



# 2024

## ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

*Protecting Children,  
Strengthening Families,  
Securing Futures.*



New ACCS Building (2026)



ACCS Campus (1969-2026)



ACCS Children's Home (1881-1969)



**Athens County  
Children Services**



# Athens County Children Services Board



**Chair, Nancy Schell**



**Co-Chair,  
Susan Erlewine**



**Keith Adams**



**Reggie Robinson**



**David Stretton**



**Gary Arnold**



**Julie Lew**



**Lesli Johnson**



**Monna French**

**2,583**

referrals of  
abuse/neglect  
in 2024

**155**

children in  
custody  
in 2024

**513**

case reviews  
in 2024

**1,840**

family visits in our  
visitation center  
in 2024

## Management Team



# *A Message From Our Executive Director*

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## **To our Athens Community,**

It is my pleasure to present our 2024 Annual Report to the Community, which highlights our staff, service delivery, foster parents, and new initiatives. 2024 marked an exciting moment in our history, as we officially embarked on the construction of our new 28,800 sq.ft. building. This new space will enhance the productivity of our workforce and improve service delivery to our clients and the public. We will move our offices from the converted residential homes built in 1972 where we currently reside, to a more welcoming and functional building for offices and our new visitation center.

In addition to our facilities, ACCS has been expanding our reach and services. We have been selected as the lead county for four surrounding counties (Gallia, Jackson, Meigs, and Perry), for the Treatment Foster Care Pilot program where our agency will recruit and train foster caregivers to provide an enhanced level of care for children. This program provides children the help they need closer to home, rather than placing them outside their communities. ACCS is also embarking on the PACT (Practice in Action Together) model of service delivery, to rethink the framework in which we interact with clients and improve service delivery across the entire agency. We are utilizing a working group composed of agency staff and those with lived experiences to model a new standard of working together to help the families we serve.

In 2024, we also passed one of our two ten-year levies that support our mission and agency services. Thanks to our ongoing support from the Athens County community, our agency can participate in these pilot programs and be on the cutting edge of innovation and new initiative that benefit Ohio families. As placement costs continue to rise and as our caseload increases and becomes more complex, we thank those in our community who reaffirmed their support for our mission, especially in these times of uncertain funding for social programs.

This annual report will highlight our programs and staff, displaying the breadth of services we offer to our clients and community. It will show how we are committed to protecting children, strengthening families, and securing futures, and how our community consistently supports our mission. It will feature our support from our amazing foster parents who provide safe and loving homes to children in need. It will also display how our agency and staff is always innovating and perfecting service delivery to achieve better outcomes for the families we work with.

We thank all our partners for joining us in our commitment to improving the lives of children and families 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 in protecting children, strengthening families, and securing futures.



**W. Otis Crockron Jr., MBA**  
**Executive Director**

# Foster Caregiver Feature

Abby and Gabe Miller, both teachers in the Athens City School District, received their first placement of a child in March of 2022, and have fostered 15 children in the three years since. As some of Athens County's youngest foster parents, they have already amassed a wealth of experience by taking placements of children of all ages and working closely with the birth families to ensure those children maintain some semblance of normalcy and familiarity.

Since her own childhood, Abby had wanted to become a foster parent and, as teachers, they both saw children they helped to guide and mentor leave Athens County to be placed in an unfamiliar community away from what they had known. Understanding they could be a soft place to land for other children, they decided to become foster parents, starting their licensure before they were even married. Since then, they've had children for various times, from one night, to almost two years.

As foster parents, they put a primary focus on maintaining connection with the birth families, even having children who have since moved to other placements call them up on random nights to say 'Hi,' come over for sleepovers, and invite them to their adoption hearings. Their mission is to foster the whole family, not just the child. Abby shared the story of a child who was placed with them calling her up to tell her he had learned to swim after making sure he would continue his swimming lessons after exiting the Miller home. It's this kind of continuity, stability, and security they strive for the children placed in their household. The long-lasting bonds they create with both the child and their birth family help the children feel safe and loved throughout the traumatic process of being involved in the child welfare system.

One of the most rewarding parts of the foster care process for the Miller family is when they see the child begin to overcome the trauma they have faced in their life and watch the rewiring of their brain to allow them to feel safe and regulated right in front of their eyes. Their reward is in seeing this success and these children thrive, knowing they have had a positive role in their life and prepared them to face adversity and surmount the challenges they encounter.

Abby and Gabe recognize that their support network is a huge help on their fostering journey as they are surrounded by others who love and care for children, including Abby's mom who lives across the street and many teachers who live the life of caring for and mentoring children. They said that fostering should not be entered into lightly, or with the mindset that you are going to fix everything with the child. There are up and downs, setbacks and advancements, and many good days followed by bad ones. There will be many times where your own needs are set aside for the needs of these children, but it's all worth it when you get to see the emotional, behavioral, and academic advancement the children make while in your care.



**Abby & Gabe Miller**

***“Our job is not to be their hero, it’s to walk with them through what is likely the hardest time of their life (and their parents’ lives).”***

***Thank you to all our wonderful and dedicated foster and kinship caregivers!***

**44**  
licensed  
foster homes  
in 2024



# Family Services Supervisor Profile

Stephanie McDaniel has been with Athens County Children Services since 2013 and has been a Family Services Team Supervisor for the last four years. Before coming to ACCS, she worked at Hocking County Children Services and earned her Bachelor's in Social Work from University of Rio Grande. Using her work experience and seeking to attain a higher understanding of social welfare, she has gone back for her Masters of Social Work and will attain her degree in the summer.

Stephanie described her drive to become a social worker as stemming from her natural desire to be a helper, something inherited and nurtured by her mother and grandmother. She would always try to empower and advocate for families growing up. After first going into the education field, Stephanie quickly realized that she wanted to do more with the families, which took her on the route to becoming a social worker. She identifies the lack of supports as one of the largest factors impacting the families she works with and has worked to ensure her and her team function as supports for the families they work with.

As a supervisor, Stephanie enjoys mentoring her team and celebrating victories, both large and small. She feels it's paramount to recognize the tough, hard work her team does, help them through their tough moments, but celebrate the good moments, especially when they achieve breakthroughs with the families they work with. The job can seem tough and thankless on some days, so she feels her biggest role is helping her team work through their difficulties, provide them the support they need to do their job well and help the families they work with. She and her team try to promote the idea of thinking outside the box, while keeping the children's best interest at heart.

Stephanie readily admits that the job is challenging but rewarding. The toughest part of the job for her are when children need to be removed from the home for their safety. She can tell the parents and children love and care about each other, but at the end of the day, they are there to ensure the safety of the children. During these moments, she has stressed the importance of her team being trauma-informed and keeping the mindset of working with the families as a support to help give safety and security to the children.

When asked about advice she would give to someone considering the social work field, she suggested that person look into one of our internships, fellowship positions, or the University Partnership Program (UPP) as a way to gain insight and experience to determine if it is the right fit for that individual.

While not working, Stephanie enjoys spending time with her family, friends, and three dogs, especially while camping. She loves to paint and draw, but much of her time recently has been spent researching and working on her masters in social work. She also enjoys volunteering for agency events, such as Kidfest and the Superhero and Princess ball.



**Stephanie McDaniel**

***“Seeing families be successful and kids getting permanency is one of the best parts of the job. Guiding my team to be the best for these families and supporting them while they help these families achieve their goals brings fulfillment to my work.”***

**11**  
adoptions  
finalized  
in 2024

**34**  
children in  
kinship care  
in 2024

## Assessment



*Assessment Team*

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 2024, ACCS had **2,583** referrals of suspected abuse or neglect, of which:

**881** were screened in for assessment

**1,255** children were involved

**42** included drug-impacted infants

## 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.



*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 for emergency reports with caseworkers and supervisors assigned to respond.

If you are interested in mandated reporter training, please call Mindy VanBibber at (740) 592-3061.

## Family Support

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.



*Family Support Team*

In 2024, Family Support:

Supervised/monitored **1,840** visits

Provided **1,052** transports to families & children

Completed **205** virtual contacts with families

## Family Services



*Family Services Team A*



*Family Services Team B*

Our Family Services teams provide ongoing services when a family needs more support and intervention to address the outstanding safety threats or risk contributors. 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 2024, Family Services worked with **136** families, including **283** children



# 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 wellbeing. 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.



Placement Team

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 2024, ACCS had custody of **187** children throughout the year, supported by:

**44** licensed foster homes

**28** kinship homes that provided care for **36** children

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

*If you are considering becoming a foster caregiver, please scan the QR code to access 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 and Permanency Caseworkers are 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



Adoption Team

In 2024, ACCS was awarded permanent custody of **37** children. The Adoption team managed:

**11** children adopted

**55** children available for adoption at the end of 2024

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 2024, ACCS added an additional adoption caseworker to help find permanency for children in agency care.

## Case Review Coordination

In 2024, as a part of overall case planning service delivery and programming, our case review coordinators assisted in the facilitation of:

**513** case reviews

## Quality Assurance

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.



*ACCS QA Officer Walks in the Homecoming Parade*

## 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.



*SEORTC Team*

In 2024, SEORTC:

Hosted **121** child welfare workshops attended by **1,224** child protective service professionals for a total of **649.25** training hours

Hosted **130** foster parent trainings attended by **979** foster parents for a total of **297.75** training hours

## Ohio START



Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma) is a children-services-led initiative that has been shown, when implemented with fidelity, to improve outcomes for both parents and children affected by child maltreatment and parental substance use disorders.

The model is specifically designed to transform the system of care within and between child welfare agencies and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment providers and other family serving systems and agencies. START uses a family centered approach and services that help the child, parents, and the entire family. START recognizes that SUD/addiction is a family disease, recovery occurs in the context of families, and adult recovery should have a parent-child component.



*OhioSTART Team*

In 2024, substance abuse was a factor in:

**616 (24%)** of total referrals received

**107 (69%)** of all 155 total ongoing cases

**274** reports involving drug-impacted cases

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

In 2024, START accepted **6** referrals to the program.

## ACCS Facility Construction Begins

In 2024, ACCS secured funding to construct a new 28,800 sq. ft. facility. This initiative will move ACCS offices from converted residential buildings built in 1972 to a new facility, which will provide a contemporary visitation center, more room to grow, and support toward the agency's continued growth. We are excited to move into the new building in the fall of 2026 when construction is complete.





# Community Engagement

In 2024, ACCS volunteers helped with events like Kidfest, Color in the Hills, Paw Paw Festival, OU Homecoming, PB&J Distribution, the Superhero and Princess Ball, and the making and planting of Pinwheels, among other events. They also provided tutoring for children and childcare for parent teacher conferences and the Adoptive Family Support Group.

In 2024, our agency supervised:

**22** interns from **3** different majors placed in **8** of our units



*ACCS volunteers help out with Kidfest 2024.*



*ACCS School Outreach Team, volunteers, and COMCorps worker gets ready for the first week of the Peanut Butter and Jelly Project.*



*DJ Rockin' Reggie Robinson provides some stellar dance music during our walk in the OU Homecoming parade.*



*Members of VFW Post 7174 donate toys and money to the Santa Tree Project. ACCS provided holiday gifts to 1,169 children in 2024.*



*ACCS volunteers craft with kids at the Reindeer Games Family Fun Day.*

**4,296**

children given PB&J,  
bread, cannel goods  
and fresh produce

**in 2024**



*ACCS staff and volunteers run activities, crafts, and hand out candy for the 2024 Halloween Block Party Family Fun Day*

## School Outreach



*School Outreach Team*

In 2024, School Outreach:

Served **4,296** children during the **17<sup>th</sup>** annual PB&J project

Hosted **145** group support sessions

Received **2,889** requests for family financial assistance

Addressed **419** attendance and tardy concerns

Provided **564** child abuse/neglect prevention consultations

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

Amesville Elementary

East Elementary

Morrison-Gordon Elementary

Nelsonville-York Elementary

Trimble Elementary

Tri-County Career Center

School Outreach provided **49,860** direct units of service in six 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.



# *Athens County Children Services Support Staff*



*Office Management*



*Business Operations*



*Human Resources*



*Community Events*



*Maintenance*



*Family and Children First Council*



# 2024 Financial Summary

## Executive Director

Otis Crockron, MBA

## Deputy Director

Wendy Shields, MPA

## 2024 Athens County

### Commissioners

Charlie Adkins

Chris Chmiel

Lenny Eliason

## 2024 Board Members

Nancy Schell, Chair

Susan Erlewine, Co-Chair

Julie Lew, Secretary

Reggie Robinson

Keith Adams

David Stretton

Romola Hopkins/Lesli Johnson

Ralph Harvey/Gary Arnold

Chris Innis/Monna French

**2,889**

requests for family  
financial assistance  
through the School  
Outreach Team

in 2024

**1,169**

local children  
received Santa  
Tree gifts

in 2024

## Beginning Balance

\$5,498,974

## 2024 Revenues

● Local Operating Levy	\$6,277,507
● Federal Funds	\$5,155,806
● State Funds	\$2,024,166
● Other Local Funds	\$461,759

## Total Revenue

\$13,919,237

## 2024 Expenditures

● Employee Salaries	\$5,102,346
● Employee Healthcare and Benefits	\$2,335,945
● Placement Care	\$5,359,090
● Clothing, Food, and Transportation	\$168,493
● Health-Related Expenses for Children	\$385,162
● Building, Supplies, & Contracted Services	\$1,320,934
● Community Education & Staff Training	\$99,620
● Other Expenditures	\$928,508

## +Total Expenditures

\$15,700,099

## Ending Balance

\$3,718,112

In 2024, Athens County voters approved a 3 mill, ten-year renewal property tax levy. Athens County Children Services staff and board greatly appreciate the continued support of the Athens community. The primary funding source for ACCS is that and a 2.5 mill ten-year property tax levy approved by the voters in 2019. These operating funds are vital for ACCS to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of the children and families of Athens County.

# PACT & TFC Network Feature

## Practice in Action Together (PACT)

Practice in Action Together (PACT) is Ohio's children services shared practice model developed for (and by) public children services agencies. The Athens PACT local Advisory Group functions as an advisory workgroup of Athens County Children Services, with support from PCSAO, and in partnership with the other seven Cohort 1 counties.

PACT's local Advisory Group's purpose is to drive model implementation by measuring the strength of working relationships among families and staff; identifying areas for behavioral change to align with the four model values; cultivating an environment of ongoing learning and growth throughout the agency; and developing tools and approaches that support behavioral practice change. The local Advisory Group is a multidisciplinary team that includes caseworkers, supervisors, birth parents, young adults with foster care experience, foster/adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers.



*Elevate Healing.  
Build Relationships.*

### WE BELIEVE

Families define "family," and they are experts on their culture, beliefs, and experiences.

### WE BELIEVE

Families have diverse needs, and by partnering with them, we can work together to address those needs.

### WE BELIEVE

Families develop trust when we are honest and inclusive in the decision-making process.

### WE BELIEVE

Families can recover, heal, and grow.



ATHENS COUNTY  
CHILDREN SERVICES

## Southeast Ohio Treatment Foster Care (TFC) Network



*Scan for more info*

In 2024, ACCS was chosen to lead the Southeastern Ohio region's participation in the Ohio DCY Treatment Foster Home pilot program. As one of 10 regional partnerships across the state, the Southeastern Ohio Treatment Foster Care Program is working to recruit and train foster caregivers in Athens, Gallia, Meigs, Jackson, and Perry counties. The goal is to build a strong network of specialized foster families who can care for children with higher needs while keeping them in the communities where they already have connections and support.

Caregivers will be trained in the Pressley Ridge model, an evidence-based approach designed to support children with behavioral health challenges. Each child will receive a personalized treatment plan, and a neuro-sequential brain map will be completed to help the child's team better understand the child's experiences and guide their healing process. Remaining close to their communities, familiar schools, routines, and relationships gives children the strongest foundation to recover and grow.

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

### After-hours or emergencies:

Please call 740.400.7059

### Follow us on Facebook:

Athens County Children Services