



CHILDREN SERVICES

Annual Report
2024

Message from the Executive Director:

It is my pleasure to present the Lucas County Children Services 2024 Annual Report, my first full year leading the agency as executive director since joining the agency in mid-2023.



We are thankful to Lucas County's voters, who approved a new-money levy in November 2024 to assist the agency with stubborn, ever-increasing placement costs, particularly for youth in congregate care. Our leadership team continues to work to control those costs, as we also advocate alongside other county child protection agencies for state and federal financial assistance. I promised during the levy campaign to make the five-year levy a one-time need and pledge to do what it takes to keep that promise to the taxpayers who entrusted us with those funds.

After a downward trend, new referrals for child abuse and neglect increased, as did the number of alleged child victims (ACVs). However, the number of new children entering LCCS custody—and remaining in custody—continued a three-year downward trend. That is a credit to the prevention work being done by our staff and a focus on keeping children in their own homes when safe to do so. Substance abuse and domestic violence remain leading root causes of abuse and neglect.

2024 also brought LCCS to a new address. Midsummer meant moving 350-plus staff members and offices to 301 Adams Street. A four-block move doesn't sound like much on its face, but organizing that feat was a Herculean task of cooperation by everyone at LCCS that provides more modern office space for our workforce and improved amenities for the children and families we serve.

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Strategy Division embarked on an aggressive monthly listening campaign late in the year that continues well into 2025. These community conversations will bring vital feedback and the internal change necessary to better serve the public, our stakeholders, and families. I am encouraged by the content and attendance at these neighborhood-based gatherings.

We thank the LCCS Board of Trustees and Lucas County's elected officials for their continuing support, partnership, and wise counsel as we tackle the tough issues involved with achieving our mission of leading the community in the protection of children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randall Muth".

Randall Muth, J.D.
Executive Director



AT A GLANCE 2024

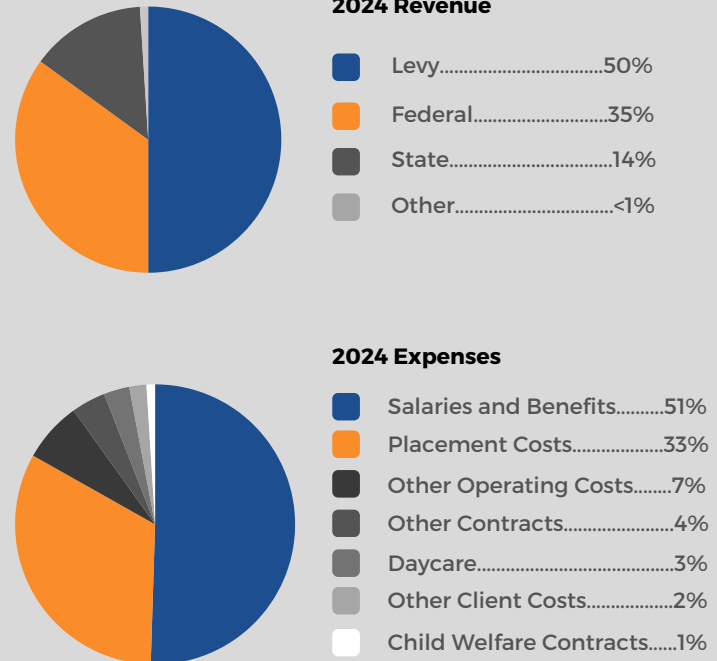
Children Served - 11,808
Families Served - 4,635
New Cases Opened - 383
Average Children on Caseload - 1,379
Children Reunified with their parents - 277
Adoptions Finalized - 75
Youth Emancipating - 47

Revenue and Expenses

Total revenue for 2024 was \$55,660,738.64. This was an increase of less than one percent from 2023. Levy funds constituted the largest revenue source at 50%. Levy funding increased less than one percent from 2023. Federal funding in the form of Title-IVE reimbursement for placement costs was the second highest revenue source at 35%. Federal funding decreased three percent from 2023; state revenue increased nine percent.

Year to date expenditures were \$63,352,795.65, an increase of seven percent. Salaries and benefits were the largest expenditure at 51%, followed by placement costs at 33%. Staff compensation, placement costs and other operating costs increased from 2023, while the other expense categories decreased. Increased placement costs are largely being driven by the high cost of group home and institutional placements for youth with complex behavioral and mental health needs.

The agency fund balance decreased by \$7,692,057.



Special Initiatives and Programs

In addition to fulfilling its core mission of protecting children and promoting families, LCCS supported several special initiatives in 2024.

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP)

The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP) supports children who cannot return to their parents and for whom adoption is not an option. This program assists kinship caregivers who have cared for children as licensed foster parents for at least six consecutive months before obtaining legal custody or guardianship. Caregivers receive initial support through a foster care per diem and, upon obtaining legal custody, a monthly subsidy until the child turns 18. In 2024, Lucas County Children Services licensed 46 kinship homes as foster parents, providing stable and supportive placements for children in need. Since implementing KGAP in 2023, Lucas County Children Services has licensed 74 kinship caregiver homes.

Kinnect to Family Collaboration

LCCS has established a collaborative relationship with Kinnect to Family, focused on supporting kinship caregivers and promoting a KinFirst culture. Through this collaboration a Family Search and Engagement unit is diligent in family search and engagement activities, utilizing various technologies—including social media and advanced search tools—to identify potential kinship caregivers for children entering foster care. This approach emphasizes the importance of keeping children connected to their culture, community, and kin.

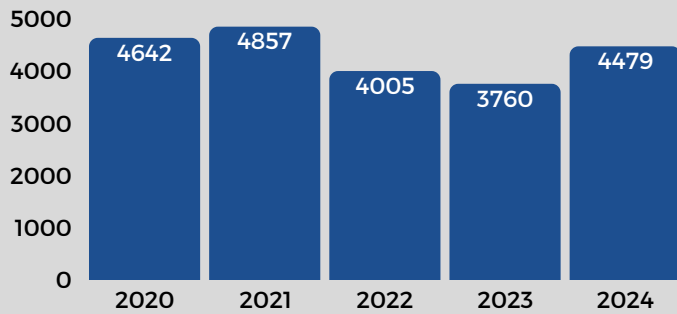
Ohio START

Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma) is an intensive child welfare program designed to support families struggling with substance use disorders. It brings together child welfare caseworkers, substance abuse treatment providers, family peer mentors, and other supports to help families safely care for their children while working toward recovery.

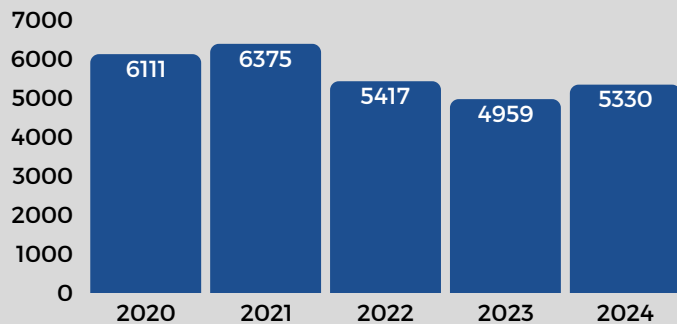
LCCS joined in collaboration with TASC to bring Ohio START to the community, enhancing support for families affected by substance use. Since the program began in 2019, it has served 46 families. In 2024 alone, Ohio START supported 10 new families and 21 children, in addition to those already enrolled. The program also expanded partnerships with local service providers to better serve families.

A major milestone was achieved as LCCS received national certification, making it the sixth county in Ohio—and the first metro county—to earn this recognition. In addition, in 2024, our START supervisor was named Supervisor of the Year by Ohio START, further highlighting the dedication and impact of our team in supporting families on their path to recovery.

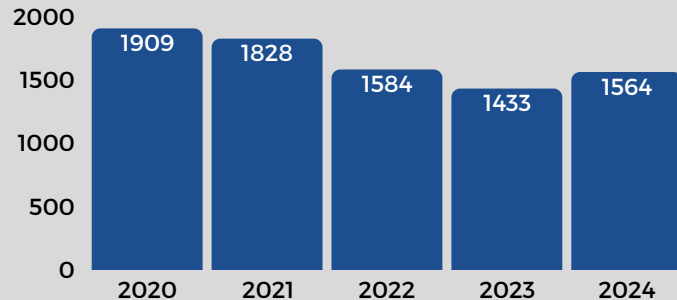
Investigations by Year



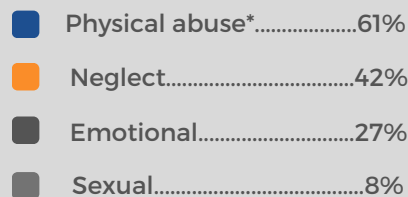
Alleged Child Victims



Substantiated Victims

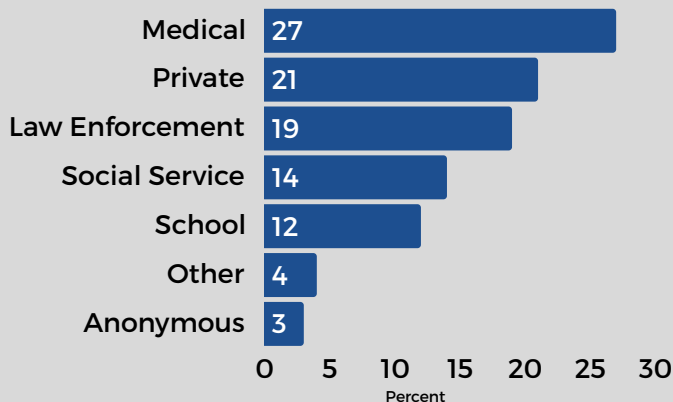


Type of Abuse



*Includes prenatal substance use
Note: 29% of intakes involved multiple abuse types

Referral Sources



OneOhio Recovery Foundation Grant

Lucas County Children Services has secured a OneOhio Recovery Foundation grant to strengthen its family finding efforts and foster a Kin-First culture for families impacted by the opioid epidemic. The grant supports initiatives to connect children in congregate care with their families and includes families involved with Ohio Start. In partnership with the Area Office of Aging, the program expands kinship navigator services to better assist these families. Additionally, Lucas County collaborates with Kinnect to Family, offering coaching and support to ensure kinship caregivers receive the guidance they need. This comprehensive approach aims to reunite families and provide lasting stability for children and caregivers affected by the opioid crisis.

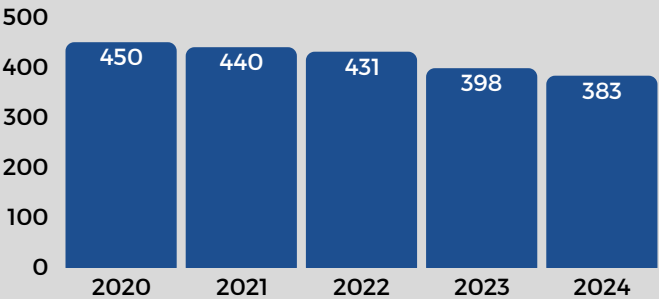
Parent Empowerment Institute (PEI)

The Parent Empowerment Institute (PEI) is a community outreach program through Lucas County Children Services that offers prevention services to families in an effort to prevent child abuse and neglect. The philosophy behind PEI is that parents want what's best for their child and want their children to reach their fullest potential. In 2024, PEI partnered with six different community organizations within Lucas County to offer parenting support classes weekly and continues to do so in 2025. PEI also provides diapers and wipes at each parenting support group thanks to a partnership with the As We Grow Diaper Bank. PEI offers parenting support groups to anyone in the community looking for support while raising their children.

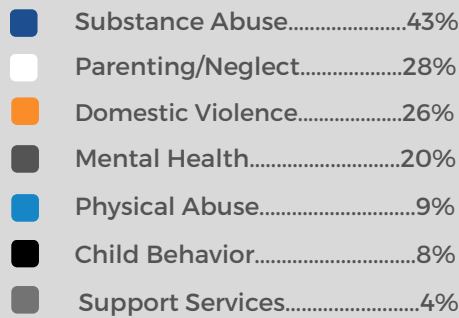
Prevention Services

The LCCS Prevention Services Worker is responsible for supporting families with newborns exposed to marijuana (THC) during pregnancy. The primary role involves educating families about the potential effects of substance use on their child, preventing future involvement with LCCS, and ensuring the baby's safety through the development and implementation of a Plan of Safe Care (POSC). The worker also connects families with community resources to promote self-sufficiency and provide additional support, fostering a stable and safe environment for the child's well-being.

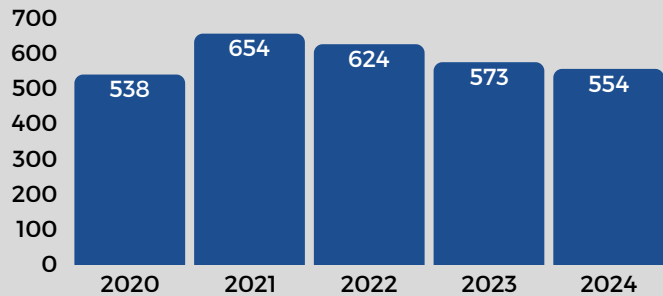
New Cases Opened



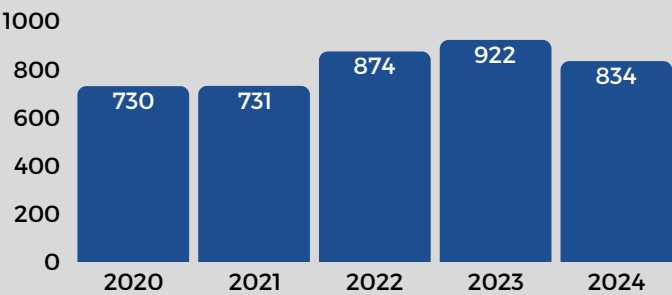
Reasons for Case Opening



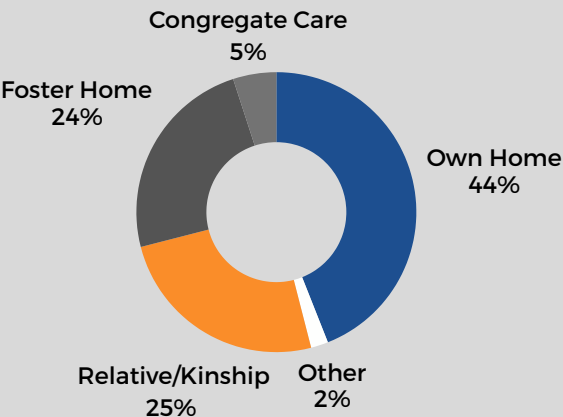
Children Entering Custody



Children in Custody



Placement Settings - Children in Services



Children Belong in Families

Lucas County Children Services believes that children belong with their families. We make every effort to serve them while they live at home with their parents. Forty-four percent of the children receiving ongoing services in 2024 were living with their families. When children cannot safely live with their parents while receiving services we attempt to place them with safe and appropriate relatives. Twenty-five percent of the children receiving services were living with relatives or other “kinship” providers. Twenty-four percent of children were living in a family foster home setting. When only considering children in substitute care, forty-six percent of children were living with relatives during the provision of services to the family.

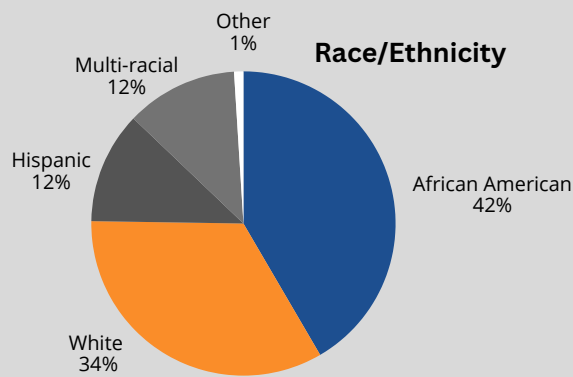
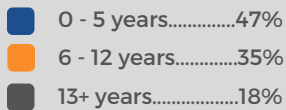
Substance abuse was the most prevalent issue in families involved with LCCS on an ongoing case during 2024, followed by parenting/neglect issues, domestic violence and mental health. Cocaine and opiates were the most common drugs of abuse leading to a case being opened with the agency.



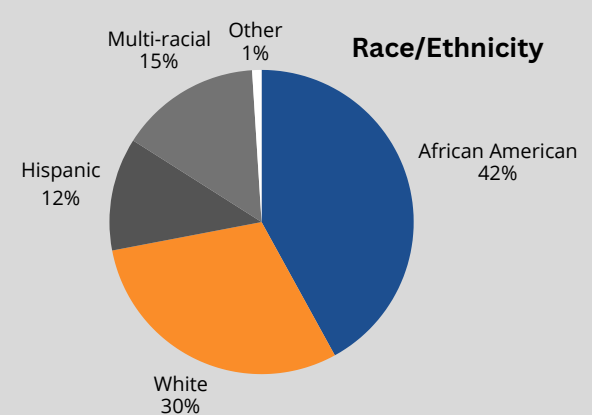
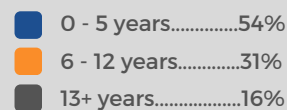
PROTECTING CHILDREN, PROMOTING FAMILIES

Children We Serve

Investigations



Children in Custody

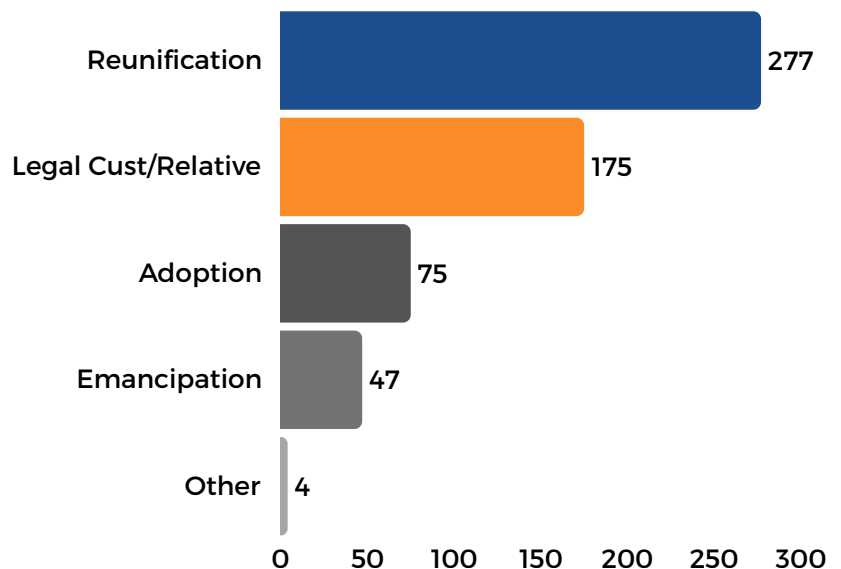


SAFE CHILDREN, SAFE FAMILIES

It is always the goal of LCCS to reunify children with their families when safely possible through the provision of risk reduction services. Despite the challenges of resolving problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health, LCCS was able to reunify 277 children with their parents in 2024 following the completion of services.

When problems are too severe for children to be reunified with their parents, we must develop a permanent plan for them. That may include living with a relative, adoption, or a long-term foster placement until the child reaches adulthood. A total of 175 children entered the legal custody of a relative in 2024. The agency finalized the adoption of seventy-five children and forty-seven youth emancipated from LCCS custody.

Custody Terminations



Spotlight on Disproportionality

The disproportionate representation of African American children in the child welfare system remains a persistent and urgent issue—one that Lucas County Children Services (LCCS) is actively working to confront. Although African American children make up 22% of the county's child population, they account for 40% of child abuse and neglect reports, 41% of screened-in investigations, and 40% of substantiated or indicated cases. This disproportionality extends into foster care, where African American children are also overrepresented in substitute care placements.

LCCS has partnered with a nationally known consultant who uses data, courageous conversations, and institutional self-examination to identify and dismantle systemic racism. The consultant's work has helped agencies across the country, including LCCS, to understand how historical and structural inequities contribute to poor outcomes for children and families of color. The agency is also a part of a "Race Equity workgroup", which is a collaborative initiative that brings together community partners, Casey Family Programs, and child welfare leadership to develop and implement strategic approaches to address racial disproportionality. This partnership is grounded in a shared commitment to advancing equity by examining systemic barriers, identifying root causes of disparities, and co-creating solutions that lead to better outcomes for children and families.

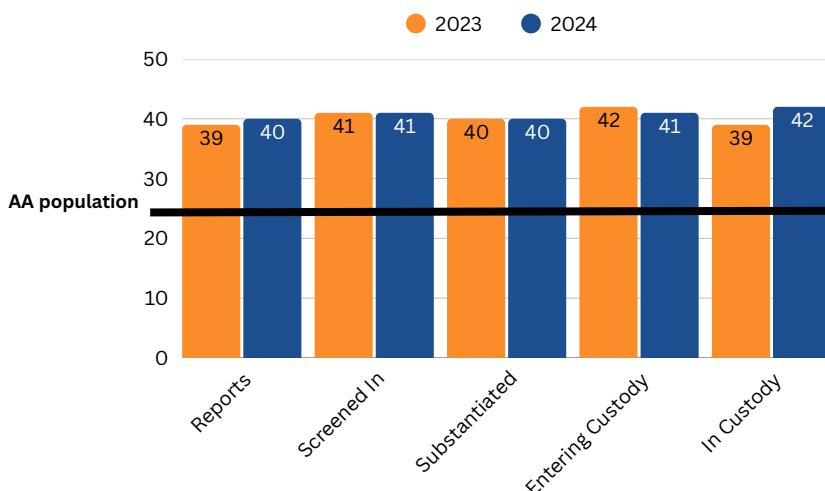
The LCCS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Strategy (DEIS) team leads a range of initiatives aimed at fostering cultural responsiveness and bias awareness. Through equity-focused trainings, reflective dialogues, and policy reviews, the DEIS team works to ensure that decision-making is culturally informed and rooted in best practice. The team has also prioritized improving community partnerships with constituents and stakeholders and building and sustaining trust through monthly "Community Discussion Sessions." These sessions are designed to empower community voices and influence systemic change, reinforcing LCCS's commitment to transparency, accountability, and inclusive practice.

As part of its community engagement strategy, LCCS also collaborates with individuals with lived experience through its Parent Advocacy Work and the Parent Empowerment Institute program, recognizing the value of partnering with parents to co-create solutions and transform systems from the ground up.

"We cannot improve outcomes for children and families without addressing the root causes of racial inequities embedded in our systems." – Joyce James

African American Children in the LCCS System

The graph below shows the percentage of children in the LCCS system at various decision points during 2024, with a comparison to 2023





LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

301 Adams Street
Toledo, OH 43604

Switchboard - 419-213-3200
To report child abuse/neglect - 419 - 213-CARE (2273)
Foster care/adoptions: 419-213-3336
Family Help Center hotline: 419-213-3833
www.lucaskids.net



Report child abuse and neglect
Call 419-213-CARE,
24 hours, 7 days a week



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Randall Muth, J.D.

BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Suzette Cowell, *Chair*
Johnetta McCollough, *Vice Chair*
Rachel Gagnon, *Secretary*
Rev. Dr. Donald Perryman, *Treasurer*
Joseph Corfman
Timothy Meyer
Dan Dergham Ridi
John Schinharl
Kathy Vasquez
Jim Walrod