

innovate

maximize

sustain



Family & Children  
First Council



COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
EDWARD FITZGERALD



## Family & Children First Council

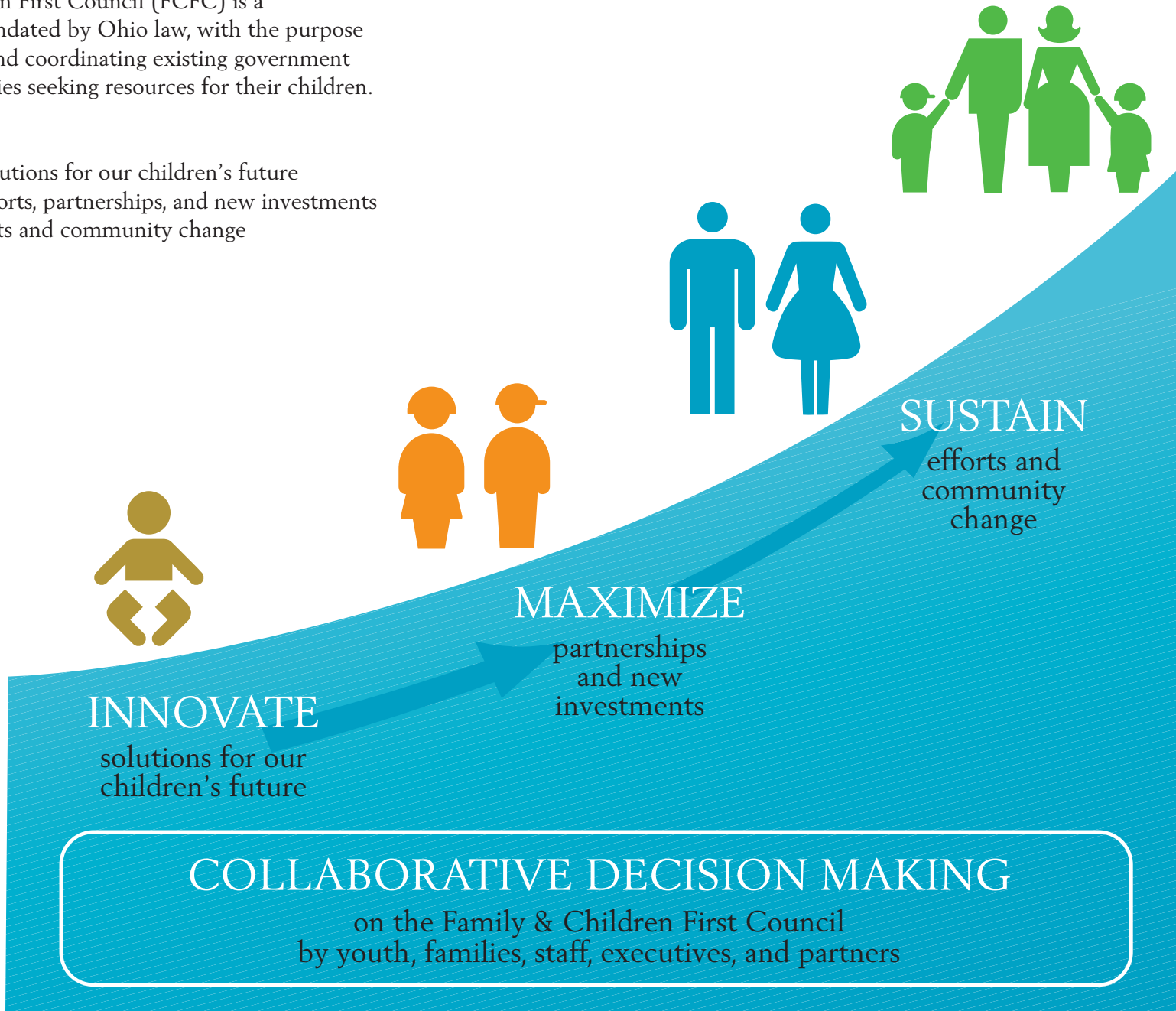
Family & Children First Council (FCFC) is a collaboration mandated by Ohio law, with the purpose of streamlining and coordinating existing government services for families seeking resources for their children.

The Council

**INNOVATES** solutions for our children's future

**MAXIMIZES** efforts, partnerships, and new investments

**SUSTAINS** efforts and community change



## **Voting Membership**

The Family & Children First Council exists not just as a state mandate to coordinate services for families, but a way for local decision-makers within public, child-centered agencies to solve problems and remove barriers. That problem solving leads to new ideas and approaches that transform care for children.

### **Family & Children First Council Co-Chairs**

**Richard Werner**  
Director  
Cuyahoga County  
Health & Human Services

**Billie Osborne-Fears**  
Executive Director  
Starting Point

**Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services  
Board of Cuyahoga County**  
**America's Promise**  
**City of Cleveland, Mayor**  
**Cleveland Police Department,  
Bureau of Community Policing**  
**Cleveland Department of Public Health**  
**Cleveland Metropolitan School District**  
**Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland**  
**Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities**  
**Cuyahoga County Board of Health**  
**Cuyahoga County Dept. of Children & Family Services**  
**Cuyahoga County Employment and Family Services**  
**Cuyahoga County Dept. of Senior & Adult Services**

**Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court**  
**Cuyahoga County Police Chiefs Association**  
**Cuyahoga County Public Library**  
**Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority**  
**Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency**  
**Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County**  
**Harvard Community Center**  
**Help Me Grow**  
**Ministerial Day Care/Headstart Association**  
**Ohio Department of Youth Services**  
**Ohio State University Extension**  
**United Way of Greater Cleveland**  
**Voices for Ohio's Children**  
**Youth, Family and Community Representatives**

## View from the Statehouse

By Statute 121.37, each county in Ohio is required by law to have a Family & Children First Council collaboration, with long-term commitments to child well-being.



## View of Cuyahoga County

Our local leaders on the Family & Children First Council support the well-being of children from prenatal care until the transition to adulthood, with programs, partnerships and proven approaches.

### Our Areas of Accountability:

#### Service Coordination

Each community needs a way for families and caring professionals to work together to keep children and teens healthy. Service Coordination is a process for child-serving systems and community providers to link families to necessary services or resources—as a team, with families in decision-making roles. It is a youth- and family-driven collaborative planning process that supports children and preserves families through the development of a coordinated cross-system plan inclusive of community services, supports, and resources. Family & Children First Council convenes the Service Coordination Team of professionals who, with the families, develop solutions for children who are involved or at risk for involvement in multiple public systems, like child welfare, mental health, developmental disabilities, juvenile justice, or the schools.

#### Child Well Being

By state law, the Family & Children First Council develops and implements a Child Well Being Plan with the goal of increasing the well-being of young people in our area. Historically, our annual plan excels in inventing new approaches to achieve better results for families and children, most recently in youth development priorities through MyCom and Family and Civic Engagement.

#### Ohio Children's Trust Fund

Children's Trust Fund is Ohio's largest funding source for child abuse and neglect prevention. Family & Children First Council is responsible for implementing strategies locally, through the Children's Trust Fund, to prevent or reduce the prevalence of child abuse and neglect by educating the public, strengthening families, or influencing policy issues.

## State Level Priorities

Ohio Family & Children First (OFCF) is statutorily defined as the Governor's Cabinet for children and families that was established in 1993 by Section 121.37 of the Ohio Revised Code.

### Ohio's Vision for Children

Ohio's children thrive and succeed within healthy communities.

### Purpose

The purpose of the cabinet council is to help families seeking government services by streamlining and coordinating services, resources, and systems. To accomplish this purpose, cross-system collaboration, leadership, and authority of the OFCF Cabinet is required.

### OFCF Cabinet Council's Role

The OFCF Cabinet and the 88 county councils are the critical opportunity structure that is needed for Ohio's economic future. The OFCF Cabinet is responsible for:

- Serving as the Governor's clearinghouse for federal and private grants that often requires a collaborative structure for the application and implementation of the grant. By collaborating on grants, departments can share resources in preparing for grants; align existing and future efforts; and be more successful in obtaining federal and private monies.
- Aligning services, resources, initiatives, policies/rules, and planning requirements across departments. This would reduce the duplication of efforts that often occurs across and within departments and thus, reduce the fiscal impact on the state.

- Advising the Governor, General Assembly, and local government regarding the state's provision of services and the needed alignment of resources to build a coordinated service delivery system for children and families. This level of accountability would ensure the Cabinet is working to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.
- Strengthening the county FCF councils by providing leadership, outreach, and being responsive to locally identified barriers impacting service delivery to children and families. Services, supports, and resources are provided locally, not at the state level. Therefore, it befits the Cabinet to strengthen the local service delivery structure so a seamless system of care does exist for all children and families.





# INNOVATE

solutions for our  
children's future

Cuyahoga County's Family & Children First Council has become a leader statewide by generating new ideas on how to equip children to become adults who work, raise stable families, and contribute to the safety and health of neighborhoods. Our efforts are in line with the Ohio Family & Children First Cabinet Council's priorities for ensuring that children and families thrive and succeed within healthy communities.

*Teens learn life and leadership skills during a summer camp experience with the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of Cuyahoga County.*

## **WE INNOVATE** by training youth and families for leadership roles

Family & Children First Council takes a deliberate and thoughtful approach to involving families and young people in decision-making, from the top-level governance of the systems, down to the individual family teams. By involving the families that each system serves, Cuyahoga County can operate in a smart, responsive way that meets the needs of its residents, while building resilient youth and parents.



*Graduates of the Parents As Leaders Training Academy facilitated by Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI) through Family & Children First Council.*

*“I am involved in the schools, community, and homes, and I wanted it all to work together, not in fragments. If we all do our part, our piece, it makes a whole.”*

Barbara Harris,  
member of Parent Advisory Committee

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) of Cuyahoga County consists of civic-minded parents interested in sharing information, concerns, and suggestions to improve the lives of children, families and their community. The major focus of the Parent Advisory Committee is developing leadership skills in the members to prepare them for relationship building with community leaders in the interest of advancing the needs of children. Research suggests that improving family functioning through the introduction of leadership skills, family bonding activities, relationship building within one’s neighborhood and the community at-large, and reinforcing positive social behaviors, can reduce problem behaviors in children. This parent forum empowers members to share concerns from their individual communities and allow group problem solving to create a solution.

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of Cuyahoga County provides youth with opportunities to discuss issues important to them, solicit opinions of peers, serve as youth representatives to county leadership, and promote youth development. Through participation on the Youth Advisory Committee, young people work in partnership with adults to become leaders on issues that matter to them and develop skills that will be useful for the rest of their lives.



*Teens from the Youth Advisory Committee serve the community.*







## **WE INNOVATE** through responsiveness and responsibility

Members of the Family & Children First Council all work for the well-being of children, so they can identify community needs and respond quickly.

### **Increasing Awareness and Visibility for Child Well-being:**

#### **Family & Children First Council's News and Public Events**

Three youth from the Youth Advisory Committee selected for Washington, D.C., "Forum for Youth Investment" National Convening of Youth

Washington, D.C., National Afterschool Association Convention & Afterschool for All Challenge

Federal legislative briefing in Washington, D.C., and Kids Talk legislative briefing in Columbus, Ohio

Out of School Time March Madness/Media Event with Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Ohio

Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) Youth Summit

YAC Nutrition Golf, Wheel of Nutrition at Parade the Circle event

Citizen Washington Focus

WTAM Radio and Online News: "A call to increase funding for recreational programs: Activists and cops claim it will cut summer crime"

Call & Post Newspaper: "Making a Difference in Out-of-School-Time Programs," "Teens Nearing Adulthood will Question County Candidates at Free Forum"

Shaker Life Magazine: "'Just About Jobs' A Big Success in Shaker"

Sun Press: "MyCom Scores MLK Award"

Kaleidoscope with Leon Bibb, WEWS Channel 5: Lisa Bottoms and John Lisy

WKYC TV: "Ohio: Economy impacts children after school"

WUAB 43 Forum with Harry Boomer: Robin Martin, Executive Director of Family & Children First Council, and Teena, youth leader



# MAXIMIZE

partnerships and  
new investments

When opportunity knocks, our community needs to be prepared. The Family & Children First Council plays a vital role in preparing our community to take advantage of new funding opportunities.

Grants from federal, state, and private sources often require two things that Family & Children First Council is in a unique position to offer: cross-system involvement, and youth and family voice.

*Adam's older sister wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. She made sure her brother was engaged in community change by bringing him to youth leadership council meetings. He transformed from observer to participant, and is now trained as a youth leader.*

## **WE MAXIMIZE** partnerships and investments by teaming with new supporters

Private and public funders teamed with Family & Children First Council efforts for community growth:

- Bruening Foundation
- Charter One
- City of Cleveland
- Cuyahoga County
- Department of Workforce Development
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- KeyBank Foundation
- Saint Luke's Foundation
- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
- The Cleveland Foundation
- Third Federal Foundation

### **One Reason Partnerships are Important:**

After-school programming is a major effort supported by the Family & Children First Council. Our children and teens are most likely to be the victim or perpetrator of a violent crime, start smoking or using drugs, between 3 and 6 p.m. on school days (after the school bell rings but before parents return home from work). After-school programs give kids better, safer places to be, and teach marketable skills.

#### **Coordination Boosts Afterschool Programming**

Coordinating the work of the many different institutions involved in after-school activities – including schools, nonprofits and municipal agencies like parks and libraries – holds the promise of making programs better and more accessible to urban children and teens who need them, according to a new RAND Corporation report ([www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)).

The study, “Hours of Opportunity,” examines the coordinating efforts put into place by five cities that sought to improve and widen the reach of out-of-school-time programs – after-school programs, summer school and other efforts offered outside standard classroom hours. Each region studied received funding from a Wallace Foundation out-of-school-time initiative launched in 2003.

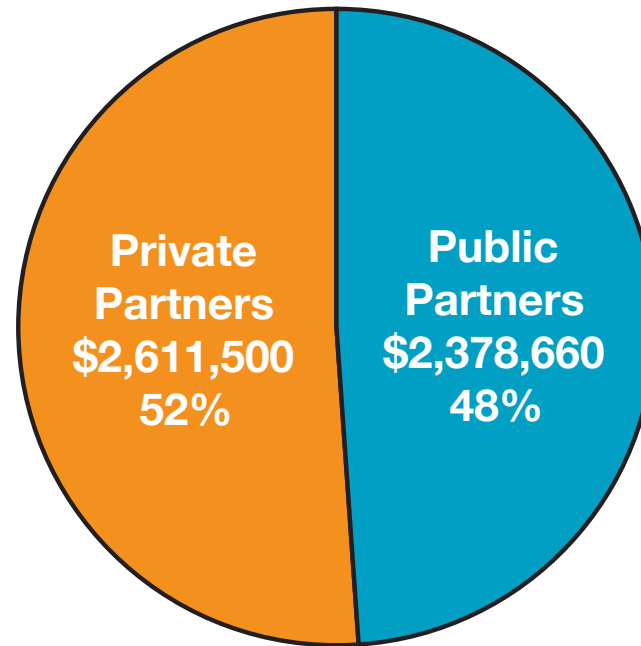
“This initiative provided a proof of principle – that organizations across cities could work together toward increasing access, quality, data-based decision making and sustainability,” the report says.

# WE MAXIMIZE public and private funding

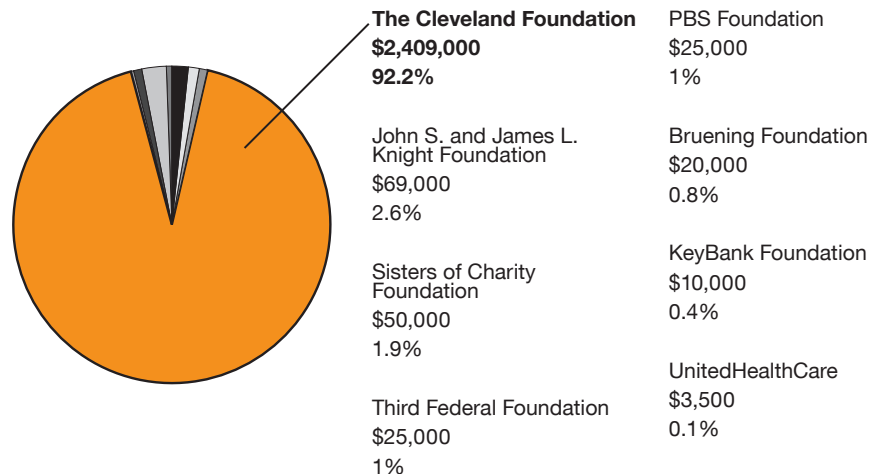
The Family & Children First Council is ready and responsive to new funding opportunities.

FCFC is uniquely situated by statute to play a central role in accepting and facilitating new grant opportunities for our community. FCFC offers a structured cross-system venue for collaboration across systems and includes youth and parents in the decision-making process, two elements that are required by most new grant opportunities.

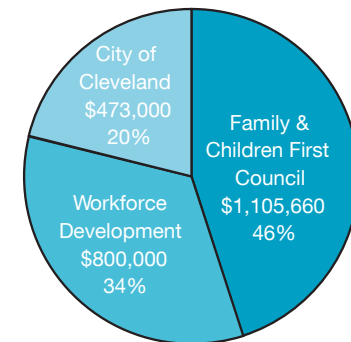
## A Snapshot of Yearly Funding



### Private Partners



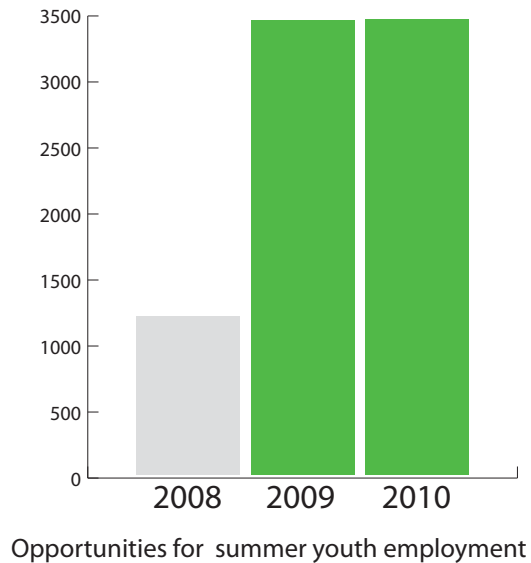
### Public Partners



Based on 2010-2011 MyCom funding cycle

## **WE MAXIMIZE** Cuyahoga County's readiness for new opportunities

With infrastructure in place and Family & Children First Council in a project management role, Cuyahoga County seized the opportunity to put citizens to work when federal stimulus dollars became available. Because of the collaboration in place for the MyCom youth development initiative, the county received federal dollars to create thousands of subsidized summer jobs for youth. In total, 3,443 opportunities were created for positive, life-enriching activities for youth in the summer of 2009, and 3,453 in 2010.



*Teens teach younger children art and cooperation skills during a summer program.*



*"I go to the doctor all the time and never thought about what it takes for the office to be prepared for the visit," says Hillary, who decided on pediatric nursing as a career focus after a youth employment experience.*



# SUSTAIN

## community change

Major child well-being initiatives have emerged from Council collaborations in the past ten years, including coordinated networks of services for both early childhood and school-age/adolescent youth, and for children who have the most complicated needs and who are involved or at risk for involvement in multiple public systems, like child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health.

*Sitting behind the WKYC Channel 3 desk, Jamie, a junior at a local high school, looks ready to deliver the news. Jamie joined a career-awareness program that gave him and other young people from his neighborhood the opportunity to think about what they do well and what their interests are, and then visit professionals in their chosen fields.*

## **WE SUSTAIN** change by creating lasting collaborations

The idea for each of the initiatives for the health and well-being of children emerged from the creativity of the members of the Family & Children First Council, as a way to coordinate services and reduce costs. These efforts have been sustained over the life of a child. For example, the babies who received the first services from Invest in Children are now teenagers.

### **Invest in Children (IIC)**

Invest in Children (formerly known as the Early Childhood Initiative: Prenatal-Three) is a community-wide, public/private partnership to help increase the development, funding, visibility and impact of early childhood services in Cuyahoga County. Each of IIC's goals is pursued through a number of service strategies for children, from prenatal to the start of kindergarten. Strategies focus on better preparing our children to enter school ready to learn, and in good mental and physical health. Each of the programs is administered by lead agencies and implemented through partnerships with community-based organizations. IIC's goals include: Effective Parents and Families; Safe and Healthy Children; Children Prepared for School; and Community Committed to Children.

### **MyCom**

MyCom stands for My Commitment, My Community (formerly known as the Youth Development Initiative: Kindergarten to Graduation). It is a network of people and efforts designed to connect resources by increasing access to existing opportunities for youth ages kindergarten to high-school graduation, as well as funding new opportunities.

MyCom strengthens the resources in our neighborhoods in six key areas: youth engagement, youth employment, transitions (example: the change from middle school to high school or other difficult transitions in a child's life), neighborhood engagement, out of school time, and advocacy.

The Family & Children First Council serves as the main agency responsible for the oversight of this project. Six lead agencies are responsible for managing each of the different focus areas. There also are eight identified pilot neighborhoods including: Central, Cudell, Mt. Pleasant, Parma, St. Clair-Superior, Shaker Heights, Slavic Village, and West Park. Additionally, MyCom strives to expand youth-focused programs throughout Cuyahoga County.



### **MyCom – My Commitment, My Community**

In its first year of implementation:

- MyCom served 5,514 youth in afterschool and summer programming that enriched their knowledge, skills and joy.
- MyCom helped put more than 3,000 young citizens to work over the summer; 1,251 of those youth also live in MyCom neighborhoods.
- At least 30 MyCom kids impressed their employers so much that they were hired on permanently.
- MyCom had the goal to create 250 new private-sector jobs for youth, and in fact created 256!
- In total, we reached more than 30,000 kids in Cuyahoga County through strategies like preparing new kindergartners for school.
- MyCom reached adults, too – training more than 300 adults in current youth development strategies that focus on quality programming.

## Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care

Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care, or Tapestry as it is known by families, exists to serve children with emotional difficulties and their families. Tapestry uses a community wraparound process, and provides both care coordination and family advocacy to more than 600 families each year. The High Fidelity Wraparound process focuses on discovering the strengths, needs and culture of each individual family, while also tapping into close-to-home services and natural supports in the community that can sustain the family during the process and beyond.

The Family & Children First Council, through Service Coordination, can assist in identifying children and families who may need the support of Tapestry. Tapestry serves children who are involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as families referred from one of the 14 Neighborhood Collaboratives within the county. Tapestry's goals are to (1) improve family functioning; (2) reduce recidivism in juvenile justice; (3) reduce recidivism in child welfare; and (4) increase effectiveness and efficiency as compared to more traditional service models.

**These partnerships** daily impact the lives of our youngest residents:



Founded 2000



Founded 2008



Founded 2003





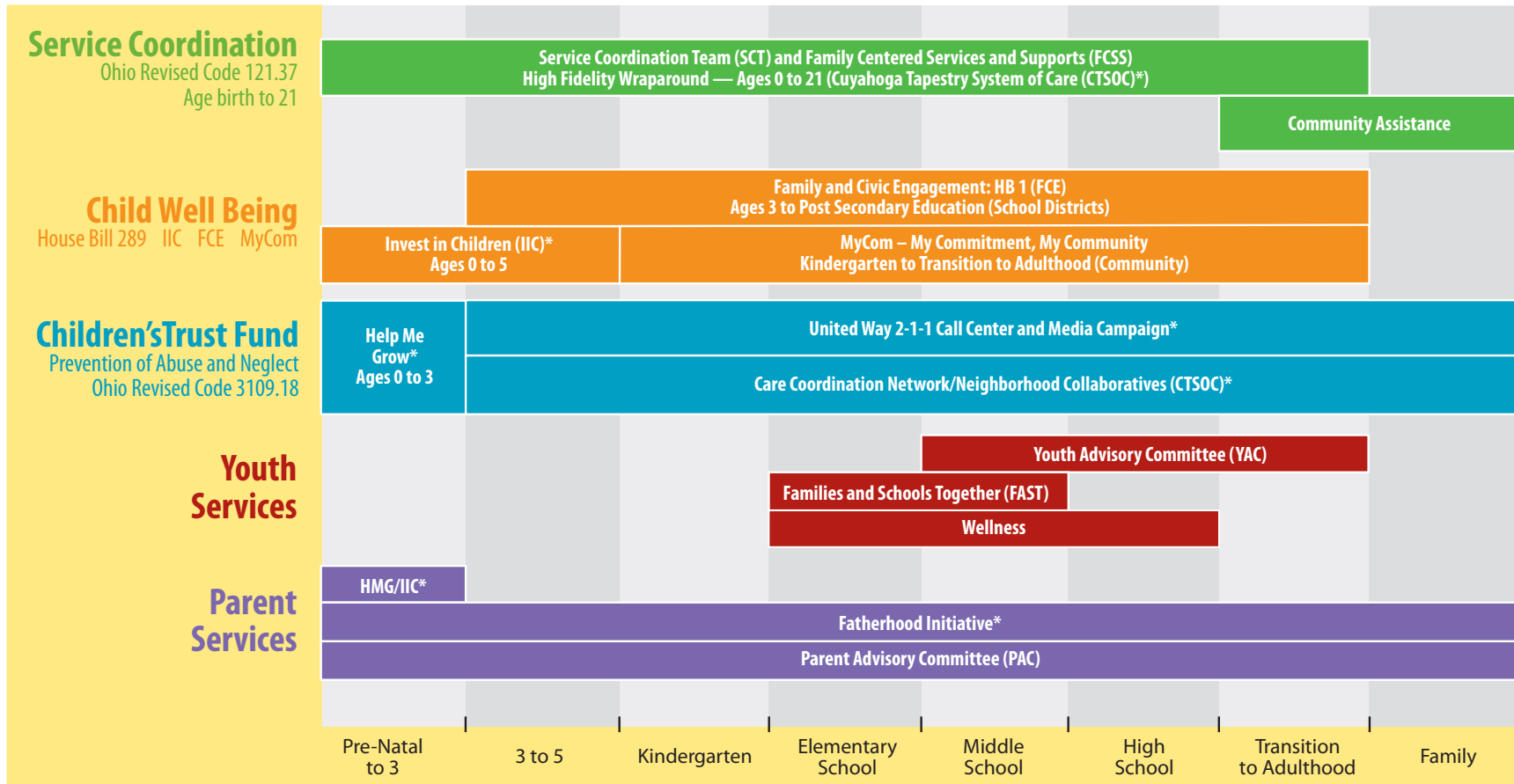
Family & Children First Council supports citizens across their childhoods and into adulthood and parenthood. The following pages include a visual depiction of services available to residents, with complete descriptions of programs.

Photo: A child enrolled in FAST in the Parma community.

Families and Schools Together (FAST), a nationally proven prevention program supported through the Family & Children First Council, is based on brain research to maximize children's intellectual and emotional development, as well as resiliency.



# Family and Children First Council Continuum of Care



\* Denotes programs/projects that are part of the continuum but not part of the FCFC office.

# *Service Coordination*

Each community needs a way for families and caring professionals to work together to keep children and teens healthy.

Service Coordination is the process for child-serving systems and community providers to link families to necessary services or resources—as a team, with families in decision-making roles.



**SERVICE COORDINATION**

## Community Assistance

The Community Assistance Program was developed in 2004 by the Family & Children First Council, the Department of Children and Family Services and the Neighborhood Collaboratives to replace the Family Stability Incentive Program (FSIP), and provides funding for some family needs, after all other available funding options have been exhausted. Each Neighborhood Collaborative has a Resource Specialist who provides information and assistance to families who reside in their community. The Resource Specialist also can refer the family to the nearest Neighborhood Collaborative for services. These funds are also available to the public systems that participate on the Service Coordination Team. Funding for Community Assistance is considered a last-resort resource. Each Neighborhood Collaborative or Public System must show that all other available funding has been exhausted prior to the authorization of this funding.

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## Family Centered Services and Supports (FCSS)

Family Centered Services and Supports (FCSS) is built on the foundation that family involvement in service planning and implementation is critical to successful treatment outcomes, strengthens the existing capacity of families to function effectively, and ensures the safety and well-being of each family member. FCSS funds are focused on maintaining children and youth in their own homes and communities by providing non-clinical, family-centered services and supports. The Family & Children First Council contracts with the Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County (ADAMHS) and Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care to provide wraparound services to youth and families.

## Service Coordination Team (SCT)

Service Coordination is a navigation process for systems and community providers to link families to the necessary services and resources through a family-driven, team process. This team works within the public systems to ensure families are not experiencing system barriers. Child-serving public systems participate on the Service Coordination Team, which meets monthly.

## The Garcia Felicianos

In 2002, a baby was found abandoned on the floor of a hospital bathroom. No potential adoptive parents wanted a child with possible health conflicts from a drug-addicted mother, and who doctors said may only live a few days. But Carmen Garcia Feliciano could not let a child die in a placement.

John, the baby boy, is now a third grader who loves to 'play school' with his adoptive mother. John was healthy and showed no problems until after the age of 3. A pediatrician recommended the family leave their native Puerto Rico to seek treatment in the United States.

John suffered his first major crisis, throwing himself into walls, acting aggressively and losing control, and was hospitalized. Carmen was referred to the Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care for high-fidelity wraparound services, and started to build a team of supporters to help the family and her son. She and John attend support groups, where he learns to manage his aggression.

Carmen has learned that John's behavior is not her fault, that he has a condition that needs education, love, patience and persistence to heal.

# *Child Well Being*

By state law, the Family & Children First Council develops and implements a Child Well Being Plan with the goal of increasing the well-being of young people in our area.



**CHILD WELL BEING**

## Invest in Children (IIC)

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## MyCom

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MyCom strengthens the resources in our neighborhoods in six key areas: youth engagement, youth employment, transitions (example: the change from middle school to high school or other difficult transitions in a child's life), neighborhood engagement, out of school time, and advocacy.

The Family & Children First Council serves as the main agency responsible for the oversight of this project. Six lead agencies are responsible for managing each of the different focus areas. There also are eight identified pilot neighborhoods including: Central, Cudell, Mt. Pleasant,

Parma, St. Clair-Superior, Shaker Heights, Slavic Village, and West Park. Additionally, MyCom strives to expand youth-focused programs throughout Cuyahoga County.

## Family and Civic Engagement (FCE)

The Family and Civic Engagement (FCE) Initiative in Cuyahoga County is a collaboration among schools, families, and community partners to develop healthy communities that lead to the academic success, safety, and well-being of youth to enable them to transition into productive and responsible citizens. FCE is led by the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County in partnership with the Family & Children First Council. Six local school districts, plus four specific neighborhoods within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, have partnered with the Family & Children First Council, submitting five-year plans that prioritize school-family-community partnerships, creating a shared vision and responsibility for the education and well-being of local students. Cuyahoga County's goals for FCE are to increase awareness of social agencies, dissolve silos between education and agencies, enhance coordination of services and programs to address non-academic and academic needs, and to expand partnerships and collaborations.

## Youth Employment

Early employment opportunities can help a young person choose their later career path. Hillary knew she wanted to go into nursing, but an employment experience helped her decide on pediatric nursing as a focus. She was responsible for multiple tasks in the children's department of a hospital.

"I go to the doctor all the time and never thought about what it takes for the office to be prepared for the visit," she says. "I learned the process of what happens at a doctor's visit and I was the one that prepared the necessary documents and files for the visit."

Forty percent of youth in employment programs say that without that opportunity, they would have been more likely to get into or cause trouble during the summer.

# *Children's Trust Fund*

The Children's Trust Fund is Ohio's largest funding source for child abuse and neglect prevention. Family & Children First Council is responsible for implementing strategies locally, through the Children's Trust Fund, to prevent or reduce the prevalence of child abuse and neglect by educating the public, strengthening families, or influencing policy issues.



**CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND**



## Help Me Grow

Help Me Grow home visiting provides home visits to eligible families. Home visits incorporate the Parents as Teachers evidence-based parenting curriculum, Born to Learn; ongoing screenings and assessments; and need-based referrals and linkages to community resources.

Help Me Grow home visiting strengthens families and helps child abuse and neglect by 1) improving parenting confidence and competence; 2) improving child health, development and readiness, and; 3) increasing family connectedness to community and social support. These goals clearly mirror the protective factors that decrease the likelihood of maltreatment.

## United Way 2-1-1 Call Center and Media Campaign

In Cuyahoga County, United Way's 2-1-1 First Call For Help is uniquely positioned to reach families that are on the brink of crisis, and who are most in need of building the protective factors recognized by the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. The majority of the more than 200,000 yearly calls to 2-1-1 are from people who are facing a major change or loss, like a foreclosure, job loss, or health-related trauma.

The Family & Children First Council and 2-1-1 work together to create a social marketing campaign that specifically targets families facing stressors that can lead to abuse and neglect of younger family members, and get them connected to resources that will help them build resilience, knowledge to help in parenting, and social connections, as well as the concrete support to get them through stressful times.

## Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care

Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care, or Tapestry, exists to serve children with emotional difficulties and their families. Tapestry uses a community wraparound process to focus on discovering the strengths, needs and culture of each family, while also tapping into close-to-home services and natural supports. Each family that is enrolled with Tapestry is assigned a Care Coordinator from a local community mental health agency as well as a Family Advocate from one of the 14 Neighborhood Collaboratives partners in the county.

The Care Coordinator is a mental health professional who can help the family address their emotional needs. The Family Advocate is someone who has been through what the family is experiencing, and can give a "real life" perspective about how to cope as well connect the family with supports in their community. Neighborhood Collaboratives offer an array of services for family members from birth through the senior years.

In a partnership with Family & Children First Council, Tapestry focuses on prevention by serving families who are not involved with the local child welfare agency or other public child-serving systems. These families are referred to Tapestry through the partnership with the Neighborhood Collaboratives.

## Neighborhood Collaboratives

Cathey Moore is a Family Advocate within the Neighborhood Collaboratives. She helps many families who have not yet reached the level of public system involvement, like with the Department of Children and Family Services, but who are struggling at home, at school or in the community.

Ms. Moore became a friend and guide to Diamond, a local teen, and her little brothers when Diamond was referred to the Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care. Diamond's outburst, suspensions, and trouble bonding sent the family looking for outside help.

With support of Tapestry, the family turned problems in strengths. Diamond, who once drew in her school notebook as a way to ignore her teachers, now uses art therapy as a treatment to handle her emotions.

# *Youth Services*

Community change will not be sustained unless we prepare, inspire, and train our future leaders. Youth services through the Family & Children First Council address needs across the lives of our youngest residents, from preventing problems at home and in the community through school-based curriculum, to providing a forum for older youth to participate in the civic leadership of our area.



**YOUTH SERVICES**

## Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)

Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) provides young people with opportunities to discuss issues important to them, solicit opinions of peers, serve as youth representatives, and promote youth development.

Through participation on the Youth Advisory Committee, young people work in partnership with adults to become leaders on issues that matter to them, and develop skills that will be useful for the rest of their lives.

The YAC has identified six focus areas: Advocacy, Education, Multimedia, Health and Fitness, Event Planning, and Serving Learning.

## Families and Schools Together (FAST)

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an early intervention/prevention program to empower and involve parents and to foster family development and cohesion with the ultimate purpose of helping all children succeed at home, in school, and in the community.

The Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County (ADAMHS) is contracted to implement the programming.

The following school districts are involved with FAST: Cleveland Heights/University Heights, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Lakewood City Schools, Parma City Schools, and Garfield Heights City Schools. The schools involved implement “Kids FAST,” which is a program for parents and their student children, kindergarten through fifth grade.

## Wellness

In partnership with target school districts and community based agencies, the Teen Wellness Initiative (TWI) focuses on providing comprehensive evidence-based sexual education to youth throughout Cuyahoga County.

The primary objectives of the Teen Wellness Initiative are to provide youth with the necessary information, motivation, and behavioral skills to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health, provide parents/guardians with a variety of tools that promote increased communication with their teens, increase access to adolescent health services, and develop policies that incorporate and support public health principles

TWI’s efforts are focused on two components: school-based and community-based. With the ultimate goal of reducing one or more sexual behaviors that lead to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, TWI has been providing evidence-based human sexuality programming in classrooms for over ten years, currently to 5th and 8th graders.

Concern for America’s at-risk sexually active youth, prompted the Annie E. Casey Foundation to develop PlainTalk, a nationally recognized initiative that takes a unique approach to the prevention of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. This is a community-based initiative that helps adults develop skills to communicate effectively with teens about reducing sexual risk-taking.

## Youth Advisory Committee

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is a countywide group of youth, ages 13–19, who use their voice to have a positive impact on issues that directly affect youth.

Youth are rising up as leaders and decision-makers not just locally, but nationally as well. Three YAC youth were selected for the Washington, D.C., “Forum for Youth Investment” National Convening of Youth.

Locally on an annual basis, YAC youth organize and host a Youth Summit for over 300 youth, focused on social issues with breakout sessions facilitated by YAC youth.

In a single six-month span, 91 youth attended five or more YAC activities, participated in Global Youth Service Day and were featured on WKYC Channel 3. The group also conducted a career-awareness and college tour to The Ohio University for 45 youth, and involved 100 youth at camp-based Leadership Retreat.

# *Parent Services*

When families have the knowledge and skills they need, parents and caregivers are more able to provide stable, loving home environments, avoid public system involvement, and raise children who contribute to their communities. Parent services through the Family & Children First Council help caregivers strengthen their own families, and advocate publicly for community change that will benefit all families of Cuyahoga County.



**PARENT SERVICES**

## Parent Advisory Committee

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) consists of civic-minded parents interested in sharing information, concerns, and suggestions to improve the lives of children, families and their community. The committee provides a venue for parents to discuss their concerns and participate in the development of a support system for their children.

The goal of the committee is to strengthen families and communities by providing information, education and support. Through information sharing and relationship building, the PAC will be able to champion the needs of all families in Cuyahoga County.

A major focus of the Parent Advisory Committee is developing leadership skills in the members to prepare them for relationship building with community leaders in the interest of advancing the needs of children. This parent forum will allow the membership to share concerns occurring in their individual communities and group problem solving to create a resolution.

## Invest In Children/Help Me Grow

Invest in Children (formerly known as the Early Childhood Initiative: Prenatal-Three) is a community-wide, public/private partnership to help increase the development, funding, visibility and impact of early childhood services in Cuyahoga County. Each of IIC's goals is pursued through a number of service strategies for children, from prenatal to the start of kindergarten. Strategies focus on better preparing our children to enter school ready to learn, and in good mental and physical health. Each of the programs is administered by lead agencies and implemented through partnerships with community-based organizations. IIC's goals include:

Effective Parents and Families; Safe and Healthy Children; Children Prepared for School; and Community Committed to Children.

Help Me Grow is a partner in the IIC network. Help Me Grow's home visiting provides home visits to eligible families. Home visits incorporate the Parents as Teachers evidence-based parenting curriculum, Born to Learn; ongoing screenings and assessments; and need-based referrals and linkages to community resources.

## Fatherhood Initiative

This initiative seeks to strengthen families in our community by encouraging fathers to play a more active role in nurturing and raising their children. The initiative responds to escalating social concerns regarding "father absence" by providing fathers with access to services designed to prepare them to better meet the emotional, psychological, and financial needs of their children.

## Fatherhood Initiative

Family disintegration in the Greater Cleveland area is at a crisis point. In a 2004 survey of major American cities, Cleveland ranked number one in poverty and was near the top in both father absent households and out-of-wedlock births.

Research has consistently shown a direct correlation between father absence and poverty. Unfortunately, poverty is just one of the consequences that children living without their fathers face.

Children whose fathers are absent are more likely to perform poorly in school, develop substance abuse problems, engage in criminal activity, and experience teenage pregnancy, ultimately perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Ensuring the welfare of our youngest citizens is a societal responsibility. We must all commit to finding ways to create opportunities that will allow every child in Cuyahoga County to grow up with a loving, nurturing, and involved father or father figure.

# *Other Partnerships*

Because of its unique position in our county as a convener and planner for children's health and well-being, the Family & Children First Council is a valuable partner to various community stakeholders. These partnerships are sustained for the good of children, adolescents, and their parents throughout Cuyahoga County.



**OTHER PARTNERSHIPS**

## **Grants Subcommittee–Family & Children First Council Executive Committee**

With the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County, the Family & Children First Council convenes a grants subcommittee to identify, share, and plan for new funding opportunities that can benefit systems serving young people and families.

## **System Coordination Committee–Family & Children First Council Executive Committee**

The System Coordination Committee (SCC) is the policy implementation group that reports to the Family & Children First Council Executive Committee. The Service Coordination Team makes recommendations to the SCC based on service or system gaps and barriers. At the request of the Executives, the SCC is responsible for translating those recommendations into policy. The members of the SCC are empowered by the agency executives to implement policy changes within each system.

## **Defending Childhood–Cuyahoga County Children Exposed to Violence Initiative**

A Governing Board has been established of leadership from various stakeholder organizations who are participating in a year-long strategic planning process that will result in a comprehensive strategic plan which will enable Cuyahoga County to improve prevention, intervention, and response systems for children most at risk and exposed to violence from birth through 17 years of age.

## **Committee Memberships**

Staff from the Family & Children First Council are members of several committees with the focus of improving collaboration and community-based involvement, such as:

- Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice Grant
- Cuyahoga County Health Care Joint Advisory Council
- Defending Childhood Core Management
- Defending Childhood Community Engagement & Awareness Committee
- Early Childhood Coordinating Committee (Help Me Grow)
- Family Support Agencies and Organizations (Educational Service Center)
- Fatherhood Initiative Steering Committee
- United Way of Greater Cleveland Organizational Assessment

## **Behavior Health Juvenile Justice**

This program's purpose is to enhance the community's ability to locally serve juvenile offenders with serious behavioral health needs by transforming the community's capacity to identify, assess, evaluate, and treat multi-need, multi-system youth and their family. BHJJ services include Wraparound Case Management, Multi-Systemic Therapy, Gender-Specific Day Report, In-Home Integrated Co-occurring Treatment, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, Short-Term Inpatient Treatment and Residential Treatment. Court Placement Aftercare Coordinators also provided an intensive level of Court supervision for these offenders.



**COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
EDWARD FITZGERALD**

1801 St. Clair Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44114 • 216-698-2875 • [fcfc.cuyahogacounty.us](http://fcfc.cuyahogacounty.us)

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