

Report to the Community 2007



Athens County Children Services

Protecting Children, Strengthening Families, Securing Futures

Our Mission

Protecting Children • Strengthening Families • Securing Futures

Dear Athens County Community Member,

On behalf of the staff and the Board of Athens County Children Services, we present the 2007 Athens County Children Services Annual Report. We continue to work diligently to keep children safe and families strong. We strongly believe that children living in a safe, stable, and nurturing family environment have the greatest chance of growing into productive, contributing members of the community.

Athens County Children Services has been working very hard to provide or arrange services that develop or enhance the factors that protect children and promote strong families. We provide prevention services that support families so incidents of abuse and neglect are reduced or eliminated.

The agency continues to improve services as well as continuing to partner with our community to further enhance services to children and families. It does take a community to protect a child. Please review our 2007 annual report. Athens County Children Services remains committed to working with families, service providers, and community members to provide children with safe and stable homes.

Sincerely,

Andrea Reik, Executive Director

Athens County Children Services Board of Directors

Nancy Schell, *Chair*

Ted Foster

Karen Carlson

As of 10/27/08

Rita Irwin

Bob Young

Chris Innis

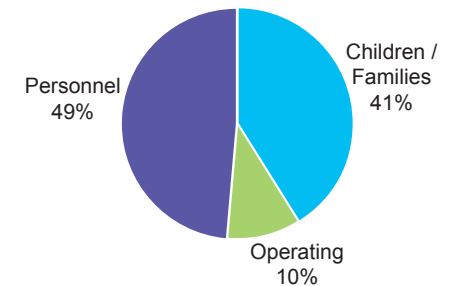
Romola Hopkins

Tommy Adkins

2007 Budget Report

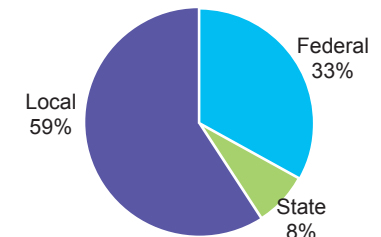
Expenses

\$5,846,812



Revenues

\$6,728,714



Athens County Commissioners

Lenny Eliason

President

Mark Sullivan

William H. (Bill) Thiesen

Referrals

A referral is an allegation of suspected child abuse, neglect, or child maltreatment. A referral includes, but is not limited to, allegations involving individuals, families and out-of-home care settings.

In 2007, there was a total of 1430 referrals, which is a 3.92% increase from 2006. There was an average of 119 referrals per month.

The total number of referrals assigned for investigation, or assessment, was 893. Of the 893 assessments completed in 2007, seventy-seven families were in need of protective services to ensure child safety.

Referrals by School District

Alexander	144 (9%)
Athens	575 (39%)
Federal Hocking	166 (11%)
Nelsonville-York	309 (21%)
Trimble	208 (14%)
Other	100 (6%)

Placement

The Placement unit is responsible for managing child placement related services. The Placement unit also handles foster and adoption activities.

There were thirteen foster parent training sessions conducted by this team. Two foster care caseworkers complete homestudies, provide support to foster parents, and arrange placements for children in agency custody. There were 31 kinship homes that served as placements for 46 children in agency custody.

The Independent Living Caseworker works with teens in agency custody to prepare them to live independently at age eighteen. The Transition Caseworker works with teenagers with disabilities and prepares them for independent living services.

Placement Services

- 33** Licensed Foster Homes (as of 01/01/07)
 - 7** New Homes
 - 4** Closed Homes
- 36** Licensed Foster Homes (as of 12/31/07)
- 42** Kinship Homestudies Completed
- 10** Life Skills Assessments Completed
- 15** Independent Living Cases
- 10** Transition Cases

Custody

If a child cannot remain safely in their family home, the agency will petition the juvenile court, requesting that the agency be given temporary custody of the child.

The agency began 2007 with 102 children in custody and ended the year with 105 children. There was a total of 169 children in agency custody during 2007, an increase of 4% from 2006. In 2007, there were 69 new children in custody, down nearly 4 percent from 2006.

Of the 69 children in custody in 2007, seven children reentered agency custody within one year of termination. The mental health of the child as well as poverty and domestic violence within the home were also factors in multiple custody episodes.

Termination of Agency Custody

When a family's home situation has stabilized and the child can return safely, the agency petitions the court to terminate agency custody. There were 66 child custody terminations during 2007.

Of the 66 child custody terminations, ten children reached the age of eighteen years. Of these, one quit school with no education plans, three are working toward a GED, and six graduated from high school.

In 2007, sixteen children were adopted, representing 24% of children in custody throughout the year.

Additionally, 31 children were reunified with parents or other relatives, representing 47% of children in custody in 2007.



Help Me Grow (HMG) is a program for Ohio's expectant parents, newborns, infants, and toddlers which provides health and development services so that children can start school healthy and ready to learn. Athens County Children Services has delivered this service since 2001.

HMG Service Coordinators work with families by providing child development information, home visits, referral services, and support. They help families by developing goals that will enhance their abilities, providing both parental and child developmental support. In 2007, Help Me Grow received 306 requests for service and worked with an average of 216 families per month. There were also 163 visits made through the Newborn Nurse Visitor Program. Help Me Grow is funded through the Athens County Family and Children First Council.

Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center (SEORTC)

Athens County Children Services hosts SEORTC, which is a regional site of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. The Ohio Child Welfare Training Program is a comprehensive, competency-based in-service training program that provides high quality, culturally responsive, family-centered job-related training for staff and caregivers of public child welfare agencies throughout Ohio.

In 2007, the Regional Training Center held 332 caseworker and foster parent training workshops. These workshops were attended by 3,905 participants.

The Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center is one of eight such centers in Ohio funded by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

Adoption

The adoption unit of Athens County Children Services is responsible for identifying permanent homes for children whose parents have had their parental rights legally terminated.

The Adoption Unit reviews the child's history as well as their educational, medical, and psychological needs in order to identify appropriate adoptive families.

A child may be placed in the permanent custody of the agency if a parent willingly surrenders the child, the child is abandoned, or has spent the past 12 out of 22 months in agency custody with the court awarding permanent custody to the agency.

ACCS was awarded permanent custody (PC) of **10** children for a total of **55** children in PC. Of the **35** children remaining in permanent custody at the end of the year, **4** children (11%) were in adoptive placements.

The Adoption Unit also has a post-adoption program which offers support, literature, crisis services, training and counseling to families who have finalized an adoption and request further services to support this placement.

Family Services

The two Family Services Units provide services to families either on a voluntary basis or through an order from juvenile court. The services provided to these children and families ensure permanency and safety for children. The caseworkers assigned to these units work with families who may be experiencing a number of issues, including:

- Homelessness
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Mental illness
- Domestic violence
- Legal difficulties
- Sexual abuse

The issues listed above interfere with their ability to parent and keep their children safe. In order to assist families, caseworkers provide a large variety of services, including:

- Case management
- Transportation
- Information and referral
- Parent education
- Emergency assistance
- Family support

Caseworkers meet with families in their own homes to develop activities that will help address their problems and work with parents toward achieving their goals. If children are in foster care, the family service worker is responsible for ensuring that the child's needs are being met and for working with the parents in trying to return the child to a safer environment.

Throughout 2007 the Family Services Unit worked with 144 families throughout Athens county. Seventy-four of those families had their children placed in either foster care or with a relative in kinship care.

School Social Workers

"It gives kids a chance to get the help and support that some kids may never have if it weren't for School Social Workers."

-Parent

Athens County Children Services provides prevention services which are designed to support children and families and reduce incidents of child maltreatment.

Since 2005, ACCS has provided social workers in two area school districts, Trimble Local and Federal Hocking.

Our school social workers seek to strengthen families and promote positive school relationships to enhance student school success. School social workers support students, families, and teachers by the following:

- increasing access to community resources
- building life skills
- providing crisis intervention
- improving communication between school and community
- providing opportunities for children



Working as part of Athens County Children Services' prevention programs, the Nelsonville Family Center is a community outreach site located on Canal Street in Nelsonville.

Formerly located on Nelsonville's Public Square, the Center opened in June of 2000, moving into its current home on

Canal Street in January 2004. With more space and a more visible location, the Nelsonville Family Center has flourished.

The Nelsonville Family Center is focused on prevention, and has implemented a number of programs to further the goal of preventing child abuse and neglect. These programs bring the following benefits to the visitors of the Family Center:

- Programs which support families
- Programs which educate both parents and children
- Fun and recreational activities for children and families

Some of the specific programs and groups which meet at the Nelsonville Family Center include:

- Girl Power, a group for teen girls
- Guy Time, a similar group for boys
- Playgroup, a group for preschool children and their parents
- Parent Support Group

Other ongoing activities at the Family Center include a free clothing bank which is open to the public, free meals, and other community events. In years past, the Nelsonville Family Center has hosted community Thanksgiving dinners with as many as 200 people in attendance.

Santa Tree Christmas Project

Athens County Children Services' annual Santa Tree Christmas Project ensured that over 1200 deserving children in Athens County would receive gifts for Christmas.

The Santa Tree Christmas Project is unique in that it is coordinated by Athens County Children Services, but made possible by the generosity of our community. The University Mall was kind enough to yet again host the Santa Tree, where names of children from all corners of Athens County are placed with their Christmas wish lists. Community members choose a name from the tree and purchase gifts for the child.

The Christmas Project simply could not happen without the kindness of individuals, businesses, schools, churches, and organizations throughout Athens County.

Money for the Christmas Project is also generated each year through the annual Benefit Trail Ride and Poker Run, which took place in early November on the trails of Wayne National Forest.

Additionally, funds raised from the Dan Dowler Memorial Golf Tournament went to help in purchasing gifts for the children.

The Trail Ride and Golf Tournament raised a combined \$20,000 to help make this the most successful year ever!



By far Athens County Children Services most popular event, Kidfest! celebrated its 18th year in April of 2007. Not only is Kidfest! a fun-filled event for children and their families, it's also an important part of raising awareness of child abuse. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and Kidfest! brings to an end a month of activities geared toward the prevention of child abuse.

At this year's Kidfest!, the children of Athens County and beyond were treated with appearances

by Scooby Doo & Shaggy, Jania the Magic Lady, and The Mark Wood Fun Show. The kids experienced up-close encounters with reptiles, birds of prey, and the Columbus Blue Jackets. Also featured at Kidfest! were performances from the musical *Annie*, police cars, Safety Town, Ted D. Bear's Castle Jump, the Federal Valley Cloggers, Cartoon Fun with J.D. Williamson, Ronald McDonald, games, activities, music, and food!

Kidfest! aims to create awareness of the people, organizations, programs, events, and projects that support children in this area. This event is also a great opportunity for parents to learn about and connect with organizations and groups that can help them out as parents.



Athens County Children Services Board
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