



 *Athens County
Children Services*

2020 Annual Report to the Community



A Message From our Executive Director



To our Athens County Community,

It is my sincere honor to bring to you our 2020 Annual Report to the Community. What a year it was. Through all the unprecedented changes we lived through together, one constant was our agency's commitment to the safety and protection of children in Athens County. Our dedicated staff remained on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and never stopped responding to the changing needs of our community.

Thank you, Athens County, for all the ways you supported our work, mission, and the children and families we served. As communities across the globe coped and adapted to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Athens County shined as we found ways to work together to provide a critical safety net to our most vulnerable citizens.

In November of 2020, our Executive Director for the past 8 years, Cathy Hill, retired after a remarkable 39-year career in social work. I was appointed by the Athens County Children Services Board to lead this distinguished agency in December of that year. We are so grateful for Cathy's leadership, and will continue the important work of this agency in the same tradition of excellence.

The pages of this report will tell the story of our incredible staff, and the resilience and compassion they showed as they developed new ways to ensure the health and safety of children in Athens County. As our communities start to re-open, I look forward to the work of leading this agency forward. As we integrate best practices and innovations from this past year, our agency will continue to press on as health restrictions allow.

While we worked in the moment to respond to the changing world around us, we also looked to the future and continue to prepare for the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. The FFPSA was signed into law on February 9, 2018 and is a total transformation of child welfare practices and a complete structural reform in which federal funding is administered. This law will make funding accessible to prevent children from coming into foster care, as well as providing more robust supports for foster parents, parents struggling with substance use, and kinship caregivers.

As our communities and economy continue to recover from the public health crisis that defined 2020, we remain focused on the children we serve. We are inspired by the promise of delivering brighter futures for those traumatized so early in life. We have many reasons to be hopeful here in Athens County; you are one of those reasons.

On behalf of our staff, and our Board of Directors, thank you for your unwavering support.

Sincerely,

W. Otis Crockron, Jr., MBA
Executive Director



Intake & Assessment

ACCS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. On weekends, holidays and after hours, we utilize a beeper service with caseworkers as the first responders and a supervisor as back-up. A Family Violence Investigator is contracted through the Sheriff's office, housed in the Intake unit, and also is assigned to sexual abuse cases and severe physical abuse cases. The investigator is responsible for making referrals to the Prosecuting Attorney's office on potential criminal matters.

In 2020, ACCS had 1,835 referrals of suspected abuse or neglect

- » ***524 were screened in for assessment***
- » ***Includes 801 children***
- » ***36 referrals involved drug-impacted infants***



In April, to celebrate Child Abuse Prevention Month, Intake Supervisor, Liesl Gyurko, models a custom Pinwheels for Prevention headpiece for a team meeting Zoom call.

Family Services

Our Family Services unit provides ongoing services when a case needs more extensive intervention or a longer term to resolve family concerns. The families served by this unit have complex needs and are often involved with Juvenile Court, either through an order that requires the family to work with the agency while their children remain in their home, or the court has determined it is unsafe for the children to remain home, and have placed the children in the temporary custody of the agency. Reuniting and restoring families is Family Services' primary goal.

In 2020 Family Services worked with 110 families including 213 children.



The Family Services Team adapted to alternative work sites quickly, utilizing various video-conferencing platforms to meet with birth families, foster families, and each other.

Alternative Response



The Alternative Response team model the homemade masks Executive Director, Cathy Hill, sewed for our staff in the early days of the public health emergency.

Alternative Response (AR) allows ACCS to provide a different approach for lower-risk cases. AR acknowledges that families are the best experts for their own situations. AR connects families to community organizations and service providers to address and resolve concerns as they arise. Identifying concerns early and working with families as equal partners can alleviate the stresses that often lead to abuse and neglect. This approach helps sustain families and prevents foster care placements.

In 2020, AR worked with 686 children from 328 families.

Family Support



In June, Family Support worker, Deb Osbourne, retired after 28 years at ACCS. Her team organized a "drive through" retirement party to send her off in style!

The Family Support unit consists of parent mentors, family support caseworkers, and transportation workers. The unit provides family time and transportation services to families whose children are living in kinship or foster care.

In 2020 Family Support

- » ***Worked with an average of 10 families a month***
- » ***Worked with 44 children***
- » ***Monitored 365 visits between children and their birth families***
- » ***Provided 382 transports to families and children working with the agency***

Foster Care & Beyond



The Placement Team wore blue to their April virtual team meeting.

The ACCS Placement unit manages all child placement-related services. This includes recruiting, training, licensing, and maintaining a dedicated group of foster homes to care for children in agency custody. The agency continuously recruits new foster parents needed for sibling groups, children and youth of all ages in all Athens County school districts. Our Life Skills Caseworker is assigned to all school age foster youth to assure the best possible educational and independent living outcomes.

In 2020, ACCS had custody of 143 children throughout the year, supported by

- » 41 licensed foster homes
- » 10 new foster homes
- » 28 kinship homes, providing care for 42 children

Adoption

Permanency is a sense of stability, support, and connection most of us take for granted. It is a vital component for lifelong well being. Our primary goal is to restore and reunify children with their birth families whenever possible. A child may be placed in the permanent custody of ACCS by the juvenile court if a parent willingly surrenders, abandons a child, or is unable to adequately address safety factors in the home.

In 2020, ACCS was awarded permanent custody of 15 children

- » Finalized the adoptions for 19 children
- » Ended the year with 24 children available for adoption



November is National Adoption Month. In November, the Athens County Commissioners Proclaimed November as Adoption Month for Athens County.

ACCS has a caseworker that provides post adoption services to families in Athens County that have finalized adoptions (public, private, kinship, or international). This is a voluntary program in which the worker can provide support in areas such as crisis management, behavioral management, and referral to services. In 2019 there were 368 contacts with adoptive families made by this worker.

Substance Abuse Impacts on Children in Our Community

In 2020, Substance abuse was a factor in

- » 209 of the screened in referrals
- » It was found in 92 (70%) of the 131 total Family Services/ Alternative Response ongoing cases
- » 36 referrals in 2020 involved drug-impacted infants
- » Opiates counted for 40% of drug-related cases



Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma) is a program to provide intensive trauma counseling and other services for the children who have been victims of abuse and neglect because of parental drug use. Additionally, this program provides specialized drug treatment for the parents of the children referred to this program.

- » Clients are screened for substance abuse using the UNCOPE tool and CTAC checklist
- » Clients receive services from Peer Mentors at Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
- » 24 START referrals were received in 2020

Quality Assurance

In order to assure the best possible outcomes for children and families, the Quality Assurance (QA) unit is responsible for training staff and monitoring compliance with administrative rules. The QA unit facilitates important case review meetings for ACCS, parents, and partner agencies to measure progress and plan services.



Quality Assurance Supervisor, Barb Cline, and HR Manager, Steve Peterson, attended the Social Work Field Fair in February of 2020.

**In 2020,
Quality Assurance facilitated
467 case reviews.**

Regional Training Center

The Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center (SEORTC) is hosted by ACCS and is one of eight sites of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program sponsored by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The SEORTC provides high-quality, family-centered, competency-based training to staff and caregivers of public child welfare agencies in 13 surrounding counties.

In 2020, SEORTC

- » **Hosted 166 workshops**
- » **Attended by 1,710 child protective service professionals for a total of 863 training hours**
- » **Hosted 115 foster parent trainings**
- » **Attended by 1,501 foster parents for a total of 342 training hours**



Tracy Reichardt, the Foster Parent Training Coordinator, posed for a picture for WEAR BLUE DAY in April.

Blessing Boxes

Responding to the food insecurity experienced by many children and families in Athens County, ACCS teamed up with partners all across the county to build, install, and maintain food pantries known as Blessing Boxes. Pantries are filled with shelf stable food items, hygiene supplies and other essentials. Each pantry displays a sign that instructs families to take what they need and donate if they can. Each of the 8 pantries were designed and constructed by ACCS facilities staff.



ACCS Facilities Manager, Rob Marcum, poses with the food pantry he built and installed at the Rome Township Volunteer Fire Department.

Community partnerships & Blessing Box locations:

- » Waterloo Township and Volunteer Fire Department
- » Carbondale Community Center
- » Columbia Township and Volunteer Fire Department
- » Kilvert Community Center
- » Rome Township and Volunteer Fire Department
- » New Beginnings Church
- » Hope Drive Apartments and Metropolitan Housing Department
- » Job and Family Services of Athens County



The Blessing Box Food Pantry that ACCS built and installed at the Carbondale Community Center.

School Outreach



School Outreach caseworker, Becky Handa, helped Trimble Elementary students start the school year prepared for success.

School Outreach seeks to strengthen families and promote positive school relationships to enhance student school success.

In 2020, School Outreach team

- » **Received 6,453 referrals for services**
- » **Provided services in all 5 Athens County School Districts and 13,962 direct units of service**
- » **Hosted 79 group support sessions**
- » **Responded to 511 Attendance / Tardy events**
- » **Academic Concerns accounted for 488 referrals made**
- » **Served 3,690 children through the PB&J Project**



ACCS staff and volunteers adapted the PB&J Project to follow covid-19 safety guidelines.



School Outreach Supervisor, Mandy Wright, and COMCorps member, Melanie Koslovic, stopped by the Kiwanis Club meeting in February.

In the Community

Despite the challenges presented by the public health emergency, ACCS sponsored a number of community events in 2020. With covid-19 safety protocols in place, ACCS offered modified versions of the Lace Up for Kids, Santa Tree Project, and Summer Fun Kids Day.



The Gift of Music. Every year, the Athens Musicians Memorial Project and Blue Eagle Music donate guitars to children through the Santa Tree Project.

In 2020, ACCS

- » **Provided gifts for 800 kids through the Santa Tree Project**
- » **Sent over 300 children back to school with new shoes through a modified version of the Lace Up for Kids Project**

ACCS continued to have a robust Volunteer & Intern program in 2020. These future professionals served in every unit of our agency and worked in prevention, casework, public relations and administration.

In 2020, ACCS had 129 volunteers and supervised 19 interns. The interns came from Ohio University, and the University of Louisville, and supported in 8 different agency units.



Volunteer & Intern Manager, Katherine Marshall, poses with 2019/2020 interns at the Social Work and Field Work fair, at Ohio University in February.

2020 Financial Summary

Executive Director

Catherine Hill, MSW, LSW
Otis Crockron, MBA

Deputy Directors

Otis Crockron, MBA
Finance and Operations

Wendy Shields, MPA
Programs

2020 Athens County Commissioners

Charlie Adkins
Chris Chmiel
Lenny Eliason

2020 Board Members

Nancy Schell, Chair
Linda Main Clark
Chris Innis
Shelley Lieberman
Ralph Harvey
John Sole
Timarie Francis
Jenny Shadik
Doug Orr

Beginning Balance \$3,642,649

2020 Revenues

Local Operating Levy \$4,547,267

Federal Funds \$3,323,262

State Funds \$1,407,699

Other Local Funds \$447,360

Total Revenue \$9,725,588

2020 Expenditures

Employee Salaries \$3,111,793

Employee Healthcare and Benefits \$1,465,708

Placement Care \$2,232,592

Clothing, Food, and Transportation \$169,539

Health-Related Expenses for Children \$247,815

Building, Supplies, & Contracted Services \$451,038

Community Education & Staff Training \$46,844

Other Expenditures \$593,879

Total Expenditures \$8,319,209

Ending Balance \$5,049,029



ACCS Board Chair WEARS BLUE for Child Abuse Prevention in April.

In 2019, Athens County voters approved a 2.5 mill, ten-year replacement property tax levy. Athens County Children Services staff and board greatly appreciate the continued support of the Athens community. The primary funding source for Athens County Children Services is that and a 3 mill ten-year property tax levy approved by the voters in 2015. These operating funds are vital for ACCS to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of the children and families of Athens County.

2020 in Numbers



1,835

referrals of abuse and neglect



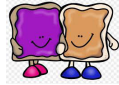
6,453

referrals to School Outreach caseworkers



213

children worked with Family Services



3,690

children were given PB&J, bread and canned goods as part of the Peanut Butter & Jelly Project



41

licensed foster homes



143

children in custody during 2020



2,161

virtual contacts with families in our visitation center



42

children were in kinship care



19

adoptions finalized



467

case reviews



300 +

children received new tennis shoes at Lace Up for Kids



129

community volunteers



800

local children received Santa Tree gifts



In January, the Trimble Girl Power girls were treated to a fun afternoon at Hocking College, where they got to test out some of the equipment in the Recreation Center!



A woman of many talents. ACCS Executive Director, Cathy Hill, sewed hundreds of masks for ACCS staff and the Athens County Community.

Cathy retired in November after a distinguished 39 year career in social work.



School Outreach Supervisor, Mandy Wright, and COMCorps member, Melanie Koslovic, wasted no time jumping in to help families meet their basic needs in the early days of the Governor's stay at home order.

Protecting Children, Strengthening Families, Securing Futures

Athens County Children Services

18 Stonybrook Drive

P.O. Box 1046

Athens, OH 45701

Phone: 740.592.3061

Fax: 740.593.3880

athenschildrenservices.com

To report child abuse or neglect:

M-F, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Please call 740.592.3061

After-hours or emergencies:

Please call 1.866.863.7373



ACCS staff and volunteers met several times in January and February to prepare the hand-painted pinwheels we use in our annual Pinwheels for Prevention display in April. Our pinwheels are made from recycled soda cans.



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Children Services**