

# Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & SIGNAL CLEVELAND

## DCFS Advisory Board

Documenter name: Jada Hobson

Agency: [Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services Advisory Board](#)

Date: Dec. 6, 2023

[See more about this meeting at Documenters.org](#)

---

## Summary

- Foster youth need support to learn life skills and need more access to creative opportunities.
- The board discussed human trafficking and abuse rates amongst Cleveland youth ages 12-14.
- T-Suites need to be updated for better outcomes for foster youth.

## Follow-Up Questions

- What will be the first step towards improving life-skills education for foster youth?
- How many human trafficking cases are likely to be solved in 2024?

## Notes

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) advisory board meeting: Last meeting of the year.

The board started the meeting with introductions focusing first on board member intros and then moving on to non-board members. The facilitator then asked for public comments before starting: no comments were made.

Meeting officially starts 👍

Beverly Torres: Introduction to Christian Anderson, who is now an advocate for children being raised in the Cuyahoga County foster care system.

The board introduced Anderson as the winner of a community advocacy award, as he is a youth advocate with personal experience in the foster care system.

Anderson spoke about it being hard to get recognition for this work. He talked about his experience transitioning out of foster care and dropping out of school. He was recently able to return to school after completing the emancipation process.

Anderson said it was an eye-opening experience to win the award and went on to talk about how he lost his mother at the age of five and about his anxiety as a youth. He also talked about the love and inspiration he felt at the award ceremony and what inspires his advocacy work with DCFS and also with the [REACH Youth Action Board](#). Anderson said he is also a Cuyahoga County representative for [YouthMOVE Ohio](#).

Anderson talked about being a mentor for foster youth. He talked about his own frustration when he was younger and navigating the system without access to consistent education and preparation on how to navigate life after foster care.

Question from Lakecia Wild (advisory board member): How would you suggest that we continue to make sure the youth voice is heard?

Wild also talked about peer support options and support groups for youth.

Anderson: We are looking for representation in leadership, youth employment, education, life skills and opportunities

Gabriella Celeste (advisory board member) : Asked Anderson what would you want to correct about what people think about kids in the foster care system?

Anderson: Judgments that we face everyday. He elaborated and said it would be beneficial to ask kids why they may do certain things that may be deemed as bad or disruptive instead of judging them.

Anderson said that adults at DCFS should not expect the kids to have everything figured out, as they have been living in survival mode. Christian said DCFS workers should take a trauma-informed approach.

Jennifer Johnson from [Canopy Child Advocacy Center](#), an organization that advocates for children who have experienced abuse, including physical and sexual abuse and human trafficking, spoke about the child protection team (CPT) and gave funding updates.

According to Johnson, there is a new CPT in Cuyahoga County that has been in the works since before the pandemic.

She said the Canopy team took two years to get funding together. They began implementing the funding in January of 2023 and spent the first six months getting new programs up and running.

The CPT is now able to take on physical and sexual abuse cases (including human trafficking cases).

Johnson said that Canopy has secured a contract with MetroHealth and subcontracts with the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals. MetroHealth is providing a child abuse pediatrician to work out of the advocacy center, Cleveland Clinic is providing a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), and University Hospitals is providing physician oversight for the team.

Johnson said a medical records person has been trained on a resource called “Care Everywhere” that allows them to access records across all three hospitals.

As of July 1, the CPT began taking cases.

Johnson said that Canopy has previously only taken sex abuse and human trafficking cases and communicated that information through a hotline to the medical intensive unit and the specialized investigator unit.

Johnson said that since July 1 Canopy has also seen siblings in families that experienced child fatalities due to gun violence and cases involving neglect and abuse of infants, pre-teens and teens.

In response to a question about having a CPT contact in emergency rooms, Johnson said the proposal’s funding was cut by 50%, which prevented some aspects of the original proposal from being implemented.

The conversation moved to subcommittee updates.

Anderson suggested DCFS do more to help foster youth develop life skills, such as building credit and financial literacy topics, so they are not set up for failure once released from the system.

**DCFS concerns :**

- Disparities
- Public health access
- Layered programming efforts/outcomes
- Primary preventions
- Lead paint-poisoning prevention

**T- Suites**

Anderson spoke again and asked how the place was run, as temporary placements don't do much to help transition foster youth to their next placement.

---

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at [cleDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com](mailto:cleDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com) with "Correction Request" in the subject line.