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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

- The Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) continues to make strides in filling staff positions. Last month, DCFS only had three vacancies.
- There can still be challenges in finding placements for children entering the foster care system.
- There is currently no measure in the division's data dashboard to show how many families are approved to be foster parents after they apply.

Follow-Up Questions

- How has DCFS been able to fill nearly every position?
- What causes families that have applied to be foster families to be rejected?
- What kind of supports would actually incentivize families to become foster parents?

Notes

Public comment

Time was offered, but no one was there to make a comment.

Minutes approval

The board unanimously approved the minutes from its [December meeting](#).

Director's report

DCFS Director Jacqueline Fletcher said that DCFS only had three vacancies in January after adding 17 new employees in the month. This [continues a trend](#) recently. In December 2023, DCFS had more than 150 vacancies.

“Three vacancies is a place that we haven’t been in a long time,” Fletcher said.

Fletcher also noted there are still times when DCFS is challenged in finding immediate placements, or homes, for children who fall under DCFS care.

Intervention Sub-Committee:

Board Member David Crampton presented the [latest version of the dashboard](#) that tracks goings-on in DCFS. He suggested that if staffing is becoming less of an issue, there may be less of a need to keep updating those figures in detail.

Other trends and figures were discussed as well. For example, the dashboard shows “Initial Kinship Placements,” representing how many kids get placed with relatives. The dashboard shows DCFS was within 10% of the state goal for much of 2024 in those placements. But there’s still a lot of work to do, Fletcher said.

The group discussed challenges around increasing the number of children placed with kin. Some of those challenges are the lack of financial support and lack of adequate housing as a family brings in more kids.

The dashboard tracks foster parent recruitment as well. However, it only shows how many families apply to be in the foster care system and not how many are actually approved. Karin Austin of DCFS said that was something the department was working on and would have that number soon.

Angela Newman-White, chair of the board, said she wanted to know more about what might be causing families to not make it through to approval.

“I understand the need for the very intense process, because you want to make sure families are appropriate. But are there ways to make it a little easier or less daunting or intimidating for folks who may want to engage?” she asked.

There was also some discussion about how to measure the number of kids who stay overnight at DCFS’ facility. Fletcher said it’s hard to know, since kids sometimes find a placement late at night or at irregular times.

Board Member Dr. Andrew Garner said he wanted some measure, but he wasn’t picky about what it should be.

The board unanimously approved the dashboard subject to possible future additions.

Governance Subcommittee

The governance subcommittee did not meet after the last full board meeting, so there was no update.

Prevention Subcommittee

Garner said the committee previously discussed a way to spread the message that parenting is hard and how to connect families with resources before they need help from DCFS. He floated the idea of doing outreach to existing organizations and help them connect with families before they end up with DCFS.

“Parenting is hard,” he said. “It’s OK to ask for help.”

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