

Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & SIGNAL CLEVELAND

DCFS Advisory Board

Documenter name: Kellie Morris

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

Date: Sept. 4, 2024

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

Summary

- State agencies are following the progress of agencies in Cuyahoga County as models for other programs throughout the state, such as the [child wellness campus](#), according to Dawnya Underwood from Cleveland Christian Home.
- Board members are requesting specific data to drive discussions on preventive measures.
- DCFS is enjoying success with hiring.

Follow-Up Questions.

- Do the agencies want to share the data that the board is requesting?
- How much and what data can be shared with the public?

Notes

The meeting was opened by the committee chair, [Angela M. Newman-White](#), at 4:06 p.m. All board members were present with the exception of Debra Rex. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members attending in person and others online. All members are appointed until Feb. 28, 2027. The board members are as follows: Newman-White, Rex, [Lakecia Wild](#), [Daniel Smith](#), [Verna Darby](#), [Bianca Crawford](#), [Dr. Andrew S. Garner](#), [David S. Crampton](#), [Beverly R. Charles](#) and [M. Gabriella Celeste](#).

The following stakeholders also attended the meeting and gave reports in addition to answering the questions of the board members: Jacqueline Fletcher, Karin Austin and Beverly Torres, all from the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Dawnya Underwood and David Gray, both from The Centers' [Cleveland Christian Home](#) (CCH), and Jennifer Johnson from [Canopy Child Advocacy Center](#).

The [agenda](#) was followed as posted. Fletcher, executive director of DCFS, welcomed the staff of the Cleveland Christian Home to provide the update on the child wellness

campus being developed on the site. Gray provided a history of the new partnership between [The Centers](#), Cleveland Christian Home and DCFS.

Gray explained that the response to the county's request for proposal ([RFP](#)) for additional emergency beds resulted in the creation of the Teen Suites (T Suites - [Short-term, emergency bed space for teens in crisis opens](#)). Gray said that more than 100 teens have been served through the program.

Underwood continued the reporting by sharing the agency goals, which include a fully operational Child Wellness Campus within three years ([Cuyahoga County selects location for child wellness campus](#)). She said that immediate goals include renovation of the buildings on campus, improvements to data collection, staff development and training.

She responded to Board Member Wild that quarterly youth focus groups are being considered as a function of the client satisfaction survey process. Newman-White suggested that a neutral entity be sought to lead focus groups to ensure that participants feel comfortable sharing feedback about the services received and/or needed.

The board members requested specific data from the CCH staff. Gray responded that CCH maintains some high-risk youth. Celeste requested specific data such as the exact number of youth served, ages and outcomes. The board was advised that weekly meetings are held between the CCH and DCFS staff for development of the wellness campus and current programs.

Garner suggested that positive outcomes be a part of the data and metrics reported. He shared the H.O.P.E. model as a potential plan to be used on the wellness campus ([Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences](#)).

Fletcher continued with the DCFS Director's Report. She began with sharing a positive outcome of a teenage girl who had to leave her home and go to T-Suites in May but was able to attend prom, graduate and return home.

Fletcher announced the dates for the next community conversations to be held as follows:

- Sept. 12 @ Friendly Inn at 5 p.m.
- Sept. 19 @ St. Martin de Porres at 5 p.m.

Fletcher reported on the success of the event held at the [West Side Community House](#), saying that the event was well attended and that attendees were very involved and responsive to the programming. Board Member Charles attended and said that she was

very impressed with the number of people in attendance and that the attendees were very open and willing to share their experiences with DCFS. A major request was for respite services for parents. Comments were made regarding the issue of parental stress and the national attention from the Surgeon General on the issue ([Parental Mental Health & Well-Being - HHS.gov](#)).

Fletcher continued her report with an update on the DCFS workforce. An open house for child protection specialists was held on Sept. 4. In August 2024, 22 workers were hired. She reported that approximately 12 vacancies still exist. She credits the increase in salary with the success of hiring, with the new starting wage being \$27.32 per hour.

The next hiring date is Oct. 7, with approximately 14 workers. Celeste said she was excited to learn of the low number of vacancies. Board Member Crampton said there are about 401 positions. DCFS caseloads are down for workers to approximately 10 to 12 per worker, according to Fletcher. Goals for screening calls and cases is a success area for DCFS, she added.

Celeste asked about the budget and public/private funding for the child wellness campus, to which Fletcher responded that [County Executive Chris Ronayne would address the issue](#) during his annual address on Sept. 5.

Johnson answered a question from Celeste about the [child protection team \(CPT\)](#). Johnson said that the referral database is open to all partners. Garner wanted to ensure that services are not being duplicated. Johnson said that data could be provided. All were concerned with the need for a medical child abuse pediatrician to be hired. The position was described as critical to the CPT team.

Crampton recommended more dashboard data be sorted by race.

New board members Daniel Smith and Bianca Crawford were welcomed.

Celeste announced the release of the [report on juvenile justice](#) from the State of Ohio citing the potential housing alternatives to the closing of the Cuyahoga Hills boys facility.

Newman-White gave positive reports about the Safe Sleep Campaign and mentioned the [toolkit](#) sponsored by First Year Cleveland and the Cuyahoga Board of Health.

The board voted to approve its definition of “prevention” and the draft of a [letter](#) to be sent to hospitals about the lack of a child abuse pediatrician for the child protection team. Charles asked about sending the letter to qualified healthcare systems.

Fletcher also suggested that insurance companies be included in the conversation.

Celeste agreed to further discussion in committee of looping in other entities at a later date.

Celeste also suggested a campaign with messaging around the stigma of contacting DCFS.

Darby shared concerns from a client regarding access to approved parenting classes. Torres said clients should be provided with class information at the time the class is ordered.

The next meeting will be on Oct. 2.

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