



LORAIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

2018-2020 Strategic Plan

COMPLETED

**STRONGER
PRACTICES**

CULTURE OF QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT

**STRONGER
WORKFORCE**

INFORMED AND
SUPPORTED
WORKFORCE

**STRONGER
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

BUILD AND
STRENGTHEN



Lorain County Children Services

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Kristen M. Fox-Berki, MSSA, LISW-S, Executive Director • www.childrenservices.org

August 18, 2020

Dear Community Member,

I'm very pleased to share with you the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan progress and the accomplishments that will have a lasting positive impact on our social work practice, our workforce development and our engagement with our community stakeholders including foster and kinship families.

A lot has changed over the course of this three-year set of initiatives. Early in the process, Lorain County Children Services experienced a change in leadership. Additionally, new investments from the State came, with new areas of state-wide importance. All of which had to be managed while continuing to make progress on the strategic plan. And of course, as we were nearing the finish line, a once-in-a-hundred-years global pandemic swept the world. I'm very happy to report that, as usual, LCCS staff were able to quickly pivot and adjust to the new reality and forge ahead, knowing that the intended outcomes from this strategic plan would create lasting improvements to for our children and families; for our workforce and for our community.

Although we asked Managers to be accountable for the overall Strategic Plan elements, many staff members participated in all aspects of initiative development and integration, and I thank them for their insight and hard work.

Lorain County Children Services is better off today with the achievement of our 2018-2020 Strategic Plan outcomes and we look forward to developing the 2021-2023 plan over the next several months.

Sincerely,

Kristen Fox-Berki, MSSA, LISW-S

Kristen Fox-Berki, MSSA, LISW-S
Executive Director



Our Mission: In partnership with the community, the staff, foster parents and volunteers of Lorain County Children Services are committed to the safety and well-being of abused, neglected and dependent children and will provide the highest quality protection, permanence and prevention services to children and families.

Our Vision: We believe all children have an absolute right to a safe, permanent, stable home which provides basic levels of nurturance and care, and is free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Values: We value Safety, Permanency within One Year and Improved Well-Being for all Children and Families We Touch

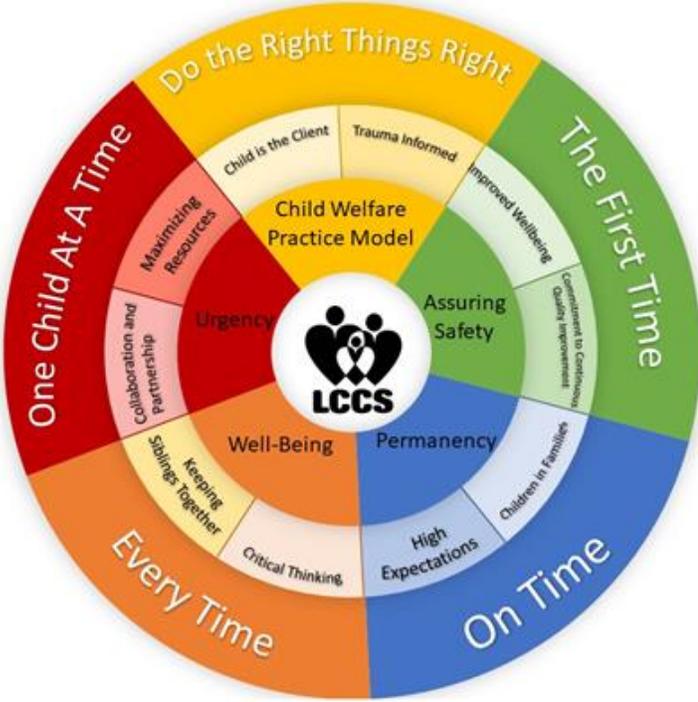
Strategic Goal: By the end of 2020, we will model Best Practices across all levels and functions of the agency.

Stronger Practices Original Goals	Stronger Workforce Original Goals	Stronger Community Engagement Original Goals
<p><i>We have a culture of continuous improvement.</i></p> <p><i>We will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Continue to improve LCCS effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.</i> <i>Continue to evaluate the impact LCCS practices have on Lorain County’s vulnerable children.</i> 	<p><i>Our workforce is informed, supported, and engaged.</i></p> <p><i>We will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Promote safe, healthy work environments.</i> <i>Improve the effectiveness of our workforce</i> <i>Continue to improve employee engagement.</i> 	<p><i>We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Lorain County’s vulnerable children and families.</i></p> <p><i>We will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Build and strengthen community partnerships.</i> <i>Help our clients successfully access the right array of community resources.</i>
SECTION OBJECTIVES	SECTION OBJECTIVES	SECTION OBJECTIVES
Develop and train on practice model	Develop an onboarding and training program for supervisors	Inform and Educate community about FFPA driven changes to practice
Adopt a trauma informed care approach to casework	Utilize new tools to support casework process and decision-making with a focus on Rapid Safety Feedback and stronger CQI support and oversight	Support staff engagement on community/external committees, boards or taskforces.
Maximize the use of data across program areas consistent with practice standards and core values		Assure the right number of high quality resource families to meet the needs of our children.

Stronger Practices Accomplishments	Develop and Train on LCCS Practice Model
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Turcola • Andrea Hall-Miller • Cathy Johnson • Stacey Spicer • Jessica Basinski • CASEWORKER-DS • CASEWORKER-FBC • Amber Gaikwad

Practice Model- a subcommittee consisting of caseworkers, supervisors and managers researched, reviewed and selected a format for the practice model. The group selected a visual practice model over a written model. The group talked about the core values at Lorain County Children Services and wanted to embed these ideas into a practice model. As the group continued to work on the model and revise ideas, a vision emerged and our practice model was created. Lorain County Children Services has had a long standing philosophy to 'Do the Right Things Right, The First Time, On Time, Every Time, One Child At A Time'. Within the model, the core values were included to reflect the ideas of best practice in child welfare, something our agency strives for.

The practice model was introduced to all staff and each staff member received a magnet of the practice model. Support staff, caseworkers, supervisors and managers were given information about the practice model and as new staff are hired, they will be given the practice model along with an explanation of why it exists.



Keeping Siblings Together and Sibling Agreements- When the practice model was being developed, much discussion was given about the importance of placing siblings together when they entered foster care. A subcommittee was formed to explore this issue further. Staff at the agency felt that siblings are not always placed together and having them visit and communicate with each other didn't happen as often as it should. When reviewing data, we learned that in fact anywhere from 72-94% of children are placed with all or some of their siblings. Since December 2019, at least 90% of children are placed with some or all of their siblings. There is much discussion and planning that happens before placement to attempt to place children together. The agency staff understands that the trauma of removing children from their biological families can be lessened some if children are placed with their brothers and/or sisters. There is a high value for this and the data points to success in this area. When children cannot be placed together the agency staff advocated for increased contact outside of visitation with biological parents. Staff at the agency had attended trainings about increasing contact between siblings. Staff found value in this training and some work was

done to contact the trainer. After consulting with the training, the agency on the subcommittee gathered documents to create a Sibling Agreement. This Agreement is reviewed and given to foster parents informing them of their obligation to ensure that children in their care see their siblings in another home. Foster Parents agree to facilitate visits between siblings and encourage contact outside of visits including virtual visits and phone contact. The contract also outlines the priority of keeping siblings together and if a placement becomes available for the siblings to be together, the agency would support this placement.

Sibling Visitation and Placement Agreement

Child's Name: _____ D.O.B. _____

Caregivers Name: _____ Phone: _____

Caregivers Name: _____ Phone: _____

I/We _____, agree to accept the placement of the above named minor children into my/our care. I/we understand that this child/these children are members of a sibling group that was placed with more than one caregiver(s) when entering foster care. I/we understand that it is the goal of Lorain County Children Services to place siblings together whenever possible and appropriate. I/we understand that in order to reach this goal, Lorain County Children Services staff will make an on-going effort to secure a placement where this sibling group can be placed together.

In an effort to maintain sibling relationships, it is the expectation of Lorain County Children Services that visitation between the above-named child/ren and his/her siblings occur outside of the agency's scheduled parent visits. This contact shall include;

- At least 2 sibling visits a month that includes all or some of the sibling group.
- Communicate with each of the other siblings via phone, facetime, skype, texting, letters, pictures, etc. on a regular basis.
- The first phone contact shall be made with the siblings within 24 hours of placement.

As a temporary caregiver for the above-named child/ren, I/we agree to assist in facilitating the visitation between these siblings.

In the event that Lorain County Children Services identifies a placement setting that can accommodate the above-named child/ren and his/her siblings, I/we understand that I will be part of a transition plan to reunite them together.

Caregiver: _____ Date: _____

Caregiver: _____ Date: _____

Caseworker: _____ Date: _____

- Chris Turcola
- Andrea Hall-Miller
- Dory Zemanek
- SUPERVISOR-DS
- Julie Schoelein
- CASEWORKER-DS
- CASEWORKER-DS
- CASEWORKER-FBC

Goal: Lorain County Children Services will be have a fully implemented Trauma Informed Care approach across agency practice including DS, FBC, CQI, Fiscal, Administration and workforce

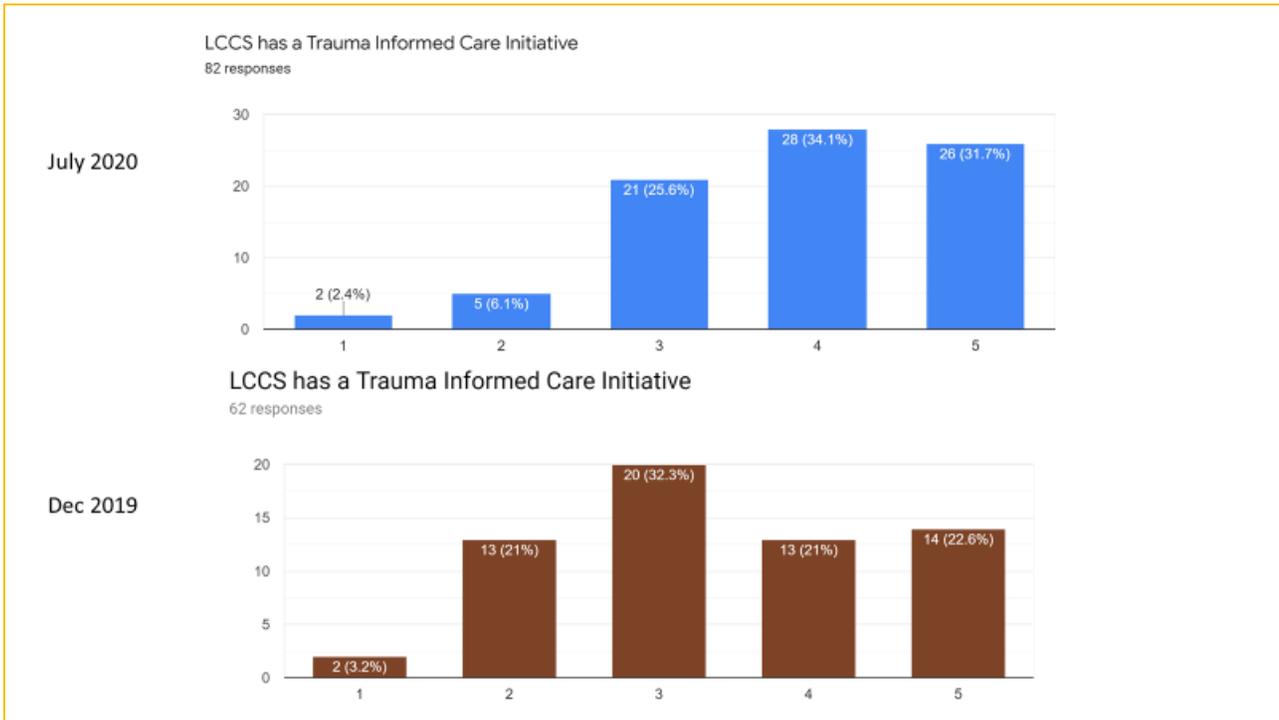
Much has been published about the impact of trauma on participats in the child welfare space. This initiative focused on strengthing existing responses to staff trauma (Secondary Trauma) and developing new agency wide understanding and protocols to support staff who can be impacted by Trauma.

At the beginning of the strategic plan, the hope was that a subcommittee could form and implement trauma informed practice through this avenue. The group members researched different trauma informed agency practice models, participated in some trainings and gathered information together to review as a group. It was determined about 6-9 months into this endeavor that becoming a trauma informed agency is a much bigger project than anticipated. It was at this time that we elevated the decision making about trauma to the manager level. Managers reviewed the research, listened to podcasts, watched videos and read articles about becoming a trauma informed agency.

The managers created a Trauma Informed Survey that staff completed in December 2019 and again in July 2020. The 2019 survey yielded 62 respondents and the 2020 had 82 respondents. From this survey, managers learned what areas to improve upon in terms of becoming more trauma informed. The managers led a group discussion about the survey results with the all management group which includes the supervisors and coordinators at the agency.

Managers learned that we could improve on developing some visual reminders about trauma; particularly secondary trauma throughout the agency. The staff recognized that there was a trauma initiative at LCCS and according to the survey results were positive about this. According to the results, areas to improve with becoming a trauma informed agency was to ensure that the agency is a psychologically safe place to come. Some staff responded that they do not feel safe to disclose mistakes. Staff also responded that they would like more supportive supervision. Areas that responded with largely positive responses included available trainings to staff, management endorsing a culture of continuous improvement, cooperation amongst staff and staff sensing that other staff at the agency are approachable.

At this time, attention is being given to creating a psychologically safe environment while still be able to hold people accountable. Work will continue in this project well beyond the end of the strategic plan.



Maximize Use of Data Across Program Areas Consistent with Practice Standards and Core Values

- Andrea Hall-Miller
- Angela Malcolm
- Stacy Schmidt
- SUPERVISOR-DS
- SUPERVISOR-FBC
- CASEWORKER-DS
- CASEWORKER-FBC

Over this strategic plan, increase use of data and using data to drive decisions has occurred. Staff are given various reports to highlight their progress toward positive outcomes for children and families. During the strategic plan, several meetings were held with supervisors and caseworkers to review what data was useful in their roles and how they use it. During these meetings, discussion about how to interpret data occurred. Members of the group reported that many times in child welfare; managers look at negative data. As a result, in the CQI annual report, data that included both strengths and areas to improve were included. Staff also have access to monthly data reports to track how they are doing with meeting timeframes, including assessments, completing case plans, entering activity logs and face-to-face visits. Meeting these mandates contributes to positive outcomes for children. If workers are seeing children, completing tasks on time and following through with mandates, it is likely that they are able to assess safety, monitor well-being and keep track of permanency. The data that is given to caseworkers, supervisors and managers helps to push the agency to hold themselves accountable to the

children and families that they serve. Data is kept historically and can show agency progress toward better outcomes or if we are falling out of compliance with a measure; we can team to determine how to improve in an area.

CQI continues to work with Direct Services and FBC on an ongoing basis to check accuracy of reports and learn about new reports as they are created in SACWIS.

<p>Stronger Workforce Accomplishments</p>	<p>All agency supervisors will have an organized formal plan for supervisory onboarding and ongoing training that include timelines.</p>
<p>January 2020-June 2020</p>	<p>A core component of creating a consistent and contemporary professional development process for Supervisory staff was the development of a Non-Bargaining Handbook. It is calendarized, so staff have key important dates listed for the year along with a listing of the CQI Committees and name of Chair(s).</p> <p>Introductory training specific to the role of the Program Supervisor was developed and will be delivered by HR to new Supervisors. Training topics include: Developing good supervisory practices & setting expectations, supervisory errors and how to avoid them, discipline errors, effective communication, casework supervision, documenting employee performance, review of the using and documenting in the personnel log, Supervisory Instruction & Coaching Procedure, Probationary Assessment Process Procedure, Performance Evaluation Procedure, LCCS Corrective Action Guidelines, Reporting Misconduct Procedure, harassment and workplace bullying, FMLA procedure, incident reports, Health and Safety OSHA and Workers Comp, political activity, reporting to work and tardiness, and the LCCS Social Media Policy.</p>

<p>The agency will have a supervisory practice model that includes guiding principles that is competency based with defined modes and expectations.</p>
<p>Over 100 potential competencies were reviewed with the goal of identifying the core competencies that would support highly qualified Supervisors able to meet the demands of our local practice. Identifying and organizing around these Supervisory Competencies will not only inform hiring practices but will also impact future training and activities around mentorship for caseworkers aspiring to move into Supervision.</p> <p>The Supervisory Competencies are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coaching, Guiding, and Developing Staff 2. Communication, Collaboration, Managing Conflict, Follow-up and Building Trust 3. Technical Knowledge & Skills, Decision Making, Continuous Learning and Professional Development 4. Customer/Client Focus, Cultural Competence 5. Stress Tolerance, Delegating responsibilities, Organizational Ability 6. Team Leadership, Facilitating Change

<p>Supervisors are aware of and provide input into new practice initiatives and policy changes.</p>
<p>We have requested that practice and policy changes be added to our All Management Meeting agenda. We meet quarterly with this group and each time do review any current policy changes and legislation that has an impact on our practice. We will need to focus our attention on this specific area of the strategic plan as we move forward. Which may include determining if the creation of a new supervisory committee is needed. The purpose will be to specifically review practice and policy changes that impact supervisors and their staff.</p>

**Stronger Community
Engagement
Accomplishments**

Inform and Educate on changes re FFPSA

We have successfully had representation on most of the state committees developed to guide/provide feedback to the state as it works to meet the new federal requirements. This has allowed us to stay abreast of the rapid changes and developments so as to forecast impact on local practice and prevention services availability.

We have successfully engaged our Community Advisory Network in exploring the changes and new requirements under FFA to help critical service providers begin discussion on how to align services with new requirements.

The State plans to submit its IV-E Prevention Plan to the federal HHS in the fall. After that occurs, LCCS can begin the process of arranging internal committees to lead the agency through its change process. We had anticipated this happening this summer but with no control over the states timeline, we will move those final strategic plan items into the 4th quarter.

The Family First Act will continue into the next strategic plan as Ohio shift from planning to implementation.

Support staff engagement with community

We continue to appoint people to represent the agency on external taskforces, committees and Boards. We did not have a spring Communications training for staff due to the rapid changes brought on by the pandemic but will revisit for Fall. We have expanded the number of staff able to provide mandated reporter trainings to Lorain County groups and have developed customized Mandated Reporter Training for key stakeholders: Law enforcement, Guardians ad Litem, and Service Providers, including teachers.

Assure the right number of high quality resource families to meet the needs of children

The launch of a coordinated recruitment campaign in 2018 led to a **net gain in licensed foster parents** in 2019. This was the first time since 2013 when we had more foster parents enter the program than exit. In early 2020, engagement and recruitment was incredibly challenged by the shelter in place orders. We have not been able to attend community events nor host recruitment events. While we know that in-person events is the best way to connect with people interested in fostering, we shifted the resources we would have put into in person recruitment to increased targeted marketing and general advertising. We placed a fill in form on the website for people who would like more information. Information Sessions and Open Houses have moved to a virtual environment. The recruiter was provided with an exclusive Zoom account.

The LCCS Board asked the agency include the development of a **Kinship Subsidy** as part of its strategic plan. Through the diligent and persistent work by many people inside and outside the agency, Lorain County

Children Services becomes the third county in Ohio to develop a mechanism to provide kinship families with financial assistance beyond what they qualify for through JFS (often income based).

 **Patti-Jo Burtnett** ▸ **Strongsville Moms Discuss It!** July 21 · 🌐

In January, this group hosted an in person discussion about foster parenting at Wine Down & Sweets Cafe that included our Lorain County Children Services foster parent recruiter. With so many in person events cancelled, we shifted our resources toward advertising to find families interested in fostering. Check out our new commercial. (We love it!) To preserve taxpayer dollars it is mostly shown in Lorain County but since this group was so welcoming and interested we want to make sure you have the opportunity to see it. We would be thrilled to Zoom/call/email with you and answer any questions you might have. No pressure- we love to help people find answers to their questions! Contact Julie Sabo Schoenlein!



YOUTUBE.COM
Foster parenting with Lorain County Children Services
Enjoy the videos and music you love, upload original content, and share it...

Service to Country - Service to Community



Veterans make great foster parents.

To learn more or to connect with a vet who is a foster parent, please call Julie at 440-328-2467

We want you to make a difference for children in your community.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY. FOSTER.

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