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**MINUTES OF LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES BOARD**  
**Regular Meeting Held July 16, 2025**  
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The regular meeting of the Lucas County Children Services Board was held at 301 Adams Street, 3:00 P.M., in person and via Zoom.

**Members Present:** Mr. Corfman, Dr. Cowell, Ms. Gagnon, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Vasquez, and Mr. Walrod

**Member(s) Absent:** Ms. McCollough, Rev. Dr. Perryman (Zoom), and Mr. Ridi (Zoom)  
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Dr. Cowell called the July 16, 2025, regular meeting of the LCCS Board to order. Roll Call was taken. A quorum was present.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES**

- Alexia Rodriguez – Caseworker Trainee
- Alivia Felser – Caseworker Trainee
- Allison Steffin – Caseworker Trainee
- Aretha Gilmer – Caseworker Trainee
- Ashley DeRosia – Caseworker Trainee
- Braxtin Adams – Caseworker Trainee
- Christelle Montgomery – Caseworker Trainee
- Erica Hass – Caseworker Trainee
- Jasiah Nelums – Caseworker Trainee
- Joshua Randolph – Caseworker Trainee
- Keagan Maynard – Caseworker Trainee
- Keyarra Apesos – Caseworker Trainee
- Nya Quimbaya – Caseworker Trainee
- Rhonda Kendall – Caseworker Trainee
- Sarah Ekron – Caseworker Trainee
- Shantae McCarver – Family Visits Monitor
- Michael Babcock- Data Management Specialist
- Gwendolyn Valentine – Records Clerk
- Bailey Bondy – Clerical Assistant

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA AND JUNE LCCS BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

- Minutes from June 18, 2025, LCCS Board of Trustees Meeting
- Personnel Committee Minutes (7/7/25)

Dr. Cowell asked if any items would be removed from the Consent Agenda. Hearing none, Dr. Cowell read the Consent Agenda into the minutes.

Dr. Cowell asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Meyer made a motion for approval, which Mr. Corfman seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Financial Updates**

Mr. Hoskins presented an overview of the most recent financial statements, accompanied by graphs that will be attached to these minutes. Mrs. Vasquez made a motion to accept the financials with Mr. Walrod seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Task Force**

Ms. Cully provided an overview of the Task Force's recent meetings. They are scheduled to meet tonight, July 16, 2025, with a focus on developing the strategic plan and setting goals. A facilitator has been hired to support the Task Force and ensure that the meetings are engaging and productive.

Participants, including representatives from the Casey Foundation, have asked insightful questions and maintained a positive and open attitude toward understanding how processes work at LCCS. There has been significant interest in LCCS's activities and how cases are processed through the system.

The goal is to encourage open communication and highlight the positive aspects of LCCS by enhancing its social media presence. The Task Force meets twice a month, from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM, and the public is welcome to attend these meetings.

## **CHAIRS REPORT**

Dr. Cowell noted that she has been monitoring LCCS's social media presence. She observed an increase in positive feedback, which has been a benefit of establishing the Task Force. The interactions within the community have shifted toward more constructive communication and dialogue.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT**

### **Executive Director Report—Randy Muth**

#### **LCCS CHILD PLACEMENT STATISTICS:**

|                          | Current Month | Previous Month |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Agency Foster Homes      | 281           | 279            |
| Subsidized Adoptions     | 769           | 1,091          |
| Purchased Boarding Homes | 243           | 234            |
| Institutions/Group Homes | 16            | 16             |
| Relative Placement       | 391           | 379            |

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTIVITIES**

### **State Biennial Budget (HB 96) Update**

Late in the evening on June 30, Governor DeWine signed HB96, Ohio's 2026-2027 operating budget, and issued 67 line-item vetoes. Most of the bill's provisions will become effective 90 days after the bill is filed with the Secretary of State's office. Usually in October. Appropriations and temporary language became effective upon signing. The final bill:

- Essentially restored the Senate SCPA cuts to the levels recommended by the Governor and as passed by the house with some caveats. The Executive and House passed version stated that ODCY shall allocate not less than \$180M/SFY2026 and \$185M/SFY2027. Senate cut that to

\$162.75M/SFY2026 and \$170.9M/SFY2027 and replaced “not less than” with “up to” meaning that OCDY could actually give us less. Final version restored the dollar amounts but left the “not less than” with “up to” change in place. Right now, there’s no reason to believe that ODCY will not allocate the full amount, but no one can see all ends.

- The Executive and House passed version provided \$20M/SFY2026 and \$10M/SFY2027 in one-time funding to establish regional child wellness campuses across the State. The Senate eliminated that provision in its entirety. The final bill funds the project with “up to” \$10M each fiscal year.
- Adopted the rate card proposal we discussed earlier in the year, but the final version added a provision exempting providers of foster care and kinship care services from the rate card language.
- Maintained Multi-System Youth (MSY) Funding at \$25M per year.
- Maintained the Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator program (OhioKAN) at \$8.5 M per year.
- Maintained the policy language which prohibits pcsas from using children’s social security benefits to offset placement costs
- Added language which would eliminate replacement levies

Several items to note:

- The Governor **did not** line-item veto language exempting providers of foster care and kinship care services from the rate card language.
- The Governor **did not** line-item veto language providing an avenue for county commissioners to opt-out of establishing or maintaining a local FCFC council.
- The Governor **did** line-item veto language eliminating replacement levies starting CY2026, however, there may be a technicality in the veto language that could allow replacement levies to be eliminated. Nevertheless, regardless of the outcome of this provision and veto, most believe that the General Assembly will eliminate replacement levies well before the 2027 general election (which is when it would impact us).

The General Assembly can override any line-item veto with a 3/5 majority vote of each house (60 votes in the House and 20 in the Senate) at any time during the current two-year legislative session which ends Dec. 31, 2026. PCSAO states that some legislators already are expressing an interest via social media in overriding certain vetoed provisions.

While the budget is positive for us, cuts to maternal and child health programs, early learning, childcare access, health supports, lead abatement, and the removal of family tax credits could negatively impact the families we serve.

### **COA Interim Reaccreditation**

LCCS received notification that we achieved interim COA reaccreditation We (with the Boards advice and consent) elected to pursue interim accreditation back January or February of last year due to cost differences between interim and full reaccreditation. We estimated that the Accreditation Fees, Site Visit and Maintenance of Accreditation along with staff costs to pursue full accreditation would total approximately \$100,000. Whereas we estimated that interim reaccreditation would be less than \$10,0000. With the fate of our new levy not yet decided at that time, we determined that interim reaccreditation would be the prudent course. Our current interim reaccreditation is valid through September 30, 2026, so we’ll need to make a decision on whether to pursue full reaccreditation soon. But not until after the November election.

### **Virtual Board Meeting Draft Policy**

The last General Assembly passed HB 257 in lame duck and it was signed by Governor DeWine. This new law authorizes certain public bodies to meet virtually under certain conditions if they adopt policies for

virtual meetings and adhere to other specified legal requirements. So, once we do all that and remain in compliance with some legal requirements, we will be able to meet quorum, hold official meetings and hold votes (on most things) even when some or all of our members can attend only virtually. Although we had discussions regarding some of the questions that were necessary to formulate a policy, no decisions were made. Instead, the Board directed management to come forward with a proposed policy.

Based on that direction, we've drafted a proposed policy which addresses:

1. When meetings may be held completely virtual, completely in person, and hybrid
2. The circumstances in which a member may attend an in-person meeting virtually
3. The notice which must be given to the chair by a member who wishes to attend virtually
4. Defines emergency situation in which a member may be allowed to attend without giving full notice
5. Defines a major/nonroutine expenditure which mandates an in-person meeting as an individual expenditure over \$100,000
6. Defines a significant hiring decision which mandates an in-person meeting as the hiring of the Executive Director

### **Communications Plan**

It has become extraordinarily clear over the recent months that there is a significant lack of clarity among the community, media and other governmental officials regarding the actual role of LCCS and our capabilities and limitations. This ambiguity has unquestionably created unrealistic expectations among the community. We have, of course, on occasion, failed to meet those unrealistic expectations. Those failures have been amplified by social media, regular media coverage, and even elected government officials in Toledo and Lucas County. This could, if it hasn't already, lead to a debilitating lack of public confidence in LCCS which would negatively impact our ability to perform our mission. Further, if we allow the community and stakeholders to hold us unrealistically accountable for the protection of every child against all misjustice, it will prevent the public from recognizing its responsibility to develop viable, community-based solutions – which are the only things that have an actual chance of reducing the incidence of child maltreatment.

I believe that we must engage in a multi-faceted community education campaign. To that end, we have been working internally with an outside consultant to develop a comprehensive communications plan. That plan calls for our Communications department to develop a more streamlined, effective and modern message distribution process.

Unfortunately, recent experience has demonstrated that everything we do and say will likely be seen as tainted by a self-serving motive or by a desire to escape responsibility for perceived failures. In order to counter that perception, we must rely on our natural allies and Task Force. Both have the potential to be viewed as more credible if they are perceived as, and actually are, neutral, transparent, and free of undue LCCS involvement.

In order to successfully reframe our image, I believe we must do both – use our voice and expertise to communicate child welfare capabilities and limitations as well as leverage the credibility of our allies and the Task Force to gain public trust.

These are the areas which we have identified as needing the most immediate attention and reframing:

### **LCCS Role in Child Abuse Prevention**

The following is from an editorial which ran in the Blade on July 7, 2025, regarding our levy:

“The best way to lower costs and regain voter trust is for LCCS to agree with changes recommended by the task force and promise to invest some of the levy into prevention services, like parent therapy and teen pregnancy education programs. Although it is not traditionally the responsibility of Children’s Services to provide prevention programs, the Family First Act demands that such organizations adapt to balance emergency action with proactive community interactions.”

While the Blade editors have accurately stated the intent of the FFPSA, there is, again, a misunderstanding of the role of Ohio’s public children services in implementing the prevention aspect of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). While it is true that, for the first time since 1980, federal Title IV-E funds have been directed toward preventions services, the implementation of that federal purpose falls primarily to the private sector. To the extent that those funds flow or pass through a governmental agency, in Ohio, those agencies are likely to be Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) which administers Medicaid, The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OHMAS) which allocates public funding to the private mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery system, and the Ohio Children’s Trust Fund (OCTF) which is describe more fully below.

Ohio has always drawn a bright line between child abuse prevention and response. Actually, to be precise, in Ohio, we refer to this concept as the difference between primary and tertiary prevention. As illustrated below, OCTF is responsible for primary prevention and PCSAs are charged with tertiary prevention.

Primary prevention focuses on the general public or all families, regardless of risk level, to promote protective factors, reduce risk factors and build awareness and educate communities about healthy child development.

Tertiary prevention applies to families already involved in the child welfare system. The focus is to utilize reasonable efforts to prevent the need for placement outside the home, minimize the effects of trauma on the children and families, achieve permanency for the child and reduce the likelihood of re-abuse or re-entry into foster care.

[Ohio Children's Trust Fund | Ohio.gov](https://www.ohio.gov/ohio-childrens-trust-fund)

The above website states on its landing page that “The mission of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund is to prevent child abuse and neglect through investing in strong communities, healthy families and safe children. We are Ohio's **sole, dedicated public funding source for child abuse and neglect prevention**. (emphasis added). Therefore, it is clear that OCTF is sole public entity charged with primary prevention.

Both the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code provide that Ohio’s public children service agencies cannot expend public funding until a case has been “screened in.” This occurs when a report of child abuse and neglect meets the OCDY guidelines for further action by the county public children services agency. Until such time, we’re not permitted to take action. In fact, we’re not even permitted to make a collateral investigation to inform the screening decision. Therefore, any efforts we make would be subsequent to the maltreatment and constitute tertiary prevention.

So, this all comes down to the definition of “prevention.” If, in the context of the discussion, “prevention” means expending public funds to reduce the societal factors commonly associated with child abuse and neglect in an effort to prevent child abuse from happening, that is probably not what LCCS funded nor have the expertise to do. If “prevention” means preventing further harm, recurrence, or family disruption after child abuse or neglect has already occurred, that is absolutely something that we do. And we do it well.

The bottom line is that these are nuanced concepts which must be carefully and effectively explained to the public. I believe that the Task Force has the ability to do that if it is well informed.

### Community's Fundamental Lack of Understanding of the Role of Children Services

The below is a comment to a Blade article regarding our levy which ran on July 1.

<https://www.toledoblade.com/local/city/2025/07/01/lucas-ounty-moves-to-renew-critical-children-services-levy/stories/20250701116>

#### S Baldwin

“I hope there will be more information about the exact services the LCCS provides as well as data on the number of people served. In my mind, their services could be easily confused with things like providing kids meals in libraries. **Also, I was surprised to learn 'many of the services focus on helping parents access parenting classes, addiction treatment, and mental health services, steps often required before a child can return home safely.'** I'd like to know more about the number of parents served, whether the programs are effective and if/how they interface with other addiction treatment and mental health services offered by other county and city departments. **It seems to me there would be a lot of support among all city residents for helping parents because even if only one parent succeeds in overcoming an addiction or mental health problem, then a great burden is removed from society as a whole.**” (emphasis added)

I got the impression that this article was the first time the commenter realized that we actually help parents. I think this brings into sharp focus that we may not be fully cognizant of the community's perception of what we do. Certainly, the questions he/she asks and his/her call for data on the services we provide are legitimate. We just need a mechanism to get that information out.

We do protect children through assessment of allegations of child abuse and neglect. But that is just where our work starts. Once we've identified a family in need of services, we inherit a legal obligation to use diligent efforts to assist the parent in mitigating the problems that led to our initial involvement. This involves case planning, service monitoring, removing barriers to obtaining services and support, concrete assistance such as providing transportation, even providing parent education. In short, it is accurate to say that 80% of the job is working with adults.

### Clarifying and Solidifying the Role of the Community

Over the course of the last few months, it has become abundantly clear the community, stakeholders and elected officials do not understand that caseworkers primarily serve as case managers. We are not direct treatment providers. We have neither the training, expertise, experience or legal authority to provide direct mental health, addiction or medical treatment to families. Rather, we rely on other community agencies and systems for the provision of direct services to children and adults. Our role is to assess child safety, develop case plans, coordinate services, and monitor family progress toward reunification or permanency. We're also government, so we have to document the progress of the family, comply with statutes, and pursue the legal remedies in court.

It is the community, usually through private non-profit agencies, that provides the services that facilitate change. These include mental health counseling, substance use treatment, parenting education, housing assistance, and other concrete supports. Community-based providers have the clinical expertise and programmatic resources to address the root causes of maltreatment and strengthen family functioning. We do not.

It is critically important that the Community understands this. Expecting us to act as treatment providers creates unrealistic expectations and weakens the system.

Over the course of the next months and years, we will follow our Communications Plan to clarify these concepts.

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### **DONATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS**

Nine local businesses are contributing to this year's backpack and school supply drive, in addition to the efforts of longtime community partner Buckeye Broadband. Many are conducting internal collections or encouraging customers to donate school supplies in-store. Many are bringing their collections to the drive-thru drop-off event July 16 at the Appliance Center in Maumee and will have volunteers participate in the backpack build Monday, August 4.

HS volunteers have helped this summer to build the weekend snack bags being sponsored by Friends of LCCS. The HS students are banking service hours for the upcoming school year by building the bags at scheduled events being held at Connecting Kids to Meals. 1,000 bags will be built and distributed to children served by LCCS, most of whom don't have access to free/reduced lunch or breakfast in summer.

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### **IN THE MEDIA**

|                                                    |                                                                        |         |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com                    | FosterWare Party<br>(Sherry Dunn interview)                            | 6-12-25 |
| WTOL, wtol.com                                     | 15 New Caseworkers<br>(Chanda Beal interview)                          | 6-18-25 |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com<br>WTVG, 13abc.com | Community Conversation<br>(Randy Muth, Andrea Carmona)                 | 6-24-25 |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com                    | Placement Costs<br>(Randy Muth)                                        | 6-30-25 |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com                    | Levy Clears First Hurdle                                               | 7-1-25  |
| <i>Toledo Free Press</i>                           | LCCS Levy Vote<br>(Randy Muth)                                         | 7-4-25  |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com                    | LCCS Levy Editorial                                                    | 7-8-25  |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com                    | Family Search/Engagement<br>(Chanda Beal, Amy Galvan, Melissa McCartt) | 7-13-25 |

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Ms. Gagnon made a motion to go into executive session to discuss non-bargaining staff and a confidential case. Mr. Corfman seconded the motion. Roll call was taken, and all members were present except Ms. McCollough, Rev. Dr. Perryman (Zoom), and Mr. Ridi (Zoom).

Mr. Corfman made a motion to exit the executive session. Ms. Gagnon seconded the motion.

A roll call was taken, and all members were present except Ms. McCollough, Rev. Dr. Perryman (Zoom), and Mr. Ridi (Zoom).

### **OPEN SESSION**

There were no business items to address following the executive session.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Gagnon  
Mr. Meyer seconding the motion.  
The meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Gagnon  
Board Secretary