



NEWS RELEASE
FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES
Division of Communications
614-275-2523 fccs.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, May 24, 2023

CONTACTS:

Scott Varner, Franklin County Children Services, 614.275.2523
Bill Teets, Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services, 614.403.2331
Tyler Lowry, Franklin County Board of Commissioners, 614.525.6630
José Rodríguez, Columbus City Council, 614.645.1257

Critical Need to Find Foster Families for Tweens and Teens in Franklin County: It Takes Heart... and Collaboration

State, County, City Joining Together on Coordinated Foster Family Recruitment Efforts

You don't have to be married, under 40, or rich to be a foster parent to a teenager. But it does take 100% heart to start... and Franklin County needs more people to give older children love and stability at a time when they need it most.

In a unique state-county-city-community collaboration around this theme of "It Takes Heart," Franklin County Children Services is enlisting the help of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Franklin County Commissioners, and Columbus City Council - along with more than two dozen foster agencies, local service providers, and community partners including Action for Children - to recruit as many as 100 additional foster parents specifically to support tween- and teen-aged children here in Franklin County.

Placement of children between the ages of 11-17 who come into the care of FCCS has become more difficult in recent years, as evidenced in part by the increasing number of times the agency has been forced to keep tweens and teens overnight in non-residential settings, including FCCS' own building.

In fact, on 40 occasions last year alone, FCCS had no other choice but to have youth spend the evening in the agency's Intake/Visitation building for two or more nights because a foster placement was not available. Nearly all of those occasions involved a young person over the age of 11, with most between 11 - 15 years old.

"Fostering is making a child feel safe and not alone. Fostering a young person is fostering hope," said Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady. "Fostering is the difference between a child sleeping in an office building that was never intended for that purpose and a child sleeping in a warm bed watched over by a caring adult."

"A sense of community and continuity plays such a vital role in the mental and emotional health of young people," added Franklin County Commissioner Erica Crawley. "While foster care is meant to be a short-term temporary solution for families engaged in the child welfare system, it can be a lifeline and sense of stability for young people at a critical time in their lives."

*** CONTINUE **

*** CONTINUE **

“There’s a great misperception about who can be a foster parent. The truth is that you don’t have to be married or middle-age, you don’t have to own your home or have a graduate degree, and while you do need to have a stable income, you don’t need to be rich. But it does take 100% heart, at least to start,” said Chip Spinning, FCCS Executive Director. “And today, we are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with dedicated partners who want to help us find more foster families through an impressive collaboration that stretches across state, county, city, and community levels.”

To meet this bold goal of recruiting 100 additional foster parents over the next year to work with tween- and teen-aged children, here’s what FCCS and its partners are doing as part of this unique state-county-city-community collaboration:

- The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and its partners at the Ohio Children’s Alliance are broadening their “It Takes 100% Heart” outreach campaign to increase the number of qualified foster, kinship, and adoptive families in the state. Targeted advertising is already starting across Central Ohio ([click here to watch the television spot](#)) and ODJFS will soon upgrade its website portal for families who are interested in signing up to foster or adopt. FCCS will join ODJFS in promoting the “It Takes 100% Heart” message with similar outreach and is making several updates to the FCCS foster care phone and website portals.
- FCCS and ODJFS (with help from the Ohio Children’s Alliance) are also supporting the work of Action for Children to collaborate with foster care agencies in Franklin County who are responsible for training, licensing, and supporting foster families. Action for Children and FCCS will collaborate on a Foster Care Fair in the coming weeks to give interested individuals an opportunity to hear more about the assistance and supports provided by these different organizations. The one-day, in-person event will feature many of the 21 provider agencies who work with FCCS to serve a diverse pool of potential foster parents.
- FCCS and its provider partners will also be working together to send direct messaging to many of the 277 caring adults here in Franklin County who are currently licensed to be foster parents but do not have a placement. Together, we will encourage these households to consider accepting a young person older than 11. Some of these potential foster families may not be aware of the additional financial supports and resources that are provided to families who care for older foster children - including a higher per-day stipend (as much as \$9000 more each year), tutoring help for school, respite care for foster parents, transportation assistance, and more.
- Columbus City Council will also join in the “It Takes Heart” campaign by sharing this important message from FCCS with city employees, at Neighborhood Pride Centers and City Recreation Centers, and with city-funded organizations who support and serve our city’s children and families.

For more information on becoming a foster parent in Franklin County, call 614.275-2711 or visit <https://fccs.us/foster-care>. To review the resources available through the State of Ohio, learn about foster and adoption options across the state, and hear more about the “It Takes Heart Ohio” campaign, go to <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/home>.

###

Franklin County Children Services

Through collaboration with families and their communities, we advocate for the safety, permanency, and well-being of each child we serve in a manner that honors family and culture.