

# Documenters

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## DCFS Advisory Board

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

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## Summary

- **Strengthening father engagement**

The board emphasized the crucial role fathers play in family stability and child welfare. New initiatives are being developed to provide targeted support, including listening sessions and mentorship programs, to better integrate fathers into the child welfare process. This effort aims to address systemic barriers and ensure that fathers feel valued and equipped to contribute positively to their families.

- **Expanding support for foster youth and families**

[Cleveland Angels](#) highlighted their programs, including [Love Box](#) and [Dare to Dream](#), which provide essential resources and mentorship to foster families and youth aging out of care. The need for more African American male mentors was emphasized, prompting a renewed focus on targeted recruitment and community outreach to address this gap.

- **Data-driven improvements in service delivery**

Officials in the meeting underscored the importance of the [Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services data dashboard](#) as a tool for tracking key performance metrics, such as placement stability and face-to-face visits between caseworkers and kids in the county's care. Efforts are underway to refine the dashboard process, ensuring it provides actionable insights that drive program improvements and better outcomes for children and families.

## Follow-Up Questions

- What specific strategies will be implemented to overcome the challenges in recruiting African American male mentors, and how will success be measured?
- How does the data dashboard refinement process ensure that actionable insights directly translate into improved services for families?
- What additional resources or partnerships are being explored to enhance father engagement initiatives and address systemic barriers?

## **Notes**

Members in attendance

Angela M. Newman-White

Bianca Crawford

David S. Crampton

Beverly R. Charles

Debra Rex

Lakecia Wild

Daniel Smith

Dr. Andrew S. Garner

Gabriella Celeste [*Correction note: Celeste also attended the meeting.*]

## **Call to order and introductions**

Angela Newman-White, executive director of [First Year Cleveland](#), opened the meeting at 4:10 p.m. She started by sharing her experience at the National Institute of Health's Maternal Health Roundtable in Washington, D.C.

"The conversations in D.C. reinforced the need for innovative solutions to systemic issues," Newman-White said. "We're not just talking about programs, but about fixing the underlying structures that impact maternal and child health." She emphasized the need for systemic reform, highlighting that the focus is on sustainable solutions, not quick fixes.

Each attendee introduced themselves.

## **Public comment**

Although the meeting offered time for public input, no comments were submitted. Newman-White encouraged continued public engagement, saying, "We value community voices. Your insights help shape the direction of our initiatives."

## **Approval of Oct. 2 meeting minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously. Charles motioned to approve, seconded by Crampton. Newman-White said, "These records serve as both a historical account and a roadmap for our collective efforts."

**Director's report** – Jacqueline Fletcher

Fletcher provided an update on [Division of Children and Family Services \(DCFS\)](#) operations, discussing key improvements and ongoing challenges.

- Staffing stability: DCFS has successfully filled 380 of 390 [staffing positions](#). Fletcher said that stable staffing leads to more consistent support for families, saying, “When families see the same caseworker regularly, it builds trust and improves outcomes.”
- Face-to-face contact goals: Despite improvements in staffing, face-to-face visits remain below target. “We’re looking at new strategies, including better scheduling and increased support for caseworkers, to ensure these vital visits happen,” Fletcher said.
- Community Partnerships: Fletcher praised collaborations with [Cleveland Angels](#), saying, “Programs like [Love Box](#) and [Dare to Dream](#) are crucial in filling gaps that our system alone cannot address.”

#### **[Cleveland Angels presentation](#)** – Gretchen Dupps

Gretchen Dupps, executive director of Cleveland Angels, shared an overview of their programs, which support foster youth and families.

- Love Box Program: This program connects foster families with volunteers who provide essential support. “We offer practical help, whether it’s providing groceries, school supplies, or simply a shoulder to lean on,” Dupps said.
- Dare to Dream Mentorship: Aimed at youth aging out of foster care, this program provides guidance through life milestones. “Our mentors help youth navigate everything from high school graduation to securing their first job,” she said.

Challenges: One key challenge remains the recruitment of African American male mentors. “Representation matters. Youth need mentors who understand their experiences and can offer culturally relevant guidance,” Dupps explained.

#### **Intervention Sub-Committee update** – David Crampton

Crampton presented the [latest version of the data dashboard](#) tracking key metrics, such as placement stability, adoption rates and face-to-face visits.

- Placement stability: Crampton noted positive trends, saying, “Stable placements mean fewer disruptions for children, which is critical for their well-being.”
- Face-to-face contacts: While there has been some progress, face-to-face visits are still below target. Crampton emphasized their importance: “These visits are a

cornerstone of effective casework, allowing us to assess family dynamics and provide timely support.”

Action Item: Crampton proposed revisiting the dashboard process for better real-time feedback. “Let’s ensure this tool is not just informative but actionable,” he urged.

### **Governance Sub-Committee update**

Fletcher provided an update on governance reforms aimed at improving transparency and efficiency. “We’re reviewing our decision-making frameworks to ensure they’re as inclusive and effective as possible,” she said.

### **Prevention Sub-Committee update**

Father engagement initiative:

Newman-White emphasized the importance of father involvement in child welfare, saying, “Fathers are an essential part of the family unit, and their active participation can lead to better outcomes for children.” She outlined plans to improve outreach: “We’re developing initiatives to create safe spaces for fathers to share their experiences and provide them with resources to actively participate in their children’s lives.”

Challenges in father engagement:

Fletcher noted barriers fathers face, including lack of information and biases within the child welfare system. “Many fathers feel sidelined or unsupported, which discourages their involvement. We need to change that narrative,” she said.

Proposed actions:

- Community listening sessions for fathers
- Targeted resources and support groups to provide legal and parenting guidance
- Enhanced communication strategies to ensure fathers are informed and engaged

Fletcher concluded, “When fathers are engaged, families are stronger, and children thrive.” *[Editor’s note: [Learn more about the county’s fatherhood initiatives.](#)]*

### **Emancipation and aging out support**

Support for youth aging out:

Dupps and Fletcher discussed the challenges faced by youth aging out of foster care, particularly in securing stable housing and employment. “Aging out of care can be a

precarious time. We need to ensure these young adults don't fall through the cracks," Fletcher said.

Bridges Program collaboration:

Cleveland Angels highlighted their partnership with the [Bridges Program](#), which helps youth transition out of care. "We work closely with Bridges to ensure youth have a mentor guiding them through critical milestones, whether it's finding a job or securing housing," Dupps noted.

### **Resource sharing across agencies**

Fletcher announced partnerships with local agencies to host trauma-informed-care training sessions for caseworkers. Newman-White emphasized the value of integrating resources across agencies: "By working together, we can provide comprehensive support without duplicating efforts. Every child deserves a well-rounded safety net."

### **Child and family mental health support**

Mental health support was a key theme of the meeting. Fletcher discussed expanding access to mental health services for children and families. "Addressing trauma early is critical. We're expanding partnerships with mental health providers to offer immediate and long-term care," she explained.

Cleveland Angels also works to connect families with community-based mental health resources, ensuring accessibility regardless of financial status.

### **Recruitment strategies for volunteers and foster families**

Broadening volunteer outreach:

Dupps discussed new strategies for volunteer recruitment, particularly focusing on underrepresented communities such as African American male mentors. "We're looking at innovative ways to engage communities, including partnerships with local organizations and targeted outreach events," she said.

Foster family retention:

Fletcher noted the importance of not only recruiting new foster families but also supporting existing ones to prevent burnout. "We're not just recruiting new foster families; we're also focused on supporting existing ones to prevent burnout and placement disruptions," she explained.

### **Legislative and policy updates**

Child welfare funding:

Newman-White provided an update on efforts to secure additional special revenue funding for child welfare programs. "We need to ensure our policies reflect the needs of the community and that funding aligns with those priorities," she said.

Policy changes:

Fletcher highlighted upcoming policy changes at the state and federal levels that could affect child welfare operations.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 5 at 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

County Headquarters 2079 E. 9th St.,

Council Committee Room A

Cleveland, OH 44115

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