

# Athens County Children Services Annual Report to the Community



2019



Athens County  
Children Services

## A Message From our Executive Director



Dear Athens Community,

On behalf of our dedicated staff and Athens County Children Services Board, it is my pleasure to present our 2019 Annual Report to the Community. This report captures in numbers and narrative, photos and experiences, the reach and impact ACCS has on the vulnerable children and families we serve.

First, thank you Athens County, sincerely. We simply could not do this important work without the firm backing of our community.

Earlier this year I announced my upcoming retirement in 2020. In reflecting back on my tenure with the agency I am filled with gratitude and appreciation for Athens County and the community that surrounds us here on Stonybrook Drive. I will miss the people and the challenge of this meaningful work. However, I will leave my position as Executive Director confident in the knowledge that the important work of ACCS will carry on.

Throughout 2019 the agency was busy planning for implementation of once in a generation federal child protection legislation. The Family First Prevention Services Act passed in 2018 setting in motion major system transformation. States have since been preparing for significant cross-system reform that will occur over the next several years. This new law includes the biggest change to the structure of federal child welfare finance since the establishment of the existing law in 1980. ACCS continues to work in collaboration with stakeholders and Ohio's new state Office of Children Services Transformation. The future is bright, for the first time in US history, funding will be provided to help families address issues aimed at preventing the use of foster care; support robust family foster care, when it is needed; and to better support grandparents or kin caring for children.

Finally, as we publish this report in the Spring of 2020 we are in the midst of a once in a generation public health emergency and related social and economic crisis for our community, our state, and indeed our country. This crisis brings long-standing inequities into laser focus. While it is one of the most difficult periods in our history, it is also a once in a generation opportunity for positive and lasting change. Being an optimist, it is my hope and belief that the awareness and social consciousness we now have will translate into meaningful social and economic change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Hill". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Catherine Hill, MSW, LSW  
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 2019, ACCS had 2,177 referrals of suspected abuse or neglect***

- » ***608 were screened in for assessment***
- » ***includes 925 children***
- » ***36 referrals involved drug-impacted infants***



*Our Intake team attended the Coffee with a Cop, hosted by OUPD and APD, at the Front Room in December.*

## 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 2019 Family Services worked with 102 families including 209 children.***

*Family Services Supervisor, Susan Ballard, chats with foster parent, Ed Price, at an Ice Cream Social our Placement team hosted in June.*



## Alternative Response



*Alternative Response Supervisor, Jamie Mays, smiles at the Parade of the Hills in August.*

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 2019, AR worked with 686 children from 328 families.***

## Family Support

*Family Support workers, Emily Durfey and Hannah Simpson pose for a photo at a family fun day for children and families at our visitation center in August.*



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 2019 Family Support***

- » ***Worked with an average of 11 families a month***
- » ***Worked with 76 children***
- » ***Monitored 1,095 visits between children and their birth families***
- » ***Provided 827 transports to families and children working with the agency***

## Foster Care & Beyond

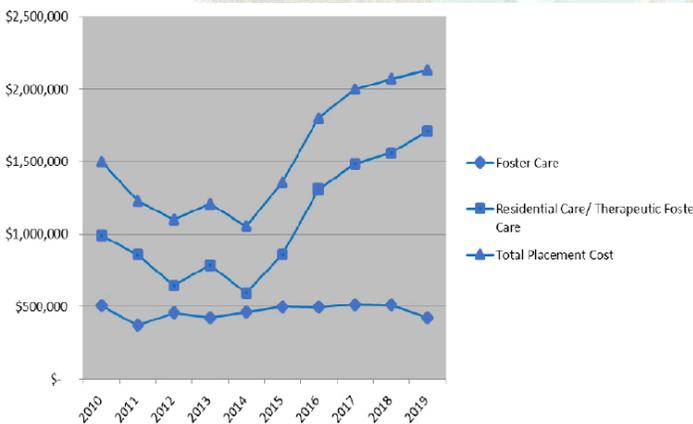


*The Placement Team poses for a picture at the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet, held every May.*

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 2019, ACCS had custody of 148 children throughout the year, supported by**

- » **40 licensed foster homes**
- » **9 new foster homes**
- » **29 kinship homes providing care for 41 children**



For the 5th straight year, the cost for placing children in temporary foster care went up in Athens County. The agency spent over 2 million dollars in 2019, placing children in private, therapeutic, and residential foster homes.



*Tom & Missy Kisor were named the 2019 Foster Caregivers of the Year.*

## 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 2019, ACCS was awarded permanent custody of 16 children**

- » **Finalized the adoptions for 27 children**
- » **Ended the year with 30 children available for adoption**



*Foster & Adoptive Parent Recruiter, Tanja Kuhre, poses with a proclamation from the County Commissioners declaring November Adoption Month in 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.



*Members of the Adoption and Leadership teams attended the annual PCSAO conference in September.*

Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK), funded by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, is a grant-funded regional partnership that allows for a dedicated, full-time recruiter to do evidence based, child focused recruitment for adoptive families for children in permanent custody. Our WWK recruiter serves Athens, Washington, Perry, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs and Gallia counties.

**In 2019, ACCS' Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter worked with 17 children in our region.**

## 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.



**In 2019, Quality Assurance facilitated 537 case reviews.**

*Quality Assurance Supervisor, Barb Cline, and HR Manager, Steve Peterson graduated from Leadership Athens County in May.*

## 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 2019, SEORTC**

- » **Hosted 149 workshops**
- » **attended by 1,415 child protective service professionals for a total of 1,014 training hours**
- » **Hosted 175 foster parent trainings**
- » **attended by 2,099 foster parents for a total of 609 training hours**



*In September, ACCS staff joined other county agencies and the recovery community in the 2nd Annual Walk for Recovery, hosted by the Athens County Prosecutor's Office.*

## The Nationwide Opiate Epidemic Impacts on Children in Our Community

**Ohio leads the nation in opiate addiction issues.**

**Among the 100,000 cases entering Ohio's child protection system annually, families dealing with opiate or other drug abuse consume the most resources.**

**With the increase in number of children in our care, the cost to have them in care went up as well.**

148 children spent a cumulative total of 31,225 placement days in our custody.

The costs for children in care in Athens County range from \$24 per day to \$406 per day.

Athens County spent a record \$2,578,318 in care and placement costs in 2019.

### **Athens County**

Substance abuse was a factor in 93 (71%) of the 131 total Family Services/Alternative Response ongoing cases. 36 referrals in 2019 involved drug-impacted infants.

In the Spring of 2017, ACCS was awarded a grant through the Ohio Attorney General's Office. 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. The specialized treatment includes certified Family Peer Mentors that serve as recovery supporters to work with children services caseworkers to provide intensive case management to the parents in recovery from drug addiction. 2019 was the third year of the Ohio START grant in Athens County.



## School Outreach



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

### *In 2019, School Outreach team*

- » *received 8,530 referrals for services*
- » *Had caseworkers in all 5 Athens County School Districts and provided 17,619 direct units of service*
- » *Hosted 246 group support sessions*
- » *Served 3,969 children through the PB&J Project*



*ACCS Staff at the 6th Annual PB&J 5K/10K hosted by the Athens Professionals for Philanthropy.*



*School Outreach hosted the annual Girl Power Formal at the Burr Oak Lodge in April.*

*The Hocking Valley District, Simon Kenton Council, Boy Scouts of America Club stopped by to drop off a donation to our Peanut Butter & Jelly Project in June.*



## In the Community

ACCS sponsored a number of community events in 2019, including Kidfest, Lace Up For Kids, and the Santa Tree Project. ACCS staff and volunteers also participated in a number of community events, including the annual Athens Area Stand Down, the Ohio University Homecoming Parade, the Paw Paw Festival, Kids Day at the Athens County Fair, Wear Blue Day and more.



*ACCS staff teamed with COMCorps and the Athens Sunrise Rotary to paint playground equipment at The Plains Elementary School in September.*

### *In 2019, ACCS*

- » *Provided gifts for 1,246 kids through the Santa Tree Project*
- » *Sent over 250 children back to school with new shoes through the Lace Up for Kids Project*

ACCS' Volunteer & Intern program continued to grow in 2019. These future professionals served in every unit of our agency and worked in prevention, casework, public relations and administration.

### *In 2019, the Volunteer & Intern Program ended the year with 118 volunteers*

- » *Our volunteers gave 1,104 hours, valued at over \$26,000 to the community*
- » *Supervised 25 interns from five different majors*

*\* <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla/research>*

Through the collection of money on Casual Fridays by our Employer-Employee Relations Committee (EERC), our employees donated \$1,616 to 17 different



### EERC

*Deputy Director, Otis Crockron, tests out some footballs that were donated to ACCS by LSU fans celebrating Joe Burrow's Heisman win in December.*



# 2019 Financial Summary

## Executive Director

Catherine Hill, MSW, LSW

## Deputy Directors

Otis Crockron, MBA  
Finance and Operations

Sheila Shafer, MA, LSW  
Programs

Wendy Sheilds, MPA  
Programs

## 2019 Athens County Commissioners

Charlie Adkins  
Chris Chmiel  
Lenny Eliason

## 2019 Board Members

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

Beginning Balance \$3,206,487

## ***2019 Revenues***

Local Operating Levy \$4,376,603

Federal Funds \$3,334,724

State Funds \$1,108,694

Other Local Funds \$227,372

**Total Revenue** \$9,047,393

## ***2019 Expenditures***

Employee Salaries \$3,032,690

Employee Healthcare and Benefits \$1,446,754

Placement Care \$2,578,318

Clothing, Food, and Transportation \$230,696

Health-Related Expenses for Children \$234,137

Building, Supplies, & Contracted Services \$421,963

Community Education & Staff Training \$75,162

Other Expenditures \$591,510

**Total Expenditures** \$8,661,231

**Ending Balance** \$3,642,650



The ACCS Board donned their blue for WEAR BLUE Day in April.

In November, 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.

# 2019 In Numbers



**2,177**  
referrals of abuse and neglect



**209**  
children worked with Family Services



**40**  
licensed foster home



**1,095**  
visits with families in our visitation center



**27**  
Adoptions Finalized



**250+**  
children received new tennis shoes at Lace Up For Kids



**50+**  
organizations set up at Kidfest



**8,530**  
referrals to School Outreach caseworkers



**3,969**  
children were given PB&J, bread and canned goods as part of the Peanut Butter & Jelly Project



**148**  
children in custody during 2018



**41**  
children were in kinship care



**537**  
case reviews



**118**  
community volunteers



**1,246**  
local children received Santa Tree gifts



In August, our Deputy Director, Sheila Shafer, (on right) retired after 32 years of service. Wendy Sheilds (on left) started as our new Deputy Director of Programs in September. Here they are sharing a shift in our booth at the Pawpaw Festival in September.



ACCS Board Chair, Nancy Schell, poses with her grandson in the photo booth at the Superhero & Princess Ball in March.

## 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](http://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, volunteers, and their families braved a rainy morning to walk in the annual Ohio University Homecoming Parade in October.



**Athens County Children Services**