



2011 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

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I. ABOUT OACCA

The Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies (OACCA)

Founded in 1973, the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies (OACCA) is a statewide association of private agencies that provide a wide array of services to children, youth, and families across the state. OACCA takes an active role to ensure that Ohio's evolving public policy results in a system that is fully integrated, efficient, cost effective and beneficial to those that matter most - Ohio's at-risk children and families. At any point in time, 14,000 Ohio children are placed in foster care to provide them safe and healthy living environments. For more than half of these children, intensive treatment is needed to heal the damage inflicted by horrific abuse and significant neglect. This treatment is provided in substitute care settings such as treatment foster homes or residential treatment facilities. We began measuring the results of the services our agencies provide to children and families in 2005 in order to continuously improve the quality of those services. To learn more about OACCA and how you can help us enhance access to high-quality care for all children, youth, and families, visit us at www.oacca.org.

Mission: To promote and strengthen a fully integrated, private/public network of high quality services for Ohio's children, youth, and their families through advocacy, education, and support of member agencies.

Vision: OACCA champions a hopeful future for Ohio's children, youth, and families by advocating for cooperation and efficiency across all systems.

OACCA Member Agencies

Many OACCA member agencies were founded in the 1800s by citizens concerned for the thousands of children orphaned following the Civil War. Some were founded in the early 20th century in response to the needs of children and families during the Industrial Revolution. Other agencies were founded more recently to add to the array of high quality professional services to families and children coming to the attention of county children services agencies and juvenile courts.

Some of the services that OACCA member agencies provide to children, youth, and families include:

- **Foster care** for children experiencing the trauma of child abuse or neglect.
- **Finding adoptive families** for waiting children and providing post-adoption support so that new families can grow together.
- **Residential treatment** and out-patient services for children with mental illness or histories of alcohol and/or substance abuse.
- **Independent living** services for homeless youth and teens aging out of the foster care system.
- **Rehabilitative services** to adjudicated youth in the juvenile justice system.
- **Emergency shelter care** for children whose families are in crisis.
- **Respite care** that supports families with children who need intensive services.
- **Counseling** for children and for families.
- **Specialized education services** for children who cannot attend public school, which are highly structured and closely supervised.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amidst the continuing Great Recession of 2010, we joined with advocates and policy makers to improve efficiencies of government and of its child-serving agencies. Our key advocacy accomplishments of the year include:

2010 Major Accomplishments

1. Initiated a workgroup of our membership and state government officials to determine how the state may align regulations that apply to agencies that operate children's residential centers and other child/youth services.
2. Successfully supported current practice of training and documentation of medication administration rather than requiring nurses to administer ALL medications to any children in care. This saved millions of dollars in compliance costs for private and public agencies.
3. Successfully advocated for reform of the Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect and access to its information.
4. Co-authored and championed state legislation to would ensure the safety of Ohio children placed into out-of-state residential centers.

We will continue to advocate for public policy matters -- some new, some old -- to continue to fulfill our mission of *promoting and strengthening a fully integrated, private/public network of high quality services for Ohio's children, youth, and their families through advocacy, education, and support of member agencies*. Our 2011 policy goals follow for your review.

2011 Highest Priority Goals

1. Enact regulatory reform for agencies that operate children's residential centers and provide other services for children and youth.
2. Participate in the reform of our state Medicaid program in order to maintain critical supports for children and families.
3. Support legislation to ensure the safety of Ohio children who are placed into out-of-state residential centers.
4. Participate in the Partners for Ohio's Families initiative with the Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio to improve Ohio's child protection services.

OACCA has been active with Governor's Kasich administration and with the new General Assembly leaders. Our consistent message is that Ohio can, and must, do better for our children. This public policy agenda delineates the issues our membership has identified as crucial if we are to improve our service system. We pledge to embrace this era of reform and vow to help the administration and General Assembly make reforms that create and maintain jobs, cut unnecessary costs and administrative burden, support safety net services, and children, families, and the agencies that serve them. We ask for your support to realize our vision.

III. POLICY PRIORITIES

Behavioral Health

- Advocate for legislation to ‘elevate’ the state match for behavioral health Medicaid services from county ADAMHS agencies to the state. This will free local levy dollars to pay for services for non-Medicaid eligible clients and/or for non-Medicaid services.
- Advocate against overly-restrictive Medicaid service caps so that eligible-children can receive the services qualified clinicians determine they need.
- Advocate for the state and its stakeholders to evaluate whether or not Ohio consumers would benefit from a Medicaid 1915(i) home and community based services waiver expansion created by the federal health care reform law.
- Maintain the division between the state behavioral health Medicaid program and managed care.
- Preserve state funding for community mental health services.
- Support federal legislation to update and clarify the definition of Institution for Mental Disease (IMD) to allow services provided to Medicaid-eligible children placed in state-licensed residential centers to retain their eligibility for the Medicaid program.

Foster Care

- Advocate for federal reform of the Title IV-E Foster Care Program. Reform should 1) provide greater support to states, 2) require more accountability by states, 3) pay for prevention and post-permanency services, 4) maintain the program as an entitlement and 5) maintain the tie between funding and children’s needs.
- Advocate for state compliance with the federal Child Welfare Act and with Medicaid which requires reimbursement of all reasonable and documented costs of providing care to children.
- Advocate for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to develop a formal procedure for licensed agencies to rebut allegations during disciplinary hearings.
- Maintain the Foster Parent Training Stipend Allowance Program to reimburse foster parents’ costs for attending state-required training and private agencies’ costs of providing that training.
- Support federal efforts to make treatment foster care a Medicaid-reimbursable service.

Independent Living and Homeless Youth

- Promote the eligibility of agency-supervised independent living arrangements, including scattered-site apartment settings, for federal Title IV-E Foster Care reimbursement.
- Support state initiatives to align and consolidate youth transition resources, policies, services, and efforts among state departments and local agencies.

Information Systems

- Inform the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' roll-out of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) to private agencies.

Juvenile Justice and the Courts

- Advocate for legislation that eliminates mandatory sentencing of youth who commit crimes with firearms, mandatory bind-over to adult court, and mandatory classification as Serious Youthful Offenders.
- Advocate for legislation to narrow the criteria for binding over youth to adult courts and for their classification as Serious Youthful Offenders.
- Promote adoption of state custody laws that support permanency for children in foster care. Too many children are placed into Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (PPLA) as a custody status rather than as a means to maintain their connection with specific families. This status renders children ineligible for adoption and is too often used in a manner that is contrary to the legislature's intent in establishing it.
- Work for legislative changes to the Ohio Adam Walsh Act to exempt juvenile sex offenders who are at low-risk for re-offending from public registration and notification requirements, reduce the excessive failure-to-register penalties for juveniles, and restore discretion to juvenile courts.

Residential Care

- Support legislation to prohibit the placement of Ohio children into out-of-state facilities that do not meet Ohio's licensure and certification standards. Ensure that our state's safeguards protect all Ohio children, wherever they are placed.
- Urge the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services and Mental Health to align their regulations for children's services. Aligning the regulations will save money and time for providers, county agencies, and the state.

VI. CONTACT INFORMATION



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Learn About OACCA at

www.oacca.org