

Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services 2017 Overview

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. In 2017 the Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services took the first step in our journey to build a stronger system to care for, support, and empower the people of our community to thrive. We developed the first ever Department of Health and Human Services Strategic Plan. This plan is a roadmap for how we improve our service to residents and become a better place to work for employees.

Interim Director Walter Parfejewiec, Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has a broad footprint and impact on our community. We serve babies, children, teens, adults, seniors, and families. They come from all walks of life and socio-economic backgrounds. We are the safety net when they fall, are victims of abuse, or get a rough start in life. But we are also a resource, a fresh start, and a launching pad to healing, hope, and opportunity. This report highlights some of our work over the past year but also looks ahead to what we want to accomplish in the coming year.

During my time as the interim Director of DHHS I've learned so much about the community we serve and the 2300 employees who work here. This is our home. It's where we live, work, raise our families, and retire. We've seen the highs and lows of our community and like our sports teams, we never give up. So we come back each day, ready to take the next step on our thousand-mile journey to serve you better.

It is my great pleasure to introduce to you Cuyahoga County's Health and Human Services Annual Report.

Our Health and Human Services department is committed to improving lives and providing supports to all our residents, with a special focus on those most in need. We believe that no matter your circumstance, age, gender affiliation or zip code you should have the opportunity to thrive, be safe, have your voice heard.

With my sincere respect and thanks for your support of our work, and to our employees for the terrific work they do day in and day out for you,

Respectfully,

Armond Budish

The Department of Health and Human Services is made up of eight divisions and offices serving babies, children, teen, adults, seniors, and families across Cuyahoga County. The department's mission is to transform lives at every age and stage through collaboration, innovation, and service; connecting people with the opportunity to live their best lives.

Together We Protect the vulnerable.

Together We Invest in strong families and communities.

Together We Spark opportunity to build a better future.

Together We Thrive

Table of Contents

[Babies](#)

[Children](#)

[Teens](#)

[Adults](#)

[Seniors](#)

[Families](#)

DHHS 2018-2022 Strategic Plan

Leadership team

Walter Parfejewiec - Director

David Merriman - Assistant Director

Cynthia Weiskittel - Division of Children and Family Services

Christy Nicholls - Cuyahoga Job and Family Services

Dr. Richard Jones - Division of Senior and Adult Services

Deborah Watkins - Office of Child Support Services

Dr. Rebekah Dorman - Invest in Children

Robin Martin - Family & Children First Council

Ruth Gillett - Office of Homeless Services

Crystal Bryant - Office of Reentry

Sabrina Roberts - Health Policy and Programs

Jennifer Croessmann - Special Projects Coordinator

Leon Harris III - Performance Evaluation & Innovation

Deonna Kirkpatrick - Communications

Michael Brown - Human Resources

Michael Young - Information Technology

Babies

Babies are among our most vulnerable residents. From adequate pre-natal care, to safe child care when a parent needs to work or go to school, we are working with moms, dads, and caregivers to help make sure our little ones are safe, healthy, and able to thrive.

MomsFirst Program

MomsFirst is a City of Cleveland program that offers case management and home visiting services to pregnant moms until their baby reaches age two, with the goal of improving infant health and reducing infant mortality. Women who participate in the MomsFirst program receive health education on topics such as prenatal care, breastfeeding, family planning, and safe sleep. MomsFirst also assists with referrals to meet insurance, housing, food, and education needs, etc.

Invest in Children is the primary funder of this program (\$457,062), which is conducted by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, and has been independently evaluated by Case Western Reserve University.

Tkeyah - Real Life

Tkeyah was expecting her first child and attending East Tech High School when she became enrolled in the MomsFirst program and met her assigned Community Health Worker, Deedra. Deedra supported her throughout her pregnancy and into the baby's very early childhood. When Tkeyah graduated, Deedra continued to help by providing resources for job and job training and housing information. By the time her baby was two, Tkeyah was working and had her own stable housing. More than two years passed when Tkeyah reached out to Deedra with the news that she was expecting again and wanted her and the MomsFirst program to be a supportive part of her second pregnancy.

Tkeyah delivered a healthy baby girl, and started attending Remington College, from where she graduated with an Associate Degree in Medical Assistance. In August, 2017, she started working at Cleveland Clinic as a Medical Assistant, and is now back in school and working towards a nursing degree. Tkeyah and her children are still in the MomsFirst program and doing well. Deedra continues to help her with different situations to control her stress, and to stay focused on her goals. By supporting pregnant women and new moms in a holistic way, that is built on trusting relationships that are sustained over time, the MomsFirst program is not only helping women have healthier babies, it is helping to build resilient and nurturing families in which those babies will live and thrive.

Fatherhood Matters...

Every month, MetroHealth and the Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Initiative collaborate to host boot camps across nine hospitals in Greater Cleveland. Each class is taught by a veteran dad with their newborn, as an opportunity for new dads to engage with a real baby and ask any questions about infant care or adapting to life with a baby, including staying connected to their partner.

[Read More...](#)

Newborn Home Visiting Program

The Newborn Home Visiting program provides a single nurse home visit to families on Medicaid during the perinatal period. During the perinatal visit, a head to toe assessment is conducted of the newborn, and maternal health concerns are addressed as well. The registered nurse completes a non-invasive health screening of the mother which includes a maternal depression screening, and questionnaire to discuss the health of the parent and newborn.

The goals of the program are to improve neonatal health outcomes, enhance parenting skills and link families to community resources.

A Grateful Mother

Danielle, a mother of 3, had a Newborn Home visit for her newborn baby, J’La. During Danielle’s visit the nurse checked her vital signs and discovered that Danielle had dangerous blood pressure readings of 166/120 and 160/110. The Nurse advised her to urgently call her physician and inform him of her blood pressure readings. Danielle called her physician and was immediately directed to the hospital for monitoring. Danielle spent 2 nights in the hospital, was given magnesium and left the hospital on blood pressure medication. Danielle went back in 1 week for a recheck and stated she feels much better. Danielle and her husband have an amazing family unit. Recently, Danielle sent a text to her Newborn Nurse and stated, “Thank you! I would not have known something was wrong if you didn’t come to my house!” Thankfully the nurse acted quickly and Danielle received the urgent care she needed. Danielle would have been home unmonitored for several more weeks if it were not for the Newborn Home Visiting Program.

Opioids and the Devastating Chain Reaction

Many of us know someone who has been touched by our national opioid epidemic. In 2016, 668 of our residents lost their lives due to a drug overdose – the most in a single year in Cuyahoga County’s history, with the majority involving an opioid. Unfortunately, we are expected to surpass this total in 2017, as we are anticipating over 800 drug overdose deaths once all final toxicology reports are in. The overdoses are having a tremendous impact on our county. First and foremost, fatal overdose victims pay the ultimate price – losing their lives. Family and friends are also severely impacted by this loss. Parents lose children, siblings lose siblings, young children lose their parent(s).

The Cuyahoga County’s Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is seeing more drug exposed newborns. There were 483 cases of drug exposed babies in 2016. In 2017 that number grew to 535. Over 2,100 children and teens are in temporary or permanent custody of the County – the highest since 2011. To make matters even more challenging, we’ve seen a decline in foster homes and in-network foster homes.

Looking Ahead

The MomsFirst Program is a partner agency of Invest in Children, and is working to reduce infant mortality in the city of Cleveland. Through our work with First Year Cleveland, we are leading an expansion of the MomsFirst program in 2018 with newly secured funding. The expansion will increase the number of MomsFirst Community Health Workers, and Community Liaisons, who form the basis of the program’s efforts to support pregnant women and new moms. Additionally, we are convening a leadership group of the County’s newborn, infant, and toddler home visiting programs to coordinate work, eliminate overlap in outreach and recruitment, and develop a more seamless client experience across programs.

Children

Young brains grow and develop at an astonishing rate. A child's earliest experiences and environments help lay the foundation for learning and success for years to come. We are investing resources and partnering with caregivers and educators across the county to help pre-school and school age children reach their full potential from pre-k through graduation.

Family and Schools Together - FAST

The Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County supports the Family and Schools Together (FAST) program for children and their families as a multifamily group intervention designed to build protective factors for children and empower parents to be the primary prevention agents for their own children. FAST enlists children (3 to 10 years old) and their parents using engaging activities led by local school and agency partners in times of non-crisis.

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a preventive and intervention program aimed at improving family functioning which is intended to increase the resiliency of children. FAST's primary goals are to enhance family functioning, decrease risk of school failure, decrease risk of substance abuse in parents and children, and reduce identified stressors in the lives of parents and children. Most significant is the inclusion of parents within FAST to engage them with their local schools, which ultimately leads to children's academic success. Inclusion of parents is achieved through focused, engaging activities led by local school and agency partners in times of non-crisis. That is, parents are engaged with FAST as part of their children's activities in school, and not as an institutional response to their children's behaviors.

Since the 2010-2011 school-year, a total of 1,295 families have engaged in FAST programming across 33 schools. More than 90% of families reported attending all eight weekly FAST sessions. Reports indicate a moderate level of satisfaction with FAST programming, with parents providing a 9.3 (out of 10) satisfaction rating and teachers providing a rating of 6.2 (out of 10), respectively.

Out of School Time (OST)

The Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County supports Out of School Time (OST) programs for children and teenagers as a proven strategy for keeping kids out of trouble, improving school performance, and preparing youth for careers and stable adulthood. These after-school and summer programs immerse youngsters of all ages in positive activities like tutoring and educational enrichment, arts and culture exposure, recreation, career exploration, and college readiness.

Out of School Time (OST) activities are coordinated by Starting Point, which disperses grant funds to neighborhood agencies to provide OST programming across Cuyahoga County. Examples of OST programming include educational and academic services, enrichment programming, career exploration activities, recreation, college readiness, and workforce development. The overarching purpose of the evaluation of OST programming is to identify potential impacts on youth development outcomes as well as report on OST dosage levels (e.g., amount of activity such contacts and total hours).

Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program

In 2017, Invest in Children's Universal Pre-kindergarten program more than doubled in size from a capacity of 2000 preschoolers, to 4,600! The expansion was the result of a very successful campaign launched a year earlier that combined new public and private investments to fund the program's growth.

High quality pre-kindergarten gives children a firm foundation for educational success. Research indicates that children in high quality pre-k programs make gains in early literacy, pre-reading, and early math; have more positive interactions

with peers and adults; and are better prepared for kindergarten. UPK in Cuyahoga County makes high quality early care and education accessible to families at selected sites by providing funding to enhance quality, as well as scholarship assistance to low and moderate income families.

UPK sites include public preschools, Head Start programs, community child care centers, and family child care homes. All UPK sites meet a series of standards, proven through research to be the hallmarks of quality that result in improved school readiness. These standards include increased teacher qualifications and commensurate compensation, lower staff to child ratios, use of approved curricula, engagement of families, and family linkages to necessary supportive services. Starting Point, the regional child care resource and referral agency, serves as lead agency on this effort, and partners with Invest in Children to provide technical assistance and training to all UPK sites.

Tonesha's son Aiden is medically fragile and attends the Early Childhood Enrichment Center, a high-quality Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program. Because of his delicate state, he is in and out of the hospital often. Tonesha needs so much time off to facilitate his care, that it is difficult to retain full time employment. This makes her ineligible for certain types of assistance offered to individuals who are working. Aiden receives a "UPK Scholarship," and other financial assistance that allows him to stay in preschool and continue to prepare for kindergarten.

Keeping Our Children Safe

Every day our hotline operators answer calls about suspected child abuse and neglect. Our 696-KIDS Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including holidays) to take calls about suspected child abuse and neglect, along with families who need preventive services or other support. When someone is concerned that a child may be at risk they can speak to a trained Child Protection Specialist who will document the allegation, assess whether it requires an emergency response, and determine whether to assign it for investigation. After investigating the allegation, if there is enough evidence that a child is in danger, Child Protection Specialists may work with prosecutors and Juvenile Court to obtain protective supervision, emergency custody, temporary custody, or permanent custody of a child. Once in custody it is our goal to find a permanent, safe home for these children.

Looking Ahead

Access to affordable, high-quality preschool is an important step toward fostering children's development and preparing them for kindergarten and the years beyond. The Office of Early Childhood offers scholarships to families in need. At the end of 2017, UPK preschools were at about 83% capacity. In 2018 we will explore options to sustain the current funding level and to expand the UPK program to include more high-quality preschools as well as engage in a marketing campaign to publicize UPK, increase awareness of the importance of early childhood education, and fill all vacant slots. We will also expand our Special Needs Child Care program to offer more intensive services in classrooms with children demonstrating severe behavioral challenge

Teens

The teen years can be exciting and confusing no matter what your background or family circumstances. Setting personal, educational and career goals can help young people navigate through rough waters and launch into successful adulthood. HHS funds or provides several programs aimed at keeping teens in school through graduation, helping them overcome obstacles to become leaders and on a path to post-secondary education and careers.

Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG)

Students of Promise partners with students who need extra guidance to reach future goals. The program helps increase school attendance and academic achievement, promotes students to their next grade level and through to graduation, and reduces negative behaviors.

YOU - Youth Opportunities Unlimited

The Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County supports youth employment programs for teenagers through Youth Opportunities Unlimited's (Y.O.U.) Pathways Internship program. The goal of Pathways is to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with area employers that will allow students to explore career fields and gain practical work experience, while helping businesses meet their needs. The program places teens with mentors in 4-8 week career-related work experiences that align with career pathways and allow them to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to a professional work environment. Internships are meant to enhance the student's educational background by providing opportunities for career exploration and development of industry specific skills, while encouraging personal growth.

The focus of Youth Employment is to prepare young people for the workforce by providing job experience, career development or training. This workforce preparation typically occurs through internships, job placements, or career exploration programs. The Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County supports youth employment programs for teenagers through Youth Opportunities Unlimited's (Y.O.U.) Pathways Internship Program. Y.O.U. matches teenagers from Cuyahoga County, ages 14-18, with meaningful summer work experiences. The jobs provide a constructive opportunity and a safe environment for the teens to work and learn the skills they need to obtain a job. Teens learn first-hand about different careers that, with more education, lead to rewarding careers while being mentored by Y.O.U. staff and their supervisors.

Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC)

The Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC) is a 4-H positive youth development initiative coordinated through the Ohio State University Extension and funded through the support of the Family and Children First Council. YALC provides a stable environment for youth to access developmental benefits from their involvement in an organized youth program. Social skills, initiative, and teamwork are utilized as young people from across Cuyahoga County converge monthly to plan events and identify opportunities to teach their peers what they learn and complete service projects in the community.

YALC participant

Foster Graduation Class of 2017 – Rising Stars

Each year the Division of Children and Family Services hosts a special graduation ceremony for all youth in custody who are seniors and graduate from their respective high schools. The class of 2017 presented 47 graduates, from high

schools throughout Ohio. This number represents 76% of the 62 youth, in DCFS custody, who entered their senior year for the 2016-17 school term.

The graduation keynote address was given by foster care alumnus, Jamole Callahan. Jamole shared his story of being in care and aging out, and how the journey of being on his own lead him to push himself, test limits and beat the odds. He is now an international speaker and trainer advocating for changes in the foster care system. Jamole's message was to discover who you are and figure out what your mark on society will be, and then "make it happen". Each youth received a laptop, printer, \$500 stipend to help with their education expenses and a copy of the FosteRevolutaries journal, in which Mr. Callahan was a contributing author.

Finally, in 2017 the third cohort of Sullivan-Deckard Opportunity Scholars started their college journey. This generous scholarship offers youth who age out of foster care tuition, room and board at Cleveland State University along with a community of support to help them be successful. Previous scholarship recipients returned to offer words of wisdom to the incoming Sullivan-Deckard Scholars, which includes three graduates from Cuyahoga County.

Looking Ahead

Teens who age out of foster care are more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment and incarceration. However children who are removed from their home have better outcomes if we help them achieve permanency safely within 12 months of removal. Permanency means the child or teen exits county custody by being reunited with their parent, granting legal custody to another caregiver, or being adopted. The federal benchmark for permanency in 12 months is 40.5%. Currently the Division of Children and Family Services is at 43.6%. In 2018 DCFS is working to decrease the number of teen who age out of foster care two strategies:

1. 30 Days to Family: an initiative to help locate relatives for children entering foster care
2. Centralized kinship caregiver assessments: moving assessments to one team to help expedite the process and ensure uniform application of standards.

Adults

From benefits and services to address residents' basic needs, to education, job training and career coaching, we are committed to helping the people of Cuyahoga County build a better life.

Innovative workforce services, opportunities for returning citizens, and building relationships that can transform lives. Those are just some of the ways we're helping residents thrive.

Propelling Our Residents to the Next Skill Level

Cuyahoga Job and Family Services (CJFS) is steadily expanding its work with community partners to assist the residents of Cuyahoga County on their path to upward income mobility and career advancement. A partnership with Ohio Means Jobs is creating an expansion of workforce services through the Workforce Opportunity Resource Center. The Workforce Opportunity Resource Center is an important resource for unemployed and underemployed residents to access career readiness services, vocational and occupational training funds, and other services that will prepare individuals for careers in many in-demand fields.

By providing services through a variety of community partners, the Workforce Opportunity Resource Center is able to provide referrals for Adult Basic Education; High School Equivalency Test Preparation; English Classes for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL); career pathways, assessments and counseling; and enrollment into fast-track training programs.

A push to increase access to Cuyahoga County residents has sparked the expansion of the Workforce Opportunity Resource Center to three locations in 2018; Central - 1641 Payne Avenue, East - 8111 Quincy Avenue, and West - 4261 Fulton Parkway. The East and West locations have been offering work supports through county partners, and with the combined efforts of CJFS there will be additional services, such as case management to ensure residents are connected to resources that meet their basic needs, assist in removing barriers, and help achieve self-sufficiency.

Aspiring to Gain More Knowledge

Aspire Greater Cleveland is a partnership with Cuyahoga Job and Family Services (CJFS), whose goal is to provide more accessibility to education and workforce development programs for residents. Aspire Great Cleveland is a tremendous resource for GED preparation classes, English Classes for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) classes, one-on-one tutoring and basic skill classes for adults, and workplace education.

In an effort to increase the number of skilled and qualified residents, Cuyahoga Job and Family Services (CJFS) is emphasizing the importance of education by reaching out to our recipients of Cash, Food and Medical assistance, that could benefit from the support of GED preparation through ASPIRE Greater Cleveland. Outreach efforts moving into 2018 will start with reaching out to over 60,000 of Cuyahoga County residents to offer GED preparation support through the ASPIRE Greater Cleveland program.

The local ASPIRE Greater Cleveland programs and CJFS will be tracking information such as, how participants heard about the ASPIRE program, what services are needed, and demographic information. Along with this information, attainment of a High School Diploma or GED is information that is used to determine eligibility for other workforce programs throughout the county.

Focus on a New Generation

The Cuyahoga County Internship Program is an expansion of the Summer Youth Employment Program. The Cuyahoga County Internship Program's focus is low-income young adults, ages 18-24, who are not in school or working. The

program is a consortium consisting of local providers, including Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U), Cuyahoga Community College, El Barrio at The Centers for Families and Children, Ohio Guidestone, Towards Employment, and other organizations and training providers that work collaboratively with the Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services, Job and Family Services, Workforce Development, and Ohio Means Jobs - Cleveland/Cuyahoga County.

The Cuyahoga County Internship Program is based on six program components; Career Exploration through Work Experiences, Job Readiness and Career Session, Career Coaching and Ongoing Case Management, Credential Training, Employer Engagement and Permanent Placement, and Referral of Young Adults to Other Projects and Initiatives. June 2017 began the year-round efforts to provide the six program components to the young adult population of Cuyahoga County. June 2017 through December 2017, 323 participants were successfully connected to consortium partners.

43% of the participants successfully connected with consortium partners start Job Readiness Training with a completion rate of 65% and 18% still enrolled

37% entered Career Pathway Technical Training with 49.5% completing training and 50% still in training or awaiting a start date

4% were permanently hired

With the Cuyahoga County Internship Program in place, the participants were equipped with the skills they needed to secure a career pathway with some well-known employers, such as University Hospitals, CVS, Spectrum, First Federal Lakewood, and Pierre's Ice Cream. With outreach efforts growing and increasing partnerships being formed, 2018 is on track to create even more opportunities for our young adult residents.

A Partnership on the Right Track

With the increased need of filling positions for local in-demand careers, Cuyahoga Job and Family Services (CJFS) and Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) have partnered to create the Workforce Development Alliance. The Workforce Development Alliance offers scholarships to income-eligible residents for enrollment into one of four available fast-track certification training programs at Tri-C; Certified Production Technician (CPT), State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA), Patient Access Specialist, or Truck Driving Academy.

Fast-Track Certification Training Programs

- Certified Production Technician (CPT)
- State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA)
- Patient Access Specialist
- Truck Driving Academy

The CJFS and Tri-C Workforce Development Alliance is a key resource that is going to provide successful candidates the opportunity and support they need to gain valuable skills, start a career path, and secure their financial stability. Looking forward to 2018, outreach efforts to inform current Ohio Works First (OWF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients, who are successfully participating in a work activity, will be expanded. Contact will be initiated to invite participants to monthly information sessions about the programs and requirements, then interested participants will be scheduled for testing to ensure they are at the appropriate math and reading levels required by the training program. Individuals that do not test at the appropriate level, or that need to obtain their GED, are then referred to the ASPIRE Greater Cleveland program. Information sessions will also include testimonies and presentations from successful program participants and local employers that hire graduates of the certification programs, in an effort to demonstrate the success of the program.

Open Table

Open Table is a national program rooted at the local level where volunteers meet together once a week for a year to help out a person in their community. In Cuyahoga County, it's used to help young adults who have aged out of foster care. Through the tables, these young people form a support network that can help them stay focused and achieve their goals.

Housing First

"Housing First" is the community initiative to end homelessness for persons who have significant mental health disabilities and who have been homeless and living on the streets for years. Over the past 12 months, 180 additional new units of Permanent Supportive Housing were either approved for Tax Credits, began construction, or began leasing up.

Since FY2010, there has been a 77% reduction in the number of chronically homeless persons.

Fewer than 2% of people housed through Housing First, return to homelessness. The new units, combined with the existing 600 PSH units, will enable our community to declare an "end to chronic homelessness" by 2019.

Housing First Initiative staff and residents

Veteran Homelessness

Homelessness among Veterans is a national crisis. Men and women returning from military duty in Vietnam and the Middle East experience a disproportionate rate of homelessness and disabilities related to their service experience. Ending homelessness for Veterans is a high priority in Cuyahoga County.

Since 2014, veteran homelessness has been reduced by 62%.

Our community has implemented a system that outreaches to homeless veterans quickly, offers immediate shelter, and links the Veteran to permanent housing in less than 90 days. The Louis Stokes Medical Center is a key partner in these efforts, leveraging local and federal resources with targeted VA housing and service funding.

Family Homelessness

Families headed by young adults (age 18 to 24) are the fastest growing demographic among households experiencing homelessness. This statistic has contributed to the fact that the age group most likely to experience homelessness includes newborns or infants in the first year of life, with children age one to five as the next most likely age group to experience homelessness. Cuyahoga County provides family emergency shelter so no family will be on the street, and offers Rapid Re-Housing assistance to every family in shelter to reduce the length of time that children experience housing instability

Reentry Programs

Cuyahoga County is one of very few local governments in the nation to establish an office dedicated to helping residents returning from incarceration. Many returning citizens face real barriers to successful reentry. They have served their time but come home to find that the sentence lasts forever in the form of severely limited resources and opportunities combined with the shame and stigma of a criminal record.

The Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry leads and convenes broad coalitions to advocate for legislative and societal changes to improve awareness of and acceptance for reentrants as restored and valuable members of communities. It partners with a wide range of stakeholders who are all invested in positive systemic change, reducing recidivism and creating safer communities through reentry work.

LMM Chopping for Change Graduates Class #4

Chopping for Change Culinary Training Program

Kimberly Waller was in the first Chopping for Change class that began in January 2016 at Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM). After being released on Transitional Control, she continued with the program, worked part-time at a Subway and graduated in August, 2016. After graduation, she was hired as a full-time Case Aide at LMM, with benefits. She continues to succeed in that role and now has her own car and apartment.

“During my incarceration I realized that I had to do something to change my life or I was going to become a repeat offender.”

I took advantage of every single program that I was eligible for and was allowed to participate in. When I heard about the “Chopping for Change” program I knew it was something that I had to do. I had always had a love for cooking and being in a kitchen environment. Most of my work history was restaurant related and my father at one point in time owned two restaurants in Tennessee as well, so I could see this being a good start to a better future immediately upon my release. I had absolutely no idea all of the things that LMM would eventually help me fix in my life. I thought it was going to be all about cooking and the kitchen but it ended up being so much more than that!! I joined the program because I wanted to better my life and learn how to not make the same mistakes I had been making over and over again. The “Chopping for Change” program ultimately became the best thing that has ever happened to me in my life so far. “

North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center

North Star is both a concept and a place that helps returning citizens and their families navigate the challenges associated with reentry. North Star is a one-stop center that provides service linkages and a wide range of programming, classes and groups on site. Membership is free, the atmosphere is respectful and welcoming and family members are encouraged to share in the program and services with their returning citizen.

“[Here] in Cleveland, a lot of employers are open-minded, and willing to give second chances, as opposed to maybe some of the other areas in Ohio.”

North Star has a packed monthly calendar of community and self-help meetings and services and has partnered with a diverse group of community providers. North Star provides a free computer lab and is an Ohio Benefits Bank site. It is open 64-hours a week on a drop-in basis. This is a flagship program that has received national interest in being replicated. North Star also dedicates specialists to operate a comprehensive pre-and post-release reentry model.

Office of Reentry Supported Programming
Office of Child Support Services

Looking Ahead

A goal for 2018 is to reduce the total number of homeless individuals in Cuyahoga County. The Office of Homeless Services is working with community partners to develop a plan to end youth homelessness and continue progress towards ending veteran homelessness. 62 new Permanent Supportive Housing Units will open in 2018, and 66 Permanent Supportive Housing Units under development and will open in 2019. Priorities for 2018 also include:

1. Targeted case management for housing stability
2. Developing more and better landlord/rental options
3. Increase subsidies for Permanent Housing for homeless persons
4. Continue to build system capacity to quickly move people from homelessness to housing

Seniors

Older adults are the nation's fastest growing demographic. Cuyahoga County is no exception. As our family, friends, and neighbors mature we're striving to build an age-friendly community where older adults can remain safe, engaged, and valued members of our neighborhoods.

Seniors/older adults

By the year 2030, older persons age 60 and over are expected to grow to 31% of Cuyahoga County's population, outnumbering youth 20 years old and younger. With this growing demographic, older persons are facing many opportunities and challenges. As many are celebrating the gift of longer life and still contributing economically, many more are struggling with debilitating illnesses and chronic conditions such as dementia, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes. Many of these same older adults are also coping with isolation, fewer friends and fewer social networks because of losses, depression and poor nutrition, all of which are exacerbated by lack of adequate transportation. The mission of Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services (DSAS) is to empower seniors and adults with disabilities to age successfully by providing resources and support that preserve their independence. We serve older persons age 60 and over, as well as adults with disabilities age 18-59, through our Five Centers of Excellence (click on the links below for more information):

- [Adult Protective Services](#)
- [Aging and Disability Resource Center \(ADRC\)](#)
- [Community Social Services Program \(CSSP\)](#)
- [Home Support Services](#)
- [Options for Independent Living \(Options\)](#)

Senior Center Innovation

In 2017, DSAS also continued its commitment to supporting senior center innovation. Three senior center collaboratives received \$50,000 each to implement pilot projects that they designed the previous year:

- **One Call for Wellness** is a collaboration between Benjamin Rose Institute, the City of Cleveland Department of Aging, ESOP, Fairhill Partners and the Greater Cleveland Foodbank. Considered a coordinated programming initiative, One Call provides a one-stop-shop for evidence-based, evidence-informed and other health and wellness programs for older adults in the city of Cleveland.
- **The C.A.R.E. Project** (Communities Assisting Residential Elderly) is a collaboration between **eight (8)** cities, including: Cleveland Heights, Lyndhurst, Highland Hts., Maple Hts., Mayfield Hts., Mayfield Village, Solon and South Euclid. It was developed to assist low to middle income homeowners age 60 and over, with simple home maintenance tasks to keep them safe and independent. Since its inception, this innovative program has assisted over twenty (20) older residents in eight municipalities. C.A.R.E. homeowners pay a minimal annual fee to access "service bundles" designed to assist with basic home chores such as garden clean-up, technology assistance, home organization, window washing and code violation repair. C.A.R.E. is unique in several aspects:
 - Although C.A.R.E. employs a sliding scale fee for lower income participants, the typical C.A.R.E. member is someone of moderate income who may be slightly over the level for income based programs and therefore cannot easily access this type of home maintenance support;
 - All work is performed by community volunteers which has created value added outcomes. Many of the volunteers

- are students and younger adults; the intergenerational community building has been inspiring;
- C.A.R.E. members are assessed for senior independent living risks so that appropriate supports and referrals can be put into place to enhance their dignity and quality of life.

Division of Senior and Adult Services

Looking Ahead

In 2018 the Division of Senior and Adult Services plans to launch a Geriatric Mental Health Assessment Team. We will forge relationships and build collaboration with other mental health agencies and county programs to ensure mentally ill older adults are treated with respect and dignity. Mental health screens will be provided in the DSAS case management system (i.e. depression, suicide-risk) and these screens will be reviewed to determine clients with mental health needs and ensuring those clients are connected to the appropriate services.

Families

The strength of a community can be measured by the strength of its families. HHS supports our families in many ways, but we can't do it alone. We must drive collaboration among our regional partners and work with employees to provide a superior customer experience as we serve clients and families. Here are just a few of our efforts to work with partners inside and outside county government to help families thrive.

Modernizing the Benefits Process

The model that Cuyahoga Job and Family Services (CJFS) is adopting will eventually lead to a fully operational call center where cross-trained caseworkers answer in-bound calls related to Medicaid, Food Assistance (also called SNAP), and Cash Assistance (OWF), with a focus on “first-call resolution.” Currently, the call center services Medicaid applications and renewals. Because the model lends itself to robust measurement, CJFS has been tracking key performance indicators that will be used to monitor success over time.

The agency’s primary metric for success is whether the caseworker is able to respond to the customer’s request right away, such as processing their application or conducting their recertification interview.

Throughout the pilot period (January through June 2017), the average wait time never rose above 3.3 minutes, and was typically less than 1 minute. The first-time resolution describes the percentage of calls where a benefit determination was made by the caseworker, without the need to request additional information or send follow up work to another worker. The Call Center has achieved an impressive 85 percent first-time resolution rate.

In 2018, the State will transition SNAP and TANF caseloads from CRIS-E, the legacy eligibility system, to Ohio Benefits, the new eligibility system that currently supports Medicaid. Cuyahoga JFS is preparing for this change and working through its modernization department to adapt our new call-in model to include SNAP and TANF.

Increasing Access to County Services by Partnering with Libraries

Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish, along with Cuyahoga County Public Library and Cleveland Public Library leadership, announced an innovative partnership in August 2017 to bring county services to neighborhoods at local library branches. This partnership ensures that county residents can conveniently access benefits resources while also connecting with education and workforce development programs at the library. By partnering with public libraries Cuyahoga County can touch residents in every community, every age, and every background, no matter their zip code.

The County is partnering with the libraries for two programs – the Community Navigator Program and Aspire Greater Cleveland.

What is the Public Benefits Community Navigator Program?

This partnership provides residents with increased access to safety net programs and stabilizing services. Cuyahoga Job and Family Services is modernizing how residents apply for public benefits, including assistance with food, medical and child care by giving residents access to the applications and forms at their local libraries. In order to make the process as simple and efficient and customer-friendly as possible, over 400 library staff have been trained to provide residents with public benefit navigation services. The navigator program is available at all Cuyahoga County library branches and will soon be available at Cleveland Public Library branches and other independent libraries.

Aspire Greater Cleveland

Our shared goal with our partners, including the library systems is to design and implement a coordinated, well-functioning workforce system that delivers effective services. The Aspire Greater Cleveland Library systems partnership connects the current needs of job seekers in entry-level jobs with services that support them and helps move them into a higher career and wage pathway.

Hope for the Holidays

Hope for the Holidays helps warm up December for many

This past December, DCFS community partners stepped up to provide one of the most successful holiday gift drives ever to help our kids and their families celebrate the holidays. Over 20 volunteers joined with another 20 of our staff to distribute gifts to over 400 foster children. Our partners provided enough gifts to allow us to distribute them to another 1800 families served by DCFS in 2017.

Continuum of Care

The Cuyahoga County Service Coordination model is a navigation process designed to direct parents with children, prenatal through graduation, to appropriate services. It directs parents to a full scale of quality services for their children, particularly kids who are having a tough time, and are having difficulties with the traditional service system. It focuses on developing a coordinated and cooperative public system infrastructure that promotes cross system collaboration—at the policy, programmatic, and case levels.

The Service Coordination Team (SCT) exists to help children with multiple needs and who are involved in multiple public systems, and their families, access appropriate community services and to assure the effective coordination and delivery of services among systems for the child's best possible health and safety. This team works within the public systems to ensure families are not experiencing system barriers. The Service Coordination Team works with family teams ("wraparound" or "wrap" teams) to assist when children are in crisis or in need of a short-term placement. These system liaisons are able to commit dollars on behalf of the systems they represent, and help monitor the child's length of stay. This subcommittee meets monthly.

Office of Child Support Services partnership with Passages, Inc.

In 2017, the Office of Child Support Services began a partnership with Passages, Inc. to refer child support clients to Passages for career counseling and parenting skills development. Passages is a non-profit organization dedicated to enriching quality of life for children, fathers, and mothers through self-improvement resources.

The OCSS-Passages partnership focuses on referrals to New Beginnings for New Fathers which is a program designed for young fathers (16-25 years old), expectant fathers, or fathers with children under one-year old. The program provides job readiness and job placement programs, fatherhood development, financial literacy and legal assistance. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services/Ohio Commission on Fatherhood was awarded the New Beginnings for New Fathers five year grant in October 2015. Passages, Inc. is one of the four Fatherhood programs providing New Beginnings for New Fathers service delivery.

In addition to referring clients to Passages, OCSS meets with each New Beginning for New Fathers cohort to address their case specific concerns and to message OCSS' transition to a family-centric agency. This partnership has resulted in

increased collections of support, warrant recalls, access to parenting resources, and community education.

Looking forward: OCSS looks forward to increasing the number of referrals and improved program outcomes.

Increasing access to child support payment methods

Any door our customers walk through is the right door to access services and resources provided by county government. For the Office of Child Support Services that means providing multiple convenient options for parents to make child support payments in person, online, and by mail.

As part of the No Wrong Door policy, in February 2017, Job and Family Services began accepting payments at the Virgil E. Brown on Payne Avenue. Non-custodial parents can now pay with cash, money order, or cashier's check at the Negotiable Items window at 1641 Payne Avenue. In the initial month that the new payment window opened at Virgil E. Brown, \$15,527.81 in cash was collected.

Additional payment locations are available at the Justice Center, the Treasurer's Office and Juvenile Court as well. If a parent cannot make it to a county location, MoneyGram payments can be made at their local WalMart or CVS. Providing several convenient payment locations, along with online and mail-in payment options, give parents greater access to services and opportunities to provide vital support for their families.

In 2017, total cash child support collections exceeded \$3,600,000.00 at the four county payment locations.

Here is the list of in-person payment locations: <https://cjfs.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/payment-information.aspx>

looking ahead

A priority in 2018 is to see a reduction of the average length of time individuals and families enrolled in emergency shelter and overflow projects experience homelessness. The Office of Homeless Services is working with community partners to assist families with complex needs with intensive case management services sooner, to engage family mediation to facilitate positive outcomes, and increase access to employment opportunities and benefits.

Currently, 1 in 3 children are involved in Ohio's child support program. Child support can make a real difference in managing food, shelter, child care, transportation, clothing, medical and dental expenses. The Office of Child Support is engaged in various projects and innovations designed to enhance the child support process:

- Developing technology, tools and resources that will allow for better communication and service delivery with customers.
- Utilization of research and analysis to identify efficient processes.
- The Families Forward aims to increase reliable child support payments among Non-Custodial Parents by preparing them to work in higher-paying, in-demand jobs with opportunities for career advancement.
- Lean Project: Termination of Support. This project will seek to reduce redundancies and inefficiencies of the termination process.

Boot Camp for New Dads

Every month, MetroHealth and the Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Initiative collaborate to host boot camps across nine hospitals in Greater Cleveland. Each class is taught by a veteran dad with their newborn, as an opportunity for new dads to engage with a real baby and ask any questions about infant care or adapting to life with a baby, including staying connected to their partner.

“Men feel more secure in talking openly among other men. So, this is just for them. During pregnancy all the emphasis is on the mom and while the dad is often there for a Lamaze class or infant care class, his questions are not always addressed,” said Sandi Hoch, childbirth education coordinator at MetroHealth.

Every class is interactive. It starts with time for the men to just observe how to care for a baby, then they talk about infant health and safety, managing baby into their lives and what kind of dad did they have or what kind of dad they want to be. There is also time for personal questions about helping mom, intimacy and sex.

It's important for dads to know about the health benefits of breastfeeding too. Women look to their partners for support and acceptance, so dad needs to help her from being discouraged.

“Babies have no instructions. Our camp is about showing him what to do. It’s a safe space for men to ask questions on things they are worried about and be directly educated on baby care.

“Babies have no instructions. Our camp is about showing him what to do. It’s a safe space for men to ask questions on things they are worried about and be directly educated on baby care. Even our veteran dad instructors leave the class feeling more confident in their parenting skills. For many of them, this is the first solo outing with the baby... and that is a big accomplishment,” said Hoch.

Boot camp can be especially beneficial for dad’s co-parenting in separate homes. Camp participants can apply for a free pack-n-play as a safe place to sleep for the baby’s second home – whether it is at dad's house or a grandparent's home.

“More than 7,000 men have benefited from Boot Camp for New Dads in Cleveland. We are very proud to say our program educates about 6% of dads in our community—that’s about 800-1000 new dads each year since we have kept records and three times higher participation than every major national city,” added Hoch.

Open Table Young adults who have experienced foster care connect with a committed group of volunteer mentors

Open Table Model –Making a Big Difference to Older Youth in Foster Care

Open Table is a national program rooted at the local level where volunteers meet together once a week for a year to help out a person in their community. In Cuyahoga County, it's used to help young adults who have aged out of foster care. Through the tables, these young people form a support network that can help them stay focused and achieve their goals.

Each year over 130 young people leaving foster care without much permanent support in Cleveland. Two years ago, The Open Table model was launched here to connect these youth with a group of mentors to provide encouragement and support for them. Under the model a group of 6-8 volunteers from organizations all over the community gather weekly to mentor one young adult who has aged out of care.

Since Open Table has become a part of my life it has been nothing less than an eye opening experience. To sit with a group of strangers is needless to say scary. After feeling invisible for so long it's terrifying! But to find out these strangers aren't like the many of "others" I've known is amazing! They're not driven by profit or gain. They are not punching the clock waiting for the hour to be over. They are there because they want to be. Because they want to help. They want to care about me. ME...It's scary. It's new. But it's Great!

At an appreciation dinner held last year, some of the young participants reflected on what made them most thankful about having a community of caring adults. Here are some of their comments:

"I hold a lot of my thoughts in. But now I know that once a week, I can sit with these people, who are my family and I can let it all out. After I do, I am ready for a whole new week with a whole new mindset, because I have positive people in my life."

"My table is the best, they all have big hearts. I am so thankful they embrace me for who I am." "It's just hard to get the concept that you can receive support from people who are not your family. But as you can see, it is possible and you just have to take advantage of the opportunities you have been given. I am blessed."

The table members also shared what they were grateful for, and one woman shared that the table was "making her life big". She spoke about how the diversity around the table and the work of helping the young lady on her table was really expanding her heart and her life in ways she didn't know were possible.

Partners like Cleveland.com have been sharing stories about the program and its' participants. As a result, new potential mentors are calling to get involved. They also hosted a meeting to recruit new table members. At that event youth also spoke about the positive impact the program was having on their lives.

When Tiara, took the microphone, she was nervous. She shared her story with a room of about 250 potential volunteers who came to the cleveland.com office to find out more about helping others in their community through Open Table.

Tiara said she felt invisible going through the foster care system.

“Since Open Table has been part of my life it’s been nothing less than an eye-opening experience,” she said. “To sit with a group of strangers is, to say the least, scary. After feeling invisible for so long, it’s terrifying. But to find out these strangers are unlike any others... They’re not driven by profit or gain. They’re not punching a clock waiting for the hour to be over.” By the time she was done, she was in tears and the room gave her a standing ovation.

Dominique, a former table member, was in and out of foster care throughout her childhood. About three months after her table started, she found out she was pregnant. She was afraid what this new group of people, all women, were going to say about her pregnancy. They surprised her. “I didn’t realize they were going to be so supportive,” she said. “They were buying clothes, they were giving me advice. I had books on top of books on top of books.”

The stories varied, but all had the same theme: Open Table had given each member a new family. The stories also encouraged new mentors to come forward to form new tables for additional youth.

[More about Open Table](#)

[Return to Adults](#)

[Appreciate](#)

[Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Report Abuse](#)