

July 31, 2008



Kristin Gilbert
Administrator, Justice Services
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services

Steven W. Hanson
Manager, Children, Families and the Courts Programs
The Supreme Court of Ohio

Dear Kristin and Steve,

It was a great opportunity to gather with the other county teams at the May 1st and 2nd Ohio Summit on Children. I appreciate the efforts of all who organized this Summit, including yourselves, Pat Latham, Governor Strickland and Chief Justice Moyer.

It has long been a dream of mine to develop a Family Dependency Drug Court in Trumbull County. I would estimate that *at least 75%* of the referrals to Trumbull County Children Services have some reference to drug or alcohol abuse as part of the concern for children. We have a very difficult time reunifying children within the one-year time frame when parents don't "get serious" about their substance abuse for the first nine or ten months, if then. The facilitator for our table at the Summit introduced me to Christine Raffaele from the Supreme Court of Ohio, who was very supportive and encouraged us to make application for a "start up" grant. In fact, Christine is traveling to Trumbull County on August 1st to assist us in completing the necessary paperwork.

Those at the Summit promoted team and community collaboration in developing our County Plan. Trumbull's team at the Summit consisted of the MRDD Superintendent, the Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court Judge, the MH Board Executive Director, a manager from the county DJFS, and myself, the Executive Director of Children Services. During a break at the Summit, we actually telephoned our vacationing Family and Children First Council coordinator to share the experience and expectations for a County Plan by August 1st. Realizing we wanted a broad representation from community providers, we began planning for a full FCFC retreat. Within two months, we settled on a date/place and applied for (and received) a small grant from the Raymond John Wean Foundation to pay for lodging and food for the FCFC participants. Because the Family and Children First Council is defined as a gathering of people-helping agencies to make a positive, county-wide impact on children and families, we thought this would be a great group to help develop our Post-Summit Plan!

Twenty-nine council members attended the retreat at the Aurora Inn in Aurora, Ohio, on July 14th and 15th. Tim Schaffner, the Executive Director (and FCFC member) of Valley Counseling, Inc. facilitated the work groups. (Valley Counseling is the public community counseling agency in Trumbull County.) I can't tell you how encouraged I was by the open communication, the sharing of ideas, and the progress we made on our plan! Mrs. Strickland would have been proud of the collaborative spirit of our diverse group!

All this to tell you that we were inspired by the Summit, and have made significant headway in so many areas. The Summit was the catalyst we needed to spark our already-strong FCFC into action. I believe we have a unique team of service providers in Trumbull County. Our retreat proved that to be true.

I am pleased to submit Trumbull County's Plan, along with the names of the retreat participants who contributed.

Very truly yours,

Marcia A. Tiger
Executive Director

MAT/nkb

enclosure

OHIO SUMMIT ON CHILDREN, Post-Summit Plan Participants (Trumbull County)

Margie	Alexander	FCFC, Coordinator
Charlene	Allen	ACOP (Alliance Community Outreach Program)
Shelly	Blosser	Dept. of Job and Family Services
Jane	Boutwell	Valley Counseling, Inc. (Community Mental Health)
April	Caraway	Trumbull LifeLines (ADAMH Board)
Nick	Ceglia	Trumbull LifeLines (ADAMH Board)
Laura	Domitrovich	Wraparound Oversight Committee Coordinator
Marie	Economus	Ohio State University Extension
Janice	Houchins	Regional FCFC Coordinator
Christine	Kotapish	TCAP (Headstart Program)
Matt	Kresic	Homes for Kids (MH & Treatment Foster Care)
Selene	Layton	Trumbull County Health Department
Jill	Lewis	ASAP Coordinator (Drug Prevention)
Ken	Lloyd	Community Solutions Association (Drug & Alcohol)
Mary	Olesh	Solace Center (Family Visitation Center)
Diane	O'Rell	Parent Representative
Jean	Orsuto	Emmanuel Community Care Center (Advocacy)
Marilyn	Pape	Trumbull County Children Services
Juanita	Pasley	United Methodist Community Center
Patricia	Porter	Someplace Safe (Domestic Violence Shelter)
Loree	Richardson	Warren City Schools
Tim	Schaffner	Valley Counseling, Inc.
Michelle	Schmader	YWCA
Trudy	Seymour-Evans	Help Me Grow
Lauren	Thorp	Trumbull LifeLines (ADAMH Board)
Marcia	Tiger	Trumbull County Children Services
Sheila	Triplet	Beatitude House (Housing & Career Development)
Judy	Valenti	Parent Representative
Mary	VonPhilp	FCFC/Help Me Grow

POST-SUMMIT PLANNING FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY AUGUST 1, 2008

E-mail to summitonchildren@sc.ohio.gov or fax to 614-387-9409.

COUNTY NAME: **Trumbull**

CONTACT NAME: **Marcia A. Tiger**

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: **(330) 372-2010**

CONTACT E-MAIL: **tigerm@odjfs.state.oh.us**

As they relate to the *safety, well-being and permanent home environments* for children in your county, please complete the following:

WHAT ARE THE TOP FIVE ISSUES AFFECTING THE SAFETY, WELL-BEING AND PERMANENT HOME ENVIRONMENTS OF CHILDREN?

1. **Substance abuse and untreated mental illness.**
2. **Fragmented families.**
3. **Violence in the communities and within families.**
4. **Economic challenges, unemployment, underemployment and poverty in the county.**
5. **Lack of access to healthcare for all.**

WHAT ARE THE TOP FIVE STRENGTHS AND/OR RESOURCES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

1. **Trumbull County's Family and Children First Council. Cooperative, collaborative spirit, with excellent parent representation and involvement.**
2. **Strong community partnerships, employing *high-fidelity* wraparound to meet the needs of children and families in Trumbull County. Strong interest in being progressive. Always striving to reach the "next level".**
3. **Trumbull County Children Services' local residential treatment programs for children/adolescents. There are *no* children placed out of the county in residential treatment facilities.**
4. **Pooled funding by mandated FCFC members. (The "big three" mandated agencies—CSB, MRDD & MH—have a history of successful levy support in the county.)**
5. **Strong information and referral services within the county.**

WHAT ARE THE TOP FIVE CHALLENGES FACING YOUR COMMUNITY?

1. Lack of flexibility in funding, which broadly affects service eligibility for children.

Examples:

- Funding is there once children are brought into foster care, but there is little funding for *prevention* in these family situations.
- The Emergency Services Allocation (ESA) funds for *reunification* only apply to situations when children have been in care for 15 months or less. For long-term cases--over 15 months--there are no ESA funds to help reunify.
- Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance standards are tied to parents' income levels established in the mid-1990's. *Any* child coming into a public agency's custody should be IV-E eligible, regardless of the parents' income.

2. Trumbull County is depressed economically, with increased unemployment and a decreasing tax base. The latter has particularly negative consequences for the CSB, MRDD and MH agencies.

3. Somewhat weak political support, in terms of FCFC involvement from elected officials and court officials. Everyone needs to work together creatively to do more with less.

4. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain dedicated, qualified staff to work in the "helping" profession. Many of the veteran leaders will soon be retiring, leaving some executive leadership gaps. The vision for children and families in Trumbull County must not fade!

5. There is no public mass-transportation system in Trumbull County. Especially with rising fuel costs, mobility has been challenging.

WHAT ARE THE TOP FIVE MOST-NEEDED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

1. Access to a full continuum of healthcare services for all.

2. A full continuum of substance abuse services. (Example-The county lacks supportive housing for drug/alcohol parent(s) in treatment. There is only housing for *sober* mothers in treatment, without their children. Also, there is no housing for rehabilitated felons.)

3. Transportation/mobility management. Trumbull County has no public transportation system.

4. Increased options for out-of-home placements. There is a need for foster/adoptive homes for the MRDD population and for adolescents, minorities, sibling groups, etc.

5. Access to safe, structured recreational programs for youth.

WHAT ACTION STEPS WILL BE TAKEN LOCALLY TO DEVELOP NEEDED SERVICES OR ADDRESS LOCAL CHALLENGES?

1. Establish a Family Dependency Drug Court in Trumbull County. *(Supreme Court of Ohio staff will meet with representatives from CSB and the Court on 8/1/08 to pursue a "start-up" application.)*
2. Recruit additional foster-to-adopt homes for children. *(FCFC will develop a plan at the 8/21/08 FCFC meeting to organize additional recruitment efforts for hard-to-place children. Re-ignite faith-based initiatives, like "One Church, One Child"?)*
3. Identify and address gaps in services to those families and children in need. *(FCFC will highlight an identified "need" at each Council Meeting, and develop committees to address/eliminate the gaps in service.)*
4. There is a need to secure housing for the "resource-less"—from full supportive residential treatment for the drug-addicted, to step-down (three-quarter & half-way) housing, to more long-term transitional housing for those parents trying to establish and maintain sobriety and/or to stabilize their mental illness. In Trumbull County, the only housing for these individuals is a hospital or a jail. *(Initiate a "roundtable" discussion with local housing specialists—the Trumbull County Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Trumbull County Homeless Coalition, York Avenue Treatment Center, Beatitude House, Emmanuel Care, etc. to identify and address housing issues, as they relate to substance abuse, mental illness, and the removal of children from parental care.)*
5. Develop a program to inform families of options for service and promote an anti-stigma campaign so those in need will freely reach out for help. *(Explore the idea of partnering with the Regional Chamber of Commerce to initiate such a campaign. Continue to work with the Trumbull County 2-1-1 system.)*

BEYOND FUNDING, WHAT ACTION DOES THE COUNTY NEED FROM THE STATE TO HELP THE COUNTY ACHIEVE ITS ACTION PLAN?

1. More flexibility in funding.
2. Listen to the local agencies/service providers. Be accountable to the same standards the counties are expected to uphold.
3. Less regulation, more support of policies that improve access to services.
4. Less audits, more technical assistance.
5. Reduce paperwork expectations and redundancy, wherever possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments and ideas.