

# '22 Annual Report to the Community

You don't have to be perfect  
to be a perfect parent.

For information on foster care and adoption  
opportunities with ACCS, call 740/592-3061

Athens County  
Children's Services

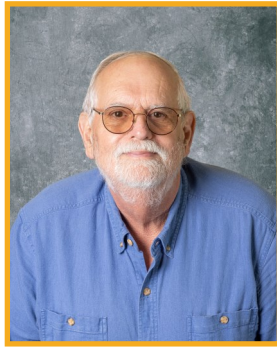


**Athens County  
Children's Services**

# Athens County Children Services Board



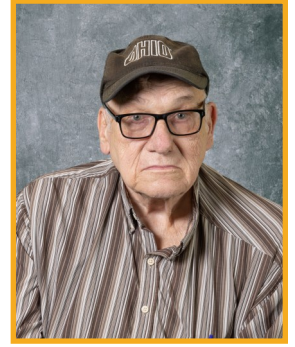
Chair, Nancy Schell



Co-Chair, Chris Innis



Keith Adams



Ralph Harvey



David Stretton



Susan Erlewine



Julie Lew

Not Pictured: Romola Hopkins and Reggie Robinson

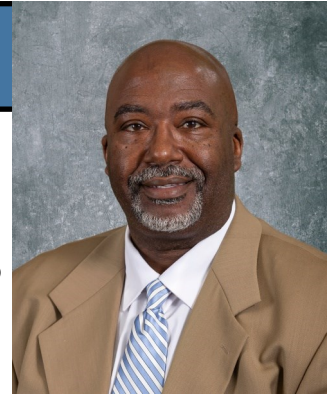
# Athens County Children Services Management Team



# A Message From Our Executive Director

To our Athens County Community,

It is my pleasure to present the Athens County Children Services 2022 Annual Report to the Community. We spent the year, like many in our community, emerging from the pandemic and its restrictions to return to a sense of normalcy and connectedness we have sorely missed. As we have returned, our caseworkers and staff have encountered an increased number of complex cases and have engaged children and families with determination and vigor.



Our staff are committed to adapting to new and difficult circumstances while carrying over what we have innovated and learned from these past few years. We sincerely appreciate the Athens County community for continuing to support our efforts throughout the pandemic and we have seen their eagerness to return to in-person events that we all are used to.

It was through this community support that we returned to Kids Day at the Athens County Fair, continued our Peanut Butter and Jelly Project, and increased the number of children who received a holiday gift through the Santa Tree Project. We have also seen our faithful volunteers, those who wish to give back and make a difference in the lives of others, increase as we return to in-person events.

This annual report will highlight the innovation and dedication our staff have shown during our transitional year toward a post pandemic operation. This annual report will highlight how our staff have adapted to continue our mission with a sense of purpose and excellence. We relish the opportunity to retain our role as a recognized leader throughout Ohio in the innovation of best practices in child welfare.

In 2023, we intend to fully return to in-person events such as Kidfest, the Superhero and Princess Ball, the Foster Parent Banquet, along with many other events. We will continue our engagement of families throughout Athens County and our focus on prevention services to assist those who are in need of help while pioneering new ways of serving families.

We thank all our partners for joining us in our commitment to improving the lives of children and families in our community who struggle to find stability and who deserve every chance we can give them to thrive.

On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff, we sincerely thank the Athens County community for its continued and generous support toward our efforts to protect children, strengthen families, and secure futures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. O. Crockron Jr.", written in a cursive style.

W. Otis Crockron Jr., MBA  
Executive Director



## Foster Caregiver Spotlight: Terry Beitzel

In her 44 years of service as a foster caregiver, Terry Beitzel and her husband, Richard, have fostered over 200 children and have adopted three into their forever family. Terry said she always intended to work with and take care of children. Her grandparents and aunt were foster caregivers, and her husband was raised by foster caregivers. She was always involved with 4-H and other farm groups, working with children. When she began her fostering journey, she could not know just how many lives she would touch and how much she would support other foster caregivers who have embarked along this fulfilling journey.

Terry said the most rewarding part of fostering is when she sees that little smile on a child's face after they have been through so much trauma in their life. These children come to Terry scared, with little trust, and when that first smile appears on their face, it is a reaffirmation of sorts that happiness is possible and that Terry and Richard might be the ones who help that child build a happy future.

As a board member of the Athens County Foster Parent Association and with her wealth of experience, Terry offered some sage advice for new foster caregivers or those considering becoming foster caregivers. Terry identified her support network as being paramount to her success and longevity as a foster caregiver. She recommended that new foster caregivers get their extend family and friends on board with their decision, get involved with other foster caregivers and Foster Parent Association, and lean on their church or other civic groups for help along the way.

Terry understands that becoming a foster caregiver can be a daunting endeavor and had some concise advice for those considering the journey. She said those considering should go through the training and then assess if you want to do it. Then if you feel it is right for you, get your support network on board and make time for yourself. Terry leaves us with this parting wisdom:

**“If you are considering become a foster caregiver, go through the training process, and try it. If you have the desire, try it.”**



*Terry Beitzel and her husband, Richard, at a Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet with Permanency Services Manager, Angie Verity.*

## Foster Caregiver Spotlight: Jenna Carpenter

Ever since Jenna was ten years old, she knew she wanted to be involved with raising a child. She grew up in Indiana and moved to Alaska with her mom to work in the addiction field. After moving back to the Midwest, she has worked as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Mental Health and Addiction Counselor and has realized her dream of becoming a parent to a wonderful child.

Jenna knew she didn't need a partner to make raising a child possible so, two years ago, she decided to embark on her adoption journey. Since her adoption of Bexley, she has seen the effects of a safe, loving home on her child. She sees Bexley happy and safe, knowing that he is loved—he loves to be outside and loves water. Whether it is splash-time, the park, or biking, if it involves water, life is good.

As Jenna and Bexley continue their adoptive journey, Jenna offered some advice for any parents considering the same. Having a support structure in place, whether family or friends, is essential. Jenna counts herself lucky she has supportive family and the Adoptive Family Support Group to lean on for advice and help, when needed. This helps with understanding how best to deal with a child with trauma and for help with childcare needs. As a single mother, she had a multitude of questions along the way and this support structure along with ACCS staff had been crucial in helping her navigate the trials of parenthood.

Jenna acknowledges there are struggles along the way, especially as a first-time parent, but she says it is all worth it in the end. She adds:

**“Take things one day at a time and genuinely enjoy the good times. It's crazy how fast it goes!”**



*Jenna with Bexley after receiving a new playhouse from Habitat for Humanity.*

## Anaise Alyerime—Assessment Caseworker

Anaise Alyerime has been a caseworker on the Assessment team at Athens County Children Services for two years. Like many, she took an unconventional path toward social work, achieving her first bachelor's in graphic design and then later switching to another bachelor's in Psychology. She is now pursuing her master's in Social Work at Ohio University.

Anaise identified the need to be of service to others as her main motivation for pursuing social work. In her home country of Yemen, there is no social work as we understand it, but being of service to others is a big part of her culture. Anaise and her family were forced to flee Yemen when a civil war broke out in 2015 and eventually landed in Athens County where her stepfather is a Millfield native.

When initially working with families, Anaise mentioned that she will often get questions regarding her hijab (a head covering) and other questions about her heritage that sometimes would make the initial meetings with the families harder than what some other caseworkers must deal with. However, she relishes her opportunity to serve as a cultural ambassador and she noted that once she crosses that tiny barrier with a family, it bridges the gap, and they work with her as family.

The most rewarding part of Anaise's day is when she gains a family's confidence to work with their children, a sacred trust, and she can work with the family to reach their goals. She said that kids are like your heart, and you need to be their arms and legs. She said the day she sees a case end positively and remembers the journey and the hard work along the way – that is what makes it all worth it. She added when asked about her motivation to keep going during adversity:

**“Life is about three things: living life for gratefulness, joy, and the edges; the 1% and 2%, but also understanding that the downtime is going to come. You just need to find the middle because with every hardship, comes ease.”**



*Anaise enjoys creating her own tea and food recipes in her spare time.*



## Lisa Seitz—Life-Skills Caseworker

Lisa Seitz began her employment with Athens County Children Services in 2012 as an alternative response caseworker but has been in the Life Skills Caseworker position for most of her time with the agency. She has a Bachelors in Psychology, a Masters of Social Work from Ohio University, and spent time as a COMCorps worker at Alexander School District.

Lisa's position is somewhat unique in that she is not the primary caseworker for most of the, currently 35, children on her caseload. When children are 14 years or older, Lisa begins to engage the youth and prepare them with skills needed for life as an adult. Many of these children lack the support structures most of us take for granted, so Lisa's focus is connecting them with services they will need and preparing them for the difficulties of independent living.

*Lisa enjoys being outdoors, exercising, and spending time with family and friends.*

When asked about the biggest issue that youth have transitioning to living on their own, Lisa identified access to affordable housing as a large hurdle. Another difficulty is developing a realistic transition plan and getting the youth to understand the difficulty in realizing the goals of their transition plan. Despite these difficulties, her job leads to some special moments with these children.

Lisa loves watching the youth she works with achieve their goals, such as graduating high school or obtaining a GED. Helping these children battle adversity, graduate, earn their first paycheck, and, of course, having young adults she worked with reach back out with their success stories, all make her career worth it to Lisa.

When asked for advice for new caseworkers, Lisa said it is important to separate work and personal life. She said it is important to find something you enjoy and left us with this parting wisdom:

**“You have to take care of yourself, or you won't be able to help others.”**

## Assessment

The Assessment team assesses and investigates reports of child abuse, neglect or dependency. Child safety and family needs are assessed during the investigation process. The goal of the assessment is to engage families in a problem-solving process to mitigate risk factors. Court intervention may be needed to mitigate safety and risk factors. During the assessment, families are often provided with referrals to community partners as well as provided education in areas related to child abuse and neglect.

In 2022, ACCS had 2,444 referrals of suspected abuse or neglect:

- ⇒ 728 were screened in for assessment
- ⇒ Included 1,029 children
- ⇒ 32 referrals involved drug-impacted infants



*ACCS's Assessment Team*

## Screening

The Screening team is responsible for processing all reports of child abuse and neglect made to ACCS. The Screening Supervisor also provides mandated reporter training to individuals and groups in the community who are mandated reporters by law.



*ACCS's Screening Team*

ACCS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond to reports. An answering service is utilized on weekends, holidays, and after hours with caseworkers as responders and a supervisor as back-up.

If you are interested in mandated reporter training, please call 740-592-3061.

## Family Support



*ACCS's Family Support Team*

The Family Support team provides supervision and monitoring of in-person and virtual parent and child visitations. Transportation services are dedicated to providing assistance to parents and children who need transportation support. Family Support staff are dedicated and trained to provide services that assist with protecting children, strengthening families, and securing futures.

In 2022, Family Support:

- ⇒ Worked with 195 children
- ⇒ Supervised/monitored 1,817 visits
- ⇒ Provided 1,114 transports to families and children working with the agency
- ⇒ Completed 459 virtual contacts with families

## Family Services

Our Family Services team provides ongoing services when a case needs more extensive intervention or a longer term to resolve family concerns. The families served by this team 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 2022, Family Services worked with 132 families including 272 children.



*ACCS's Family Services Team A*



*ACCS's Family Services Team B*

# Permanency Services

The ACCS Permanency Services team encompasses the four areas of foster care, kinship care, independent living, and 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



ACCS's Placement Team

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.

The ACCS Permanency Services team manages all child placement-related services. This includes recruiting, training, licensing, and supporting a dedicated group of foster and kinship homes caring for children in agency custody. In an effort to minimize the trauma to children coming into the agency's custody, ACCS Placement staff strive to place children in the most family-like setting. Ideally, this is with relative or non-related kinship caregivers. However, if a child is unable to be placed with kinship caregivers, then the agency has a network of foster families available to provide a safe home environment for children in the agency's custody.

## Foster Care

In 2022, ACCS had custody of 195 children throughout the year, supported by:

- ⇒ 54 licensed foster homes
- ⇒ 35 kinship homes, providing care for 50 children

The agency continuously recruits new foster parents needed for sibling groups, children and youth of all ages in the Athens County school district.

*If you are considering becoming a foster caregiver, please scan the QR code to take you to our inquiry form to find out more.*



## Kinship Care

For children placed with relatives who are in the custody of Athens County Children Services, the agency offers ongoing support and case management services to those families and children. These services are provided by our Kinship Care workers.

## Independent Living

Our Life Skills Caseworker is assigned to foster youth ages 14 and older to ensure youth are prepared for adulthood by providing training, education and support on necessary life skills.

## Adoption

In 2022, ACCS was awarded permanent custody of 17 children:

- ⇒ Finalized the adoptions for 13 children
- ⇒ Ended the year with 30 children available for adoption

ACCS has an Adoptive Family 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 2022, there were 604 contacts with adoptive families made by this worker.**



ACCS's Adoption Team

## Quality Assurance

In 2022, as a part of quality assurance, our Case Coordinator facilitated 579 case reviews, a 4% increase from 2021.

To assure the best possible outcomes for children and families, the Quality Assurance Officer is responsible for monitoring compliance and ACCS's internal measures. The agency promotes excellence and continuous improvement through addressing data related to federal indicators, risk management, and stakeholder feedback.



*Quality Assurance Officer, Emily Kresiak, gets ready to hand out candy for Ohio University's Homecoming parade.*

## Ohio START



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.



*ACCS's OhioSTART Team*

## 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 thirteen surrounding counties.



*ACCS's SEORTC Team*

In 2022, SEORTC:

- ⇒ Hosted 175 child welfare workshops
- ⇒ Attended by 1,717 child protective service professionals for a total of 1,245 training hours
- ⇒ Hosted 91 foster parent trainings
- ⇒ Attended by 727 foster parents for a total of 287 training hours

*(Right) The Santa Tree was setup at the Market on State, in the Fall, continuing its storied tradition in Athens County.*

In 2022, substance abuse was a factor in:

- ⇒ 222 (30%) of the screened in referrals
- ⇒ 95 (61%) of the 155 total Family Services/ Alternative Response Ongoing cases
- ⇒ 32 referrals involving drug-impacted infants

OhioSTART clients are screened for substance abuse using the UNCOPE tool and CTAC checklist. Clients receive services from Peer Mentors at Integrated Services.

**In 2022, 5 OhioSTART referrals were received.**





# Community Engagement

As we all emerged from the pandemic throughout 2022, ACCS sponsored a number of community events with the proper health and safety protocols in place. ACCS offered modified versions of the Kicks for Kids, Santa Tree Project and Kidfest at Home.

In 2022, ACCS:

- ⇒ Provided gifts for 1,125 kids through the Santa Tree Project
- ⇒ Sent over 419 children back to school with new shoes from the Kicks for Kids project
- ⇒ Distributed 1,000 take home bags for Kidfest at Home 2022

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



*Volunteer & Intern Manager, Katherine Marshall, joins volunteers as they make pinwheel for Child Abuse Prevention Month.*

In 2022, ACCS continued rebuilding our volunteer program after having limited opportunities due to Covid restrictions. We look forward to growing our volunteer group as we are able to get back to more in-person events. During 2022, we supervised **16 interns** from **5 different majors** that were placed in **5 different units** at the agency.

*FCFC Coordinator, Amy Jenkins, face paints and gives temporary tattoos to children at the 2022 Kids Day at the Athens County Fair*



# School Outreach

School Outreach seeks to strengthen families and promote positive school relationships to enhance student school success. We partner with local school districts to have a school outreach worker in the following schools:

- ⇒ Alexander Elementary
- ⇒ Morrison-Gordon Elementary
- ⇒ Amesville Elementary
- ⇒ Nelsonville-York Elementary
- ⇒ East Elementary
- ⇒ Trimble Elementary



*ACCS's School Outreach Team*

In 2022, School Outreach:

- ⇒ Served 3,984 children during the 15<sup>th</sup> annual PB&J Project
- ⇒ Hosted 413 group support sessions
- ⇒ Received 1,941 referrals for services
- ⇒ Made 575 referrals for additional services
- ⇒ Addressed 512 attendance and tardy concerns
- ⇒ Provided 25,332 direct units of service in 6 schools in Athens County. These services are directly or indirectly provided to, on behalf of or in collaboration with, a student, family, service provider, school or other entity.



*School Outreach worker, Madi Moore, hosts a school supply giveaway at East Elementary's open house.*

# 2022 Financial Summary

## Executive Director

Otis Crockron, MBA

## Deputy Director

Wendy Shields, MPA

## 2022 Athens County

### Commissioners

Charlie Adkins

Chris Chmiel

Lenny Eliason

## 2022 Board Members

Nancy Schell, Chair

Chris Innis, Co-Chair

Shelley Lieberman,  
Secretary

Reggie Robinson

Timarie Francis

Ralph Harvey

Doug Orr

Dr. Tanisha King

Dr. Jenny Shadik

Beginning Balance	\$7,229,048
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## **2022 Revenues**

Local Operating Levy	\$6,136,506
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Federal Funds	\$4,112,292
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State Funds	\$1,604,020
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Other Local Funds	\$174,305
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<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$12,027,122</b>
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## **2022 Expenditures**

Employee Salaries	\$4,128,647
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Employee Healthcare and Benefits	\$1,849,270
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Placement Care	\$3,478,071
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Clothing, Food, and Transportation	\$290,291
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Health-Related Expenses for Children	\$278,751
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Building, Supplies, & Contracted Services	\$536,570
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Community Education & Staff Training	\$78,524
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Other Expenditures	\$877,550
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<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$11,517,673</b>
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<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$7,738,497</b>
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ACCS Board Chair Nancy Schell

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.

# 2022 in Numbers



*(Left) ACCS Staff and volunteers join the Ohio University Homecoming parade in a float made with hand designed paw prints from all over Athens County.*



*(Right) ACCS staff, volunteers, interns, and COMCorps worker get ready for Week 1 of the Peanut Butter and Jelly Project.*

## 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, 8:00am to 4:30pm  
 Please call 740.592.3061

After-hours or emergencies:  
 Please call 1.866.863.7373



*ACCS staff and volunteers placed hundreds of pinwheels in the ground for our annual Pinwheels for Prevention display in April. The pinwheels represent the instances where someone in the community acted courageously and called to report suspected child abuse or neglect.*



# Athens County Children Services Support Staff

# 22



ACCS's Office Management Team

Protecting Children  
Strengthening Families  
Securing Futures



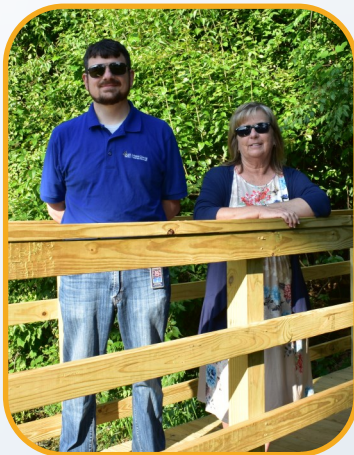
ACCS's Human Resources Team



ACCS's Operations Team



ACCS's Maintenance Team



ACCS's Community Events Team



ACCS's Family and Children First Council Team