

# Athens County Children Services

## A message from the director

On behalf of the Board and staff of Athens County Children Services, I would like to thank you for your support of the Children Services Levy in November 2005. Since 1876, when Quaker philanthropist John Fowler started a fundraising drive to build a facility for the county's dependent children, the Athens community has supported our children. In 1876, the children we served were primarily orphans, but today the issues facing children and families have changed and so have our services.

The mandate of child welfare is the protection of children from abuse and neglect. Issues facing families include poverty and unemployment, mental health issues of parents and children, homelessness, domestic violence, and alcohol and substance abuse by parents. These issues can and do lead to the abuse and neglect of children in our community.

We do believe that children grow best within their family, with parents or relatives. Our agency services are designed to keep children safe as well as offering supports to parents so that children can remain in their family home. We work closely with schools and social service agencies to keep children safe. Unfortunately, not all parents can maintain their children safely in their home. In these situations the agency provides foster placements to children while continuing to attempt to improve the home situation so the children can return to their parents. In cases where parents cannot or will not provide a safe home for their children, the agency will look for an adoptive family who can provide a permanent home for the children.

Our agency believes in supporting families in the community so issues of abuse and neglect do not occur. We know parents face many struggles and we offer services that support and strengthen families. We are very proud of our Nelsonville Family Center which provides programming, meals and clothing for children and families in the community. The Nelsonville Family Center has been operating since 2000. We are just beginning to provide programs and meals for the youth of the Glouster community. Special thanks to Athens County Jobs and Family Services for their financial support of these efforts.

We also are involved in community events and projects which are family focused and fun! Some of these activities include Kidfest, Kids in Action, Heritage Health fair as well as the presenting games at the Athens County fair. And the community supports us with Lace Up for Kids and the Christmas project that provides gifts for over 800 children.

It does take a community to protect a child. Thank you Athens County for your support of our children.

Andrea Reik  
Director

# Annual Report 2005

2006  
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### **Our Mission**

*Athens County Children Services is a child-focused, family-centered agency protecting children at risk of physical and emotional harm by strengthening families through innovative services.*

*We are invested in a community effort of child abuse prevention, education, public awareness and are dedicated to the challenge of providing children the opportunity to grow in a safe, nurturing, and permanent family.*

## **Child Advocacy Center**

The CAC provides services for child sexual abuse victims and their families in a child-friendly environment, which serves as a centralized location for interviewing and examining children who are victims of sexual abuse. The children are interviewed by specially-trained forensic interviewers, and the cases are managed by a multidisciplinary team comprised of Athens County Children's Services, Athens County prosecutors, local law enforcement officers, mental health workers, victim advocates, and medical professionals. The goal of the center is to minimize the stress for the child and family and maximize the quality of the investigation. This coordination of services will allow victims and their families to receive immediate assistance, remain engaged in the treatment process, and remain engaged in the prosecution process. As the Center evolves, a major project will be to provide community education and outreach.

The goals of the CAC are to reduce the number of multiple interviews for victims of child sexual abuse, to increase child safety through interviews and medical exams, to increase the success of prosecution of those who sexually abuse children, To support the victim and non-offending family members by offering better coordinated services and to increase the effectiveness of these services, to reduce the child abuse victim's trauma and expedites recovery, and to prevent further child abuse through community education.

The CAC would not be possible without the partnership of other organizations, including the Athens Police Department, O'Bleness Memorial Hospital, Athens County Prosecutor's Office, Athens County Sheriff, Athens County Victim's Assistance Office, Tri-County Mental Health and Counseling Services, Athens CASA/ GAL Program, and Athens County Juvenile Court.

### **Referrals**

A *referral* is an allegation of maltreatment of a child which can be made orally or in writing. It includes, but is not limited to, allegations involving individuals, families, and out-of-home care settings. There was a total of **1390** referrals during 2005 (a **5.18% decrease** from 2004).

### **Referrals by School District**

Alexander	138 (10%)
Athens	473 (34%)
Federal Hocking	142 (10%)
Nelsonville York	287 (21%)
Trimble	236 (17%)
Other	114 (8%)

## Help Me Grow

In July 2001, ACCS became the fiscal and administrative agent for Help Me Grow (HMG), which is a child development program serving families with children age birth to 3 years and pregnant women.

HMG Service Coordinators work with families by providing child development information, home visits, information and referral, and support. They help families develop goals that will enhance their abilities, parent support, and child development. Help Me Grow received **305** referrals to the Service Coordinators during the year, and worked with an average of **211** cases per month.

Also, there were **156** visits made through the Newborn Nurse Visitor Program.



## Custody Termination

Custody is terminated when determined by the Juvenile Judge that keeping the child in a substitute care placement is no longer in his/her best interests. There were **79** child custody terminations during the year (a **14% increase** from 2004).

Of the ten children who aged out of foster care:

- 1 was enrolled in JVS,
- 2 failed the GED with plans of re-take,
- 3 obtained a GED,
- 3 graduated from high school, and
- 1 has severe mental/physical problems (no formal education).

## Financial Report

### EXPENSES

Children and Families	\$ 2,108,073.29
Operating	\$ 455,337.28
Personnel	\$ 2,916,855.89
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,480,266.46</b>

### REVENUES

Federal	\$ 2,391,144.33
Local	\$ 2,865,635.01
State	\$ 414,776.44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,671,555.78</b>

## Regional Training Center

The Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center is one site of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Center funded by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center provides high quality, competency-based workshops and other skill building initiatives to the child welfare staff, caregivers, and adoptive parents in our thirteen county agencies in a freindly, comfortable learning enviornment.

## Custody

The agency began 2005 with **115** children in custody and ended the year with **96** children.

There were a total of **168** children in agency custody during 2005 (**down 7%** from 2004), with **60** (57 children) new custody entries (**down nearly 28%** from 2004).

The chart below depicts the caseworker reason for custody. Substance abuse was a major factor in most of these cases.

Physical Abuse	(1).....2%
Neglect	(12).....20%
Dependency	(33).....55%
Unruly/Delinquent Behavior	(6).....10%
Parent Drug Use	(7).....12%
Parent Incarcerated	(1).....2%

## Placement Services

The Placement Services Unit is made up of a foster/adoption recruiter who recruits, trains, and licenses foster and adoptive homes; two foster care caseworkers who complete homestudies, provide support to foster parents, and arrange placements for children in custody; plus an independent living caseworker who works with teens in agency custody to prepare them to live independently at age 18. This team also has a diverse array of additional tasks and responsibilities.

Licensed Foster Homes 1/1/05	37
New Homes	11
Closed Homes	5
Licensed Foster Homes 12/31/05	43
Kinship Homestudies Completed	36
Life Skills Assessments Completed	16
Independent Living Cases (avg/month)	9

## Nelsonville Family Center

The Nelsonville Family Center is a resource center for families. Programming includes family support groups, a clothing bank, soup meals, playgrounds, Girl Power!, and Guy Time.

### Girl Power! & Guy Time

Girl Power! provides support and fun activities for young girls ages 12-15 while also reinforcing positive, healthy values. There were **44** Girl Power! meetings held in 2005. There were **47** Guy Time meetings held.

### Parent Support Groups

This group provides information on family issues and support from other families in the community. There were **34** meetings held in 2005.

### Playgroups

Playgroups provide an opportunity for parents and their children up to the age of 4 to interact and meet other parents from their community to discuss childcare issues. There were **37** Playgroups held in 2005.



## Adoption

Athens County Children Services finalized the adoption of **25** children in 2005. A child may be placed in the permanent custody of the agency if a parent willingly surrenders the child, the child is abandoned, or has spent the past 12 out of 22 months in agency custody with the court awarding Permanent Custody. Permanent Custody means permanently severing any parental ties to the child.

ACCS was awarded Permanent Custody (PC) of **22** children in 2005 for a total of **67** children in PC during 2005. The Adoption caseworkers strive to find permanent homes for these children.

Of the **41** children remaining in Permanent Custody at the end of the year, **7 (17%)** were in an adoptive placement.

## Cases Served Beyond Intake

During 2005, **52** families were closed by the Family Services on-going caseworkers; these cases had been open for an average of 1.67 years.

The Adoption unit closed **10** cases which had been open for an average of 1.85 years. The Independent Living caseworker closed **6** cases which had been open an average of 2.56 years.