community partners also pitch in to help, such as members of Purple Umbrella. These businesses have a purple umbrella sticker in their window to let former foster youth know they are a place that understands their needs and wants to help.

Finally, teens do not have to go it alone. Future Advocates and Leaders (FALyc) is a group for young adults and teens who have or are transitioning from care. They can socialize with other youth who understand their experiences, learn about resources, services and supports in the community, and build their voices to speak out for change.





Profile: Mario

Mario achieves his goals with hard work and the support of his foster family and social workers.

Despite aging out of foster care Mario is a success story, a responsible young adult who successfully reached his goals of finishing school and attending college. Mario graduated from John Hay High School on May 18, 2019 with honors as the Valedictorian of his class. He also attended Cuyahoga Community College and graduated on May 16, 2019 with an Associate Degree in Science with honors (Magna Cum Laude). All while working at a local library. Mario's goal is to be an Architect. He was accepted to Kent State University and began classes this fall.

In addition to his own resilience and determination, Mario's success was aided by supportive foster parents and dedicated Child Protection Specialists at the Division of Children and Family Services. DCFS employees helped Mario visit campus, apply for college, scholarships and grants to cover his tuition, room and board. "My social worker helped me with everything. Making sure all the funds were getting in, making sure I didn't have to take out any loans, everything I needed," Mario said. "It was very supportive in guiding me towards the pros and cons of doing certain things."

When school is not in session Mario plans to return to his previous foster home with his brothers. His foster family has been a great support to him and is committed to be his permanent connection.

PEEKE Youth Internships

The Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County supports youth employment programs for teenagers through Youth Opportunities Unlimited's (Y.O.U.) PEEKE Internship program. PEEKE (**P**artnerships, **E**xploration, **E**xperience, **K**nowledge, **E**xcellence) allows students to explore career fields and gain practical work experience, while helping businesses meet their needs.

The program accepts 30 Cuyahoga County high school juniors per school year who maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher. Students are matched with a Y.O.U. employer in their career field of choice, who agrees to mentor the student for the summer and teach him or her about their career.

Once accepted and matched, students attend a series of professional skills-training sessions to help them prepare for their new job. Then they complete a 180-hour summer internship, which allows them to explore a career path that may be of interest.

PEEKE program participants round out their experience by completing additional professional training during the fall semester of their senior year. Students who complete the program in December may be eligible for an OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal, a formal designation which signifies to Northeast Ohio employers the student is prepared to work.

One recent success story is Connor Murphy of North Olmsted. Connor, who loves working on cars, tried to get a job at Bob Gillingham Ford, but they couldn't hire him because of his age and budget restrictions. However the PEEK program was able to place Connor with the dealership, paid his wages, and provided him with intensive work readiness training. "The internship gave me a head start and a foot in the door," said Connor.

Since starting his internship at the dealership, Connor has really soared. "He's a smart kid who picks up quick," says Dino Miceli, Connor's mentor and a Ford Senior Master Technician of 25 years, a position Connor covets. Bob Gillingham Ford loved him so much they hired Connor when his internship ended. Connor now works there three days a week after school and they have enrolled him in Ford's prestigious Asset program. Upon high school graduation, Connor will enter a Ford curriculum training program at Cuyahoga Community College, where he'll earn a degree in applied automotive technology in just three years.

Through this internship Connor has found a career he loves and looks forward to pursuing. "It's nice to be able to come to work and do what you love." said Connor.

To learn more about the PEEKE program, corporate or community partners may contact Y.O.U. Employment Specialist at Janet Mack at (216) 704-7350 or jmack@youthopportunities.org. Interested parents or youth may contact Y.O.U. Internship Specialist Valerie Slovenec at (216) 536-4940 or vslovenec@youthopportunities.org.



Creating Lasting Communities for Young Adults Impacted by Foster Care

Young adults who age out of foster care do not have to go it alone thanks to The Division of Children and Family Services and Community of Hope's group mentoring program. The program launched in 2014 and in 2016 Cuyahoga County's initial investment helped spread the program county-wide to 60 youth.

Community of Hope connects youth who have emancipated from foster care with 5-6 caring adults for at least one year. The groups meet one a week and help young people with everything from looking for work and managing money, to relationship and parenting advice. Mentors get special trauma-informed training so they can meet the unique needs of young people who experienced removal from their families and living in foster care. They start as mentors but become like family.

In 2019 DCFS extended its funding with an additional \$150,000 to help recruitment, train, and management more mentoring groups through the end of 2020.

176

New mentors recruited

17

New groups Launched

16,868

Volunteer hours



"Our continued public-private partnership with Cuyahoga County is a powerful message that we, as a community value every child and believe that no young person needs to enter adulthood on their own," said Amber Donovan, Executive Director of Community of Hope. "As we strive to continue to create long-lasting communities for youth, we are seeing the power of relationships to help young people move forward in their lives."



Adults

START Helps Parents with Addiction Find the Road to Recovery

Amanda struggled with substance abuse for years. It started with drinking as a teen then evolved to drugs. The problem persisted as an adult, but she was never able to get clean, even after having six children. When she gave birth to her seventh baby he tested positive for cocaine and heroin.

"I was still using, and I had a moment when I was just clashing with the social worker and the supervisor. We were in a staffing and Ms. Evans pulled me to the side and said, 'What is it going to take? When are you going to be ready?'"

When the Division of Children and Family Services got involved Amanda's six older children were able to remain with her husband. The newborn was moved into a foster care placement, while Amanda got treatment for her addiction. But this attempt at getting clean was different thanks to a more than 20-year-old program at DCFS called START – Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams – including the support of her family advocate.

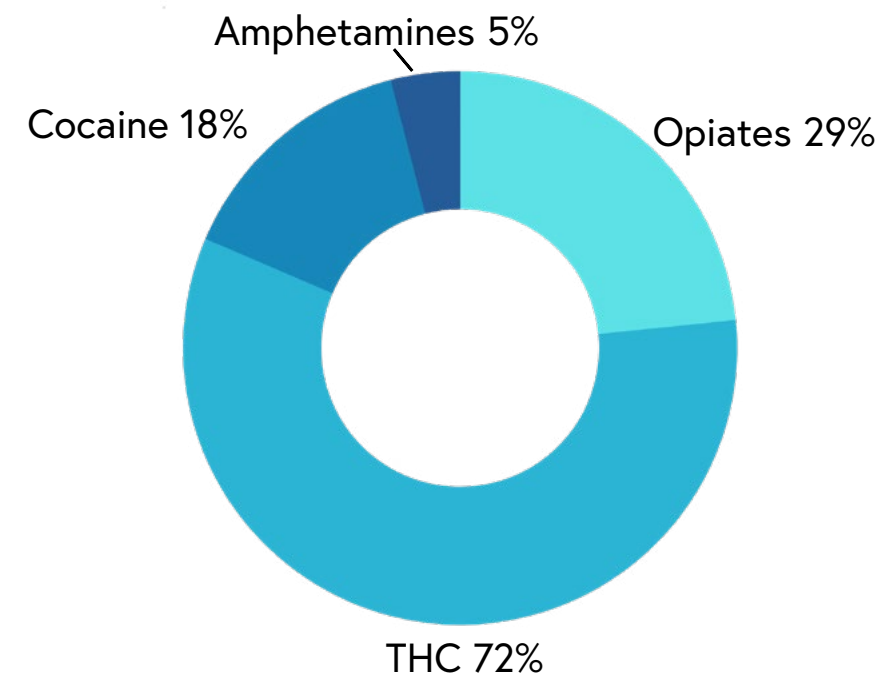
The START program receives referrals from hospitals when a pregnant mom tests positive for drugs, or when a new mom and/or baby tests positive at delivery. The START team pairs a Child Protection Specialist with a Family Advocate. While the CPS focuses on the safety of the child, the advocate helps the mother with addiction treatment resources and mentors her through the addiction recovery process.

"She was there to help, she never discounted me, she let me know that it was possible," said Amanda of her advocate Vivette Evans. "She told me just start here, this is where we need to start and I mean, I don't know, something changed and gave me the strength to just start and make a change ... I truly owe my beginning to her, my sobriety she was a big part of that."

Since 1997 approximately **over 8,600** parents have been served by the program. In recent years the team has been in high demand due to the opiate epidemic. Amanda says START changed her life and made life better for her children.

"This is the first time in my life that I'm okay with me, I'm being the best mother I can be. I am there for my kids in the morning, I'm there when they get home from school," said Amanda. "My kids have stability, they have their mother who is present and always there. I see the change in my kids, I see the happiness, I see that they're happy to say goodnight mommy I love you and I'm tucking them in ... I can actually hold my head high today and it all starts with being clean."

Number of Cases in 2019: 594



2019 CJFS Eligibility Contact Center

In 2019, improvements on the Eligibility Contact Center allowed customers applying for benefits to reach Cuyahoga Job and Family Services in new ways. In 2019, more than 26 percent of those who called the statewide benefits hotline at **1-844-640-OHIO** lived in Cuyahoga County. When customers call the state shared services platform and enter a Cuyahoga County zip code, they are routed to Cuyahoga Job and Family Services Eligibility Contact Center where local staff can assist them with applying for benefits through the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, Medicaid, and other cash assistance programs. Our Eligibility Contact Center answered 573,746 calls in 2019, an average of about 2,294 calls per day.*

In 2019, CJFS began sending voice and text notifications to customers about the status of their benefits. CJFS sent a total of 266,777 text and voice message alerts to customers about the status of their case in 2019. These notifications include:

- Notifications that SNAP benefits have been approved
- Alerts when an application is pending awaiting verifications
- Notifications that documents have been received and processed
- Notifications regarding Medicaid renewals and discontinuances.

*Average daily calls statistic is based on the 250 days the contact center was open in 2019. The center is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday – Friday and closed on major holidays.

2019 by the numbers



573,746
Calls answered



266,777
Text and voice messages sent

2019 Child Care Licensing Unit

In 2019, the Cuyahoga County Child Care Licensing Unit increased their outreach to help local child care providers meet new federal guidelines in 2020. On July 1, 2020, all home-based child care programs that want to continue to receive public funding will be required to participate in Step Up to Quality, Ohio's quality rating system for child care programs.

During the past year, the staff in the Cuyahoga County Child Care Licensing Unit has been working hard to increase local participation the rating system. Thanks to their efforts, in 2019, Cuyahoga County led all other counties in the state in participation with Step Up to Quality. Approximately 80 percent of all child care providers in Cuyahoga County included in Ohio's Step Up To Quality rating system. The unit hopes to build on that success in 2020.

"We're very proud of our staff and our providers," said Child Care Licensing Unit Manager Robyn Gibson. "Our goal is to have 90 to 95 percent of providers rated by July 1, 2020 considering a small percentage of providers plan to no longer provide care."

The Cuyahoga County Child Care Licensing Unit works with type A and B home care providers who provide care for up to 6 children (Type B) or up to 12 children with additional staff (Type A) in their home. To help streamline the process of becoming a home care provider, the Child Care Licensing Unit began offering an optional orientation and support sessions in 2019. The first orientation included 75 participants and included information about starting a home child care business, the rules and regulations for starting a home care program, and helpful links and information about ongoing support for home care providers.



Breaking Down Barriers to Employment for Residents with a Criminal History

In 2019, the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry continued its community outreach efforts by offering six workshops on Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) and record sealing at North Star Neighborhood Recovery Resource Center. The Legal Aid Society of Greater Cleveland and the Cuyahoga County Public Defender's Office answered legal questions for individuals with criminal records.

Over 650 Ohio laws automatically prohibit individuals from acquiring certain jobs or applying for certain licenses because of their criminal conviction. The CQE is an employment certificate that allows someone to apply for jobs by making state mandatory barriers discretionary for the job applicant and increases their income-earning potential. A CQE-certificate holder can also protect employers from negligent hiring liability lawsuits.

The workshop series also helped the 190 attendees understand the differences between record sealing, record expungement and the CQE. Participants learned about the eligibility requirements and benefits of these employment tools and the possibility of a sealed record being viewable to law enforcement officers or employers working with vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly or people with disabilities. Many people who were not eligible for record

sealing opted to start and complete their CQE application. If they could not afford the filing fee, they were given a poverty affidavit to submit with their application at the Cuyahoga County Clerk of Courts. CQE applications are first approved by The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC), which reviews the application for completeness and determines if the applicant is eligible to apply by satisfying the waiting period and having no outstanding warrants or current pending criminal charges.

For 2020, the Office of Reentry will continue its partnership with the Legal Aid Society and the Public Defender's Office by offering four workshops at North Star and informing community members and social service workers of the benefits of the CQE and record sealing.



2019 Reentry Week

The Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry (OOR) continued its tradition of celebrating Reentry Week by holding a series of events dedicated to bringing awareness to the barriers created by having a criminal conviction and celebrating individuals who have succeeded entrepreneurially or as community activists and leaders. The OOR kicked off the week by holding a Legislative Breakfast at Dominion Energy Foundation. Federal, state, and local legislators attended, as well as representatives from the local media, community organizations, community activists for the rights of Returning Citizens and individuals impacted by past criminal convictions. Cuyahoga County Executive, Armond Budish, welcomed attendees and Councilmen Anthony Hairston and Blaine Griffin discussed the importance of reforming the criminal justice system to create fairer outcomes for Cleveland's city residents. State Senators Sandra Williams and John Barnes shared legislation they helped pass in Columbus, which helped create the Certificate of Qualification for Employment, reform Ohio's record sealing laws for nonpayment of child support and assisted millions of Ohio drivers who could not afford to repay their license reinstatement fees with the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Throughout the rest of the week, the OOR and its community partners held a Reentry Panel, a Fair Housing workshop, a Cash Mob Restaurant Tour, a Small Business workshop, a job hiring fair and an Art and Bail Reform exhibit.



Families

Families Forward program puts lucrative jobs within reach

To extend a helping hand to parents seeking to improve their families' lives, we launched a new program -- Families Forward. This program assists parents who owe child support, by offering free job training, one-on-one support, and placement assistance. Through a partnership with training provider, Towards Employment, participating parents receive soft skills and occupational training, putting them within reach of high-demand jobs.

This year, upwards of 80 parents took the leap towards self-sufficiency. Eighty-seven percent have completed career readiness training and 50% have entered occupational skills training. Fifteen-percent have completed their occupational skills training, secured transferrable certificates in emerging fields and are working in their new career.

Families Forward offers free training in one of four in-demand occupations —information technology, customer service, computer numerically controlled (CNC) machining and commercial truck driving. The program is on track to enroll 150 parents by June 2020.

Made possible through a collaboration with MDRC (*formerly the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation*), the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and county, state and federal child support offices, Families Forward is part of a study on how to improve the lives of parents and children.

Richard Grayson Golden is currently pursuing a Commercial Driving License (CDL) through the Families Forward program. His career path brings back fond childhood memories of a family member who drove a truck for a living. He completed certifications to advance in his current career as a chef, while finishing his CDL training. Richard is taking positive steps to improve his life and that of his 7-year-old son, Jayden.



Paternity Establishment

96.91%

(increase of 0.58% from FFY18)

Support Order Establishment

91.28%

(decrease of 0.74% from FFY18)

Office of Child Support Services

Current Support Collections

63.89%

(increase of 0.53% from FFY18)

Arrears Collections

57.86%

(increase of 0.65% from FFY18)

Child Support Paid on time

\$144,535,376

The Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) has provided family support services for

382,611

participants including parents, caretakers and children during FFY19.

Annually, the child support program touches the lives of

139,247

children in Cuyahoga County.

In the 2019 program year (FFY19), OCSS collected

\$223,249,806

in child support payments.

Reaching fathers with a message that matters

Dads matter. Research shows that children with involved fathers have fewer behavior problems, do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and are less likely to use drugs or alcohol. That's why we're dedicated to engaging dads as successful and supportive co-parents.

Our *Dads Matter 2* campaign seeks to educate families, caseworkers -- and dads themselves -- about the important role dads play in their children's lives. By reaching out to fathers and involving them in their children's growth, we are forging strong family units focused on the needs of our youth.

Our *Fatherhood Initiative* reaches fathers through a 24-hour helpline, a new father boot camp, skill building, job training, premature fatherhood prevention programs and more. In 2019, more than 6,000 fathers committed to making a positive change for themselves and their children by participating in these initiatives.

Photo Caption:
Over 20,000 men participated in our Walk Your Child to School event in September, one of several initiatives designed to strengthen bonds between fathers and families. Fathers, step-fathers, grandfathers and father-figures made the walk and the pledge to instill the value of learning in their children and help them achieve the best possible outcomes in the classroom.



Family Fun Day

Connecting people with the opportunity to live their best lives. That's part of the mission for the Department of Health and Human Services. For the second year in a row DHHS brought its services and partners to Public Square for Family Fun Day. It's a fun way to help county residents, young and old, learn about and get access to the programs and resources they need. In addition to service information, there were games and activities for children, dancing, refreshments, balloon and bubble entertainment, and lots of giveaways including free school supplies.



Over 1000 people attended

Distributed 500 backpacks

Gave out 400 free hotdog lunches

Gave away 100 Mitchell's ice cream coupons

56 organizations on-site with information and giveaways

22 organizations donated school supplies to stuff the backpacks

9 volunteers helped pack the backpacks



Older Adults

Let's Get Social: Helping Our Elders Make Connections

Social isolation is a growing public health crisis among older adults. Recent studies indicate that one in three elders are experiencing loneliness, with half of lower income older adults facing debilitating isolation. We understand that connecting with our seniors is critical to their wellbeing. In 2019, our staff conducted over 34,427 face-to-face visits with older adults in our community, engaging with them while providing skilled care, personal care, transportation, meal delivery and more.

We are also fostering connections through programs that encourage seniors to get out into their neighborhoods and interact. Our Community Social Services Program (CSSP) provided 290,705 hours of activities including events, performances, lectures, outings, exercise and art classes at senior centers throughout the county.

These programs have a real effect. One example is Clay and Linda Leroux, two aspiring bridge players who met at the Rocky River Senior Center. Both widowed in 2016, they decided to take advantage of the social opportunities available at the Center. As they polished their card-playing skills, they developed a unique social connection which blossomed into a romance that today they happily share as newlyweds.

We continue to explore new ways of connecting with older adults. From Matter of Balance training that helps overcome the fear of falling, to our Elves for Elders program, where over 200 at risk seniors received holiday visits with food and gifts, we are creating meaningful connections to ensure our seniors feel safe, supported, and vital.



Social connection isn't just a buzzword – it's a reality for Linda and Clay Leroux, newlyweds who met while taking Bridge lessons at the Rocky River Senior Center. They keep their love - and their minds – bright by participating with fellow center members in the Northeast Ohio Mind Challenge, where their team placed second in 2019.

Innovative food security project extends its reach countywide

We value innovation. It helps us discover and address emerging needs in our community. We designed our Senior Innovation Grant Program to inspire new programs that keep our seniors safe and supported. Since 2016, the program has made an impact on health, wellness and nutrition by providing start-up funding to agencies that present a compelling issue coupled with a practical solution.

Food insecurity is a real issue for many older adults. Our partners at the City of Euclid Senior Center experienced this with seniors who attend their daily lunch program. The program has been providing hot meals and companionship for Euclid seniors for over 40 years. However, with over 20% of them living below the poverty line, the Center's staff learned that many seniors were going hungry over the long holiday weekends while the center was closed.

Euclid approached the County about piloting a Holiday Meal Program to provide a nutritious boxed lunch for seniors to take home on Fridays before long holiday weekends. More than 300 seniors utilized the program in 2019, and overwhelmingly noted that the lunch is a valued resource that has a positive impact on their health.

Due to the success of this pilot, we've expanded the Holiday Meal Program county-wide in 2020. In partnership with senior centers across the county, we seek to provide wholesome meals for thousands of lower income older adults who might otherwise go hungry over long holiday weekends. This project is in the planning phase, with 23 partners having expressed an interest in extending this service to their seniors.



The City of Euclid's Holiday Meal Program pilot project has reached over 300 low income seniors with healthy meals over long holiday weekends, ensuring they have the sustenance they need during times when traditional services are unavailable. By expanding this program in 2020, we are taking an innovative approach to reducing food insecurity for older adults across the county.

Reaching older adults in despair as protective calls increase

One of our most basic tenets is to ensure our older residents live a life of dignity, free from harm. That's why our Adult Protective Services (APS) unit investigates allegations of elder abuse across the County. In 2019, the unit saw a 4% increase in calls, with 2,436 reports investigated and served. Lifting defenseless seniors from harm to safety requires dedication and determination.

To align with new state guidelines, all 88 Ohio counties migrated to a new statewide database for Adult Protective Services (ODAPS), helping to improve elder abuse data accuracy and collaboration. The new system shares referrals, investigations and case management activities for every adult abuse case reported in the state, allowing us to provide seamless services to those who leave the county but remain in the state and are still in need of protection.

Mental health and substance abuse disorders among older adults are on the rise, so we launched a behavioral health program to address them. In 2019, this unit screened 147 clients for mental health concerns, allowing us to refer them to services vital to their well-being.

Fighting abuse is a community effort. That's why we continue to reach growing audiences with free public trainings on both child and elder abuse reporting for mandated professionals. Over 400 citizens have received this critical training to date. By participating in public forums with partners such as the FBI, the Department of Justice and the Department of Consumer Affairs, we continue to keep the issue of abuse at the forefront, as we work to protect our most vulnerable residents.

We convene a monthly Adult Protective Services collaborative of more than 100 community experts who meet to share solutions for challenging cases. Westlake's Outreach Coordinator, Donna Feorene, notes that this broad-based approach is making an impact in her city.

"Through the APS collaborative and prompt investigation of serious situations, they show dedication toward making our community a safe place for seniors."



Health and Human Services

Voter Registration Services

Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services is committed to non-partisan civic engagement through various public forums and voter registration efforts.

Your Voice Matters Youth Summit

Annually, Cuyahoga County hosts a youth summit for high school juniors and seniors called the "Your Voice Matters Youth Summit". This non-partisan youth summit has been designed for high school students to be active voters, leaders, thinkers, and change agents in their schools and communities. Local leaders from the county, city, Tri-c, and other civic organizations share their experiences and emphasize how important it is for young people to become engaged on matters important to them and their communities. Based on student developed voter action plans, eligible students have an opportunity to be transported from their high schools to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections during the county's early voting periods to become first time voters.



Naturalization Ceremony

In partnership with the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (BOE), the Voting Rights Coordinator (VRC) attends Cleveland's Naturalization Ceremonies held at the Carl B. Stokes U.S. Court House. The VRC and the BOE officials assist new citizens with becoming registered voters after they have been sworn in and have received their naturalization records. These ceremonies are usually held on the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month and each ceremony usually results in approximately 50 new registered voters.



Cuyahoga County HHS Leadership Team

David Merriman
Director
Department of Health and Human Services

Direct Services Team

Kevin Gowan
Administrator
[Cuyahoga Job and Family Services](#)

Cynthia Weiskittel
Director
[Division Children and Family Services](#)

Tracey Mason
Director
[Division of Senior and Adult Services](#)

Tiffany Dobbins-Brazelton
Director
[Office of Child Support Services](#)

Dr. Rebekah Dorman
Administrator
[Office of Early Childhood](#)

Robin Martin
Administrator
[Family & Children First Council](#)

Ruth Gillett
Administrator
[Office of Homeless Services](#)

Crystal Bryant
Administrator
[Office of Reentry](#)

Administrative Shared Services Team

Sabrina Roberts
Health Policy and Programs

Jennifer Croessmann
Special Projects Coordinator

Kathy Starks
Budget and Finance

Leon Harris III
Performance Evaluation & Innovation

Deonna Kirkpatrick
Communications

Tamara Mearig
Human Resources

Jason Snowbrick & Matthew Bender
Information Technology

Tyra Taylor
Assistant Law Director

Divisions and Offices

The Department of Health and Human Services is made up of eight divisions and offices serving babies, children, teens, adults, seniors, and families across Cuyahoga County.

Locations & Contact Info

Department of Health and Human Services
3955 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115
216-881-5554

Division of Children and Family Services
3955 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115
216-431-4500 / 216-696-KIDS (Abuse Hotline)
<http://cfs.cuyahogacounty.us/>

Cuyahoga Job and Family Services
1641 Payne Ave, Cleveland, OH 44114
216-987-7000 / 844-640-6446
<http://cjfs.cuyahogacounty.us/>

Division of Senior and Adult Services
13815 Kinsman Road, Cleveland, OH 44120
216.420.6750
<http://dsas.cuyahogacounty.us/>

Office of Child Support Services
1640 Superior Ave, Cleveland, OH 44114
216-443-5100
<http://cjfs.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/child-support.aspx>

Office of Homeless Services
310 W. Lakeside Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113
216.420.6844
<http://ohs.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/home.aspx>

Office of Reentry
4261 Fulton Parkway, Cleveland, OH 44144
216-698-3437
<http://reentry.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/home.aspx>

Family and Children First Council
8111 Quincy Avenue, 3rd Floor, Cleveland, OH 44104
(216) 698-2875
<http://www.fcfc.cuyahogacounty.us/>

Invest in Children
8111 Quincy Place, Cleveland, OH 44104
(216) 698-2215
<http://investinchildren.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/home.aspx>

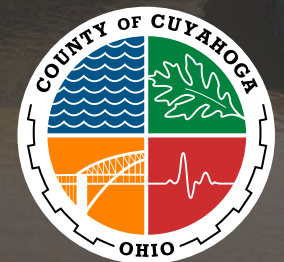
Quincy Place Neighborhood Family Service Center
8111 Quincy Place, 4th Floor, Cleveland, OH 44104

Old Brooklyn Neighborhood Family Service Center
4261 Fulton Parkway, Cleveland, OH 44144

Jane Edna Hunter Building
3955 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115

Westshore Opportunity Center
9830 Lorain Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102

Department of Health and Human Services
3955 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115
216-881-5554
www.hhs.cuyahogacounty.us



Together We Thrive