

Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

MEETING	Wednesday, December 3, 2025 4:00 pm -6:00 pm – Teams
ATTENDEES	Gabriella Celeste, Beverly Charles, David Crampton, Bianca Crawford, Verna Darby, Kara Davis (DCFS), Andrew Garner, LaToya Howard (DCFS), Angela Newman-White, Deb Rex, Daniel Smith, Karen Stormann (DCFS), Lakecia Wild Guests –Michael Bokmiller (Canopy), David Merriman (Director HHS), Cleveland Documenters
MINUTES	Available Online –Deborah Barber will post minutes upon approval
RECORDER	Deborah Barber

AGENDA ITEMS

	Introduce and Welcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Angela Newman-White opened meeting• Introductions• Motion to accept meeting minutes from October 1, 2025• Bianca Crawford– 1st• Verna Darby– 2nd• Minutes Approved
	Public Comment
DISCUSSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No public comment

DCFS Updates (Karen Stormann)

- **Building Modernization:** DCFS is consolidating staff at Jane Edna Hunter building; satellite offices to be relocated in 2026.
- **Hiring Freeze:** Still in effect; caseloads are being monitored.
- **Kin First Campaign:** Renewed initiative to increase kinship placements by 20% in 2026. Focus on staff education, family engagement, and resource awareness.
- **Positive Trends:**
 - 22% increase in initial kinship placements from 2024 to 2025.
 - 40% decrease in children spending time in the DCFS building from Q1 to Q4.

CPT (Child Protection Team) Updates

- Internal tracking system developed.
- Data exchange with Canopy is ongoing.
- On track to serve more children than in 2024.

Budget Discussion (David Merriman)

- **County Budget Context:**
 - Biennial budget process aligned with the State of Ohio.
 - Levy underperformance and inflation have led to a 10% budget cut across departments.
- **Impact on Services:**
 - Cuts to Canopy, Say Yes to Education, Tapestry, and others.
 - Hiring freeze extended through 2027.
 - \$13M less available for board and care placements.
- **State & Federal Concerns:**
 - Upcoming SNAP and Medicaid cost shifts to counties due to federal HR1.
 - Ohio may pass \$7M+ in SNAP admin costs to counties.
 - Potential for significant service reductions if state doesn't intervene.

Board Reflections

- Concerns about long-term impacts on children and families.
- Emphasis on prevention, early childhood services, and maintaining hope.
- Recognition of the need for community advocacy and collaboration.
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Subcommittees

- **Intervention – Bianca Crawford**

Meeting invites have been sent for 2026

- **Governance – Angela Newman-White**

Term Limits: 7 of 10 members set to roll off in 2027.

Solution: 3 members (Angela Newman White, Deb Rex, Beverly Charles) will step down early in April 2026 to stagger terms.

New Chair: Verna Darby approved to become Chair starting April 2026.

Recruitment: Seeking new members, especially with lived experience.

- **Prevention – Gabriella Celeste**

Next meeting is scheduled for December 5, 2025

Information Sharing/Adjournment

- **Updates -**

Gabriella Celeste: Hosting a conversation on immigrant child rights at Case Western on Dec 12.

Bianca Crawford: Christmas celebration on Dec 21; still adopting families. Community conversation on youth and justice alternatives on Dec 8.

- **Adjournment**

Next Meeting: February 4, 2026, 4:00pm – 6:00 PM
Location – County Headquarters, 2079 E 9th St., Room A, Cleveland, OH 44115