



# FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

Protecting Children by Strengthening Families



# A Call to Action

2023 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

Released April 2024



# FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

## Safety, Permanency and Well-being for Every Child

### OUR MISSION

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.



## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

# A Call to Action

Each year, Franklin County Children Services is relied upon to help more than 26,000 children and their families through prevention, protection, placement, and permanency programs. As we wrap up 2023 - nearing four years into the historic and dramatic impacts on child welfare exposed by the COVID pandemic - Franklin County Children Services is in a unique position to further evolve how we truly keep young people safe and families together.



Over these past four years, family structures have changed, and the challenges parents face are far different. Add in the mental health crisis gripping so many of our young people, the stressors of violence in our communities, the uncertainties of our economy, and a stretched-thin child welfare safety net. In spite of these growing challenges, I believe more than ever that this community is making a difference in keeping children safer and making families stronger for longer. The framework of this Call to Action is built around six key themes that drive our work:



### CALL TO ACTION 1: PROTECTING THE WHOLE CHILD

Keeping children safer today is not a “one-size-fits-all” solution. It requires an integrated strategy that emphasizes the whole child - body, mind, and heart - and recognizes the mental health and social-emotional challenges confronting many children and teens today.



### CALL TO ACTION 2: STRENGTHENING ALL FAMILIES

Children are best served if they can safely remain with their primary families as they seek support. We're putting resources into community-based prevention programs that can keep any family from coming into the child welfare system in the first place.



### CALL TO ACTION 3: VALUING OUR TEAM FCCS CULTURE

As we strive to keep our dedicated staff safer and supported, we also invest in training and in creating a true culture of safety built on respect, value, and a calling of public service.



### CALL TO ACTION 4: MANAGING FINANCIAL RESOURCES RESPONSIBLY

We tirelessly pursue financial stewardship marked by transparency, accountability, and mission-driven investments.



### CALL TO ACTION 5: ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY AUTHENTICALLY

We are building stronger relationships rooted in trusted partnerships while also promoting an ecosystem of community supports that wrap around our families - no matter their size, income, neighborhood, or background.



### CALL TO ACTION 6: LEADING IN INNOVATION

FCCS will continue to champion the transformation of child welfare, pushing our systems to “do better” in keeping kids safer and making families stronger for longer.

We hope this 2023 Annual Report serves as a call to action for others and a reminder that, as a community, we can keep children safer and make families stronger if we continue to build a hopeful future together.

Sincerely,

**Chip Spinning**  
Executive Director

# 2023 Highlights

From collaborative community outreach efforts and festive annual events to grassroots gatherings celebrating children and families, here's a look at some of the year's most uplifting moments at Franklin County Children Services.



Annual Adoption Picnic



Team FCCS at 2023 African-American Male Wellness Walk



Black Girl Magic Toy Drive



FCCS Associate Director of Adoptions and Youth Transition Services Cassie Snyder with youth honoree Jayden



Nancy Fitzgivens Award Honorees caseworkers Van Frasher (left) and Jeffery Spikes (right) with FCCS Executive Director Chip Spinning



Simba mentor John Henson at Black Boy Brilliance Event

**National Family Week Celebration**



Gladden Community House's Mardi Ciriaco (left) with Mount Carmel Healthy Living Center staff



Central Community House staff with family honoree



Franklin County Commissioners, Columbus City Council, and the State of Ohio join FCCS to recruit new foster families.

**Holiday Wish**



Holiday Wish toy drive donor Lululemon



Holiday Wish staff with volunteers from the Ohio Association of Broadcasters

**FCCS Annual Graduation Party**



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@FCCSNews



@franklincountychildrenservices



@fcchildrenservices



linkedin.com/company/franklincountychildrenservices

# Protecting the Whole Child

When it comes to keeping children safe, Franklin County Children Services is all about the bigger picture. We employ an integrated child protection strategy that takes into account the whole child - from safeguarding physical well-being and mental health mindfulness to facilitating meaningful social and emotional connections. Our **433 caseworkers at FCCS** - in concert with our expert community partners - are looking out for the bodies, minds, and hearts of our children.

## Body...

FCCS continually streamlines the reporting, screening, and investigation process when our intake staff receives reports of possible child abuse or neglect. Expertly assessing for child safety and ensuring that youth are in safe environments is always our primary consideration.

In 2023, our agency received almost **28,000** referrals to our child abuse hotline and reporting portal. Our intake team conducted **11,642** assessments and investigations based on those screened-in referrals.

## Mind...

With youth mental health concerns reaching crisis levels both locally and across the nation, we know that mental health and trauma are a key component in nearly every case that comes into our care. At least **one in four youth** in the custody of a public child service agency in Ohio has complex issues including mental illness, developmental disabilities, and multi-system experience.

FCCS invests in the latest trainings, professional staff, and proven, trauma-informed strategies to identify and address some of the mental health struggles our young people face. Supporting the mental health needs of youth while they await safe placement, we've

partnered with **National Youth Advocacy Program** to have trained mental health workers stationed at our Whitehall intake location. These clinicians are ready to de-escalate youth in behavioral crisis, complete pre-placement assessments, and thoughtfully engage with youth who are experiencing trauma.

## Heart...

We know firsthand that every young person benefits when they have a caring adult in their corner offering support, love, and encouragement. Whether it's a family member, social worker, foster parent, teacher or mentor, this compassionate advocate can make all the difference in a child's life.

FCCS's longstanding **Friendship, Malaika, Simba, and College-Bound** mentoring programs feature **224 agency-certified volunteers** matched with agency youth. These committed adults are a nurturing, stabilizing influence in the lives of our children. These special, often lifelong relationships tend to be transformative for all involved.



Simba program manager Oleatha  
Waugh with longtime Simba mentor  
Claude Russell III

# Strengthening All Families

Children thrive in strong, stable families. This truth is at the heart of our child protection mission and why we advocate for all families to have access to the supports they need to provide youth with safe, nurturing spaces in which to flourish.

## Prevention...

FCCS invests in a full range of community-based prevention programs available to all families in Franklin County—regardless of a family’s size, income, neighborhood, background, culture or race. In 2023, FCCS partnered with **16 community prevention partners** providing services supporting young parents, preventing sex trafficking, tackling food insecurity, addressing domestic violence and youth violence, providing life skills, and offering family counseling. Our longstanding **Family to Family** program, for example, supports parents and children right in their own communities, connecting them to local resources and needed services.

## Connection...

At times when children can’t safely remain at home, they might be placed with relatives or in foster care. This typically temporary separation does not mean a loss of connection, however. FCCS honors the important bonds between children and parents, siblings, and other family members. Over the course of the year, we facilitated more than **6,000 safe visitations** with support from our committed, compassionate team of **34 social service aides**, who help families work toward reunification.

## Kinship and Foster care...

Family-like settings, when possible, are the best place for a child who cannot safely remain at home. In 2023, **1,205 FCCS-involved youth were placed with relatives** or in another kinship arrangement. By placing a child in a more familiar environment, kinship care creates a critical sense of belonging and allows a child to maintain vital connections to family, culture, and community. When children need a soft spot to land during difficult circumstances, foster care is another placement option we rely on. In 2023, FCCS placed 1,472 children in foster homes, arranged through one of our 21 foster care provider partners.

## Permanency...

All children deserve a caring community and a permanent sense of belonging and connection. Adoption is one way we help youth find a place they’ll always feel at home. Our annual **National Adoption Day** celebration highlighted seven older youth involved with FCCS who joined their permanent families. They were part of the **125 adoptions** our agency legalized in 2023. FCCS also had more than 250 children in agency custody available for adoption. Fortunately, more than half were matched with families and in the process of adoption.



Longtime foster parents Eric and Maya Ward



FCCS social service aide LaTisha Sterling

# Engaging our Community Authentically



Team FCCS at Sullivant Elementary



The Bike Lady (left) dropping off a bike donation at Holiday Wish

It does indeed take a village—which is why community connection and active collaboration is at the core of Franklin County Children Services' daily work. Ongoing partnerships with our trusted community supporters and dedicated stakeholders help us more effectively and authentically engage with the children and families we serve.

Our annual **FamJam** family enrichment festival was back in 2023 and better than ever, boasting record crowds of more than 5,000 people and dozens of community partners. Held at Goodale Park, this free event featured plenty of family friendly fun, access to valuable community resources, and a school supply giveaway.

Marking its 60th anniversary, **Holiday Wish** brought together more than 700 caring community members, local businesses, and area faith organizations in 2023. These generous, kindhearted stakeholders helped provide nearly 5,000 gifts for children in our care. In addition, our **Black Girl Magic** community gift drive provided more than 230 Black and Brown girls with curated care packages designed to celebrate individuality and boost self-esteem. And at the first **Black Boy**

**Brilliance** community event, hosted by Mount Vernon's A Cut Above the Rest Barber Shop, we collected more than 100 STEM-related toys, along with culturally specific books and sporting goods for Black and Brown boys involved with the agency.

Engaging our staff, members of Team FCCS marched in the **Stonewall Columbus Pride Parade** and the **African American Male Wellness Walk and Run**. We also celebrated the first day of school with teachers and students at Columbus' **Sullivant Elementary**.

Raising awareness about our child protection mission, the Team FCCS speakers bureau attended hundreds of outreach engagements and community events in 2023 all over Franklin County. From the Hilltop and Hilliard to Milo-Grogan, Grandview, and Gahanna, we were out in full force, sharing our mission and connecting one-on-one with stakeholders. FCCS leadership also participated in several community conversations around anti-racism, youth safety, and gun violence in collaboration with **Columbus City Council, Columbus City Schools, YWCA Columbus, and NAACP Columbus**, to name a few of our many valued community partners.

# Valuing Team FCCS Culture: Investing in Staff, Safety, and Diversity

Franklin County Children Services’ team of child welfare professionals work tirelessly and selflessly to advocate for the safety and stability of our community’s children and families. Our dedicated staff benefits from a supportive work environment that’s focused on three key areas: staff investment, safety, and diversity and inclusion.

FCCS’s **human resources** and **professional development** departments strive to recruit, train, and retain a strong, capable workforce. At the end of 2023, FCCS reached **809 employees**, with more than half serving as caseworkers. It’s no secret that being a child welfare professional is a challenging job. To more fully support newer caseworkers with in-depth orientation and ongoing training, we have launched casework mentoring teams in each of our direct service areas. Seasoned casework mentors are there at every step of the way for newer workers as they acclimate to the important mission of keeping kids safe and families strong. These veteran casework mentors offer advice, answer questions, troubleshoot challenges, and empower and build confidence.

Developing a “**Safer Together**” approach to safety, we deployed several new tools and strategies over the year to keep employees and visitors safer. In 2023, FCCS hired its first-ever Director of Safety & Security. FCCS also contracted with a private security team to provide expanded safety coverage in collaboration with local law enforcement. This multi-layered approach aims to keep all FCCS locations safe and secure—bringing much needed protection and peace of mind to all who use these busy, public spaces.

In addition to keeping staff safe and supported, FCCS also prioritizes having a culturally competent, diverse workforce reflective of the kids and families we serve. Our agency’s ongoing “Building a Community of Hope” speaker series focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. This initiative also prioritized moving our agency along a **Culture of Safety journey**. Focused on personal safety, stress management, workplace connectedness, psychological safety, and mindfulness, this initiative supports positive organizational outcomes and creates better supports for children and families.



FCCS Director of Safety and Security Robert Collins (left) with agency security staff

FCCS caseworker mentors  
(left to right) Debbie Adediran, Emily Brown,  
Sarah Hogan and Sharon Steele



# 2023 Report Of Services

In 2023, Franklin County Children Services helped **26,408** children and their families via direct collaboration with the agency's professional staff and through partnership with provider agencies.

## Prevention

Children Services believes that its mission to protect children by strengthening families can best be carried out by offering a variety of support services to families at every stage of a case. Prevention services are designed to provide help to families and children to prevent case openings, to prevent out-of-home placement of children, to prevent further maltreatment of children, and to prevent the recidivism of children who have returned home following placement.

Services are aligned with the Children Services mission and with meeting federal goals in three areas: permanency, well-being and safety.

## Permanency

Children Services is committed to assuring a safe, permanent home for every child.

### In 2023:

- **125** adoptions were legalized
- Through FCCS's youth transition services department, **124** older youth under agency care were referred to resources focused on achieving independence and self-sufficiency
- **62** youth graduated from high school and **25** youth headed off to college or other higher-learning opportunities
- **138** youth transitioned out of the child welfare system

## Well-being

Through our Volunteer Department, Children Services provides enrichment opportunities for youth in order to enhance their well-being.

### In 2023:

- FCCS's **Volunteer Department** has hundreds of dedicated mentors matched with agency youth via our longstanding Friendship, Malaika, Simba, and College-Bound mentoring programs. We also have a team of Crisis Center volunteers at our intake office, ready to assist children coming into the center by creating a safe, comfortable, and caring environment



**24-hour Child Abuse Hotline:**  
614-229-7000

**General Information:**  
614-229-7100

**Adoption:**  
614-341-6060

**Kinship:**  
614-341-6161

**Volunteers & Mentors:**  
614-275-2690

**Communications:**  
614-275-2523

**Foster Home Recruitment:**  
614-275-2711



## Safety

Children Services intake and investigations staff provides protective services by investigating referrals of children who are alleged to be abused, neglected or dependent. These services are provided 24 hours a day. FCCS also accepts referrals from the Franklin County Juvenile Court on youth who are unruly or delinquent.

When investigations indicate a need for ongoing services, a case is opened and sent to one of the agency's two regional offices or two managed care partner agencies. Children Services provides case management, protective and supportive services, as well as purchased services from community agencies within a case plan agreed to by the family and Children Services casework staff.

### In 2023, there were:

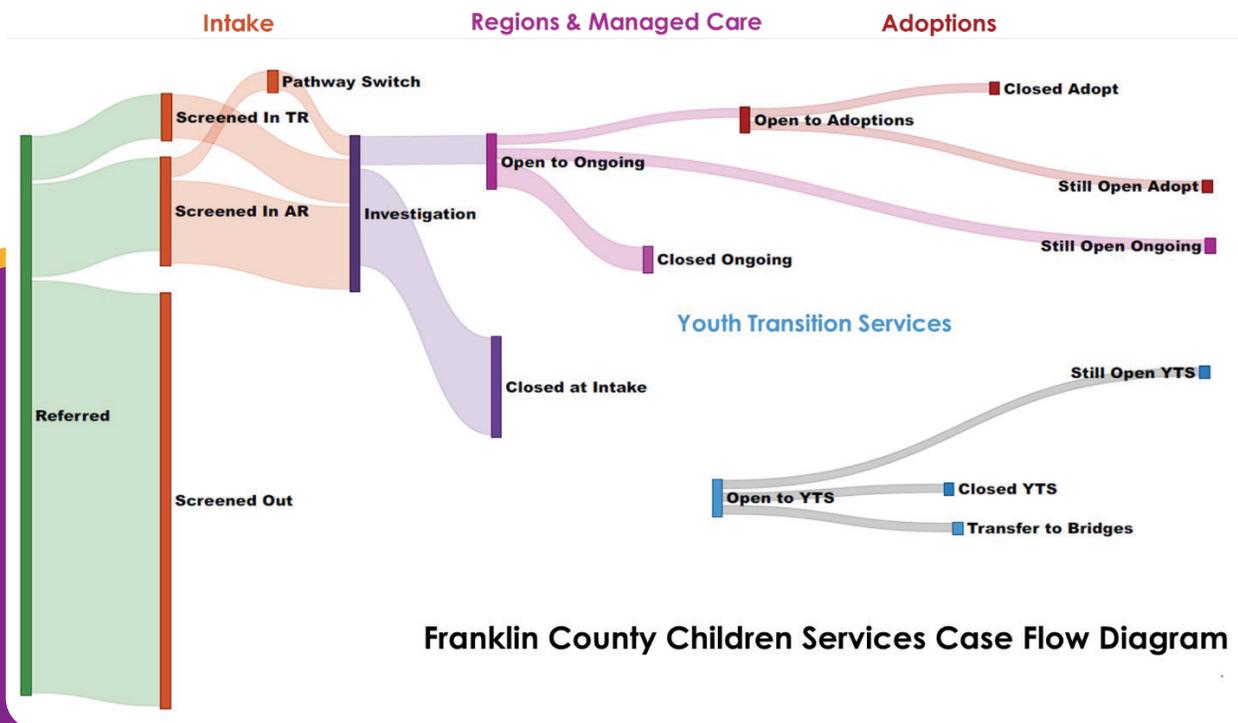
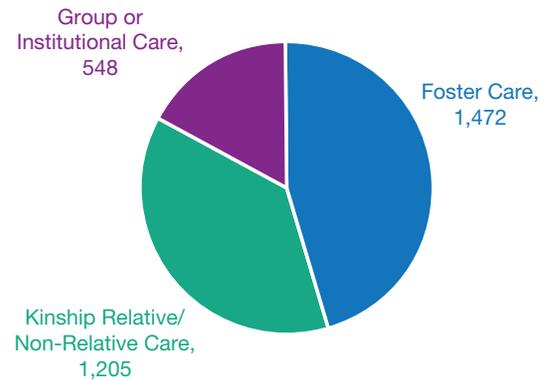
- **27,955** intake referrals received
- **11,642** referrals screened in for investigation/assessment
- Ongoing services for **3,394** cases
- **8,019** children and **10,932** adults served as part of the agency's active ongoing caseload
- Family services for **4,911** children through managed care partnerships

Every effort is made by Children Services to keep children with their families whenever safely possible. When out-of-home placement is necessary, the agency's goal is to place children in the least restrictive environment, to provide opportunities for and to facilitate regular visitation, and to reunite families as soon as this can be safely accomplished.

### In 2023, Franklin County Children Services had:

- **2,915** children in agency custody
- **2,109** children in paid care

Children in FCCS Care by Placement Type in 2023



Franklin County Children Services Case Flow Diagram

# FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

## 2023 Income Statistics

**Operating Fund Balance as of January 1, 2023** **\$157,072,100**

**Income** **(Cash Basis):**

**Local & Miscellaneous Funds** **\$145,445,544**

Property Taxes	\$142,951,139
Interfund Revenue	1,787,243
Board & Care from Parents	89,925
Miscellaneous	617,237

**Federal Funds** **\$42,263,199**

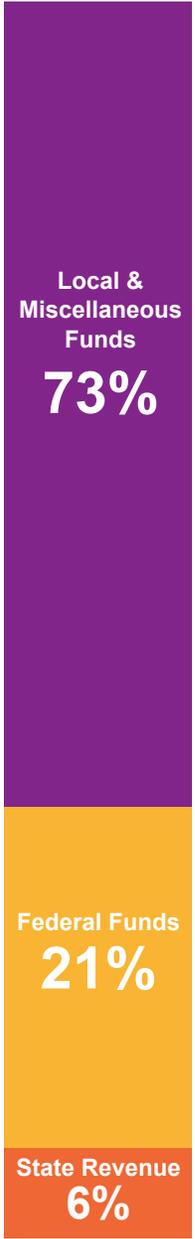
Title IV-E Placement (Administration)	\$16,232,780
Title IV-E ProtectOHIO Waiver	0
Title IV-E Administration	18,356,820
Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, VA Benefits	844,826
Title IV-B - ESSA (Emergency Services Supplemental Assistance)	662,911
CHAFFEE Independent Living Program	1,131,104
Miscellaneous	5,034,758

**State Revenue** **\$12,523,415**

Regional Training	\$1,155,359
Child Protective & Feisel Allocation	8,952,249
Miscellaneous	2,415,807

**Total 2023 Income** **\$200,232,158**

**Beginning Balance plus 2023 Income** **\$357,304,258**





## FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES 2023 Expense Statistics

### Operating Expenditures

(Cash Basis):

<b>Protection Program</b>	<b>\$133,832,731</b>
Intake & Investigations	\$36,515,162
Casework Protective Services	38,660,081
Care Partnerships	49,153,025
Family Support Services	9,504,463
<b>Placement Program</b>	<b>\$62,146,234</b>
Family Care Services	\$12,825,216
Foster Home Care	20,444,019
Group Home Care	13,848,153
Kinship Care	5,581,742
Institutional Care	9,447,103
<b>Permanency Program</b>	<b>\$15,646,883</b>
Adoption Services	\$10,596,466
Child Enrichment Services	2,490,935
Youth Transition Services	2,559,483
<b>Total 2023 Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>\$211,625,848</b>
<b>Operating Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023</b>	<b>\$145,678,410</b>
<b>Ending Balance plus 2023 Expenses</b>	<b>\$357,304,258</b>

Protection  
**63%**

Placement  
**29%**

Permanency  
**8%**

## FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

# 2023 Purchased Social Services

A and B Sisterhood	\$181,932	Huckleberry House	\$107,994
A Better Life 2 Embrace LLC	\$601,090	HYS Hands Inc.	\$268,168
A Life's Purpose Inc.	\$146,450	I am Boundless Inc.	\$1,138,348
A New Leaf Inc.	\$864,392	Indiana Developmental Training Center	\$842,994
A Place of Hope	\$304,088	Isaiah's Place	\$19,939
Ability Matters	\$187,480	Jaystarr Homes 2 Inc.	\$158,665
Acadia Healthcare	\$134,858	Journey Home Foster Care LLC	\$15,665
Action for Children	\$90,044	Keys to Success Group Home LLC	\$116,348
ADAMH	\$92,220	Keystone Newport News	\$20,877
Adoption Star	\$6,250	Keystone Richland Center	\$155,148
Adriel School	\$586,840	Kids Count Too Inc.	\$80,143
Advantage Family Outreach and Foster Care	\$189,615	KJS Brighter Days	\$174,807
Against All Odds	\$257,806	Krown Solutions LLC	\$738,617
All That (Teens Hopeful About Tomorrow)	\$40,000	L Strong Group Home	\$24,488
Applewhite Adoptions	\$5,000	Laboratory Corp of America	\$2,326
Applewood Centers	\$136,286	Lakeland Hospital Acquisition Corp	\$92,500
Avertest LLC	\$183,388	Legacy Residential Homes Inc.	\$925,302
Bair Foundation	\$1,277,824	LHS Family and Youth Services Inc.	\$633,940
Benchmark Behavioral Health Systems	\$191,331	Life Start Inc.	\$218,073
Better Beginnings For a Brighter Future	\$183,629	Lighthouse Youth Services Inc.	\$108,884
BHC Belmont Pines Hospital	\$335,012	Marie's House of Hope	\$134,473
BHC Fox Run Hospital	\$381,934	Maryhaven Inc.	\$6,459
Big Brothers Big Sisters	\$158,294	Mentor Ohio	\$30,513
Blended Family Home LLC	\$199,075	Natasha's House LLC	\$3,900
Boys to Men Transitional Home	\$112,200	National Youth Advocate Program	\$6,441,772
Brighter Future for Youth	\$286,300	Nationwide Children's Hospital	\$438,645
Buckeye Ranch Inc.	\$3,151,877	Necco LLC	\$198,866
Cadence Care Network	\$31,428	Netcare Corporation	\$109,841
Caregivers Helper	\$246,069	New Beginnings Group Home	\$22,400
Caring For Kids	\$574,948	New Life Group Homes LLC	\$1,069,327
Carrington Youth Academy	\$107,711	NM Sansait MD LLC	\$16,764
Cedar Crest Hospital and Residential Treatment Center	\$178,200	Oak Plains Academy	\$24,650
Center for Healthy Families Inc.	\$16,091	Oasis Therapeutic Foster Care	\$210,447
Children's Hospital Medical Center	\$313,129	Oesterlen Services for Youth	\$394,450
Children's Hunger Alliance	\$25,000	OhioGuidestone	\$380,352
Circles of Peace LLC	\$26,560	Ohio Hispanic Coalition	\$30,059
City of Refugee	\$293,140	Ohio Mentor	\$1,117,508
Cleveland Christian Home	\$140,832	Our Children Our Future LLC	\$631,450
Communication Speaks	\$505,130	Preventative Aftercare	\$625,499
Communities In Schools of Ohio	\$54,525	Quiver Full Adoption	\$2,150
Community Refugee & Immigration Services	\$154,439	RAD Homes	\$50,905
Community Shelter Board	\$246,181	Restoration Ranch of Ohio	\$25,800
Cornell Companies Group	\$838,082	Returns Inc.	\$57,477
Dee's Place	\$40,610	Rite of Passage Inc.	\$219,660
Dimensional Phases	\$59,667	Riverview Behavioral Health LLC	\$64,600
Directions for Youth and Families	\$80,000	Rolling Hills Hospital	\$96,273
DTAC of Ohio	\$50,400	Safeforce Ministries	\$53,783
Dungarvin Ohio	\$370,167	Safely Home Inc.	\$235,531
Eastway Corporation	\$557,946	Second Chance Dayton Group Home	\$376,571
Eden Counseling Centers	\$34,258	Seeds 4 Life Inc.	\$57,510
Educational Service Center of Central Ohio	\$2,511,567	Self-Reliance Riverview South LLC	\$620,480
ENA Inc.	\$490,941	Silver Linings Agency	\$27,825
Enterlock Corp	\$55,896	Sojourners Care Network	\$8,361
Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services	\$80,000	Southeast Inc	\$171,013
Family on the Mend	\$46,293	Specialized Alternatives for Families & Youth of Ohio	\$1,341,874
Foundation of Love for Youth	\$641,644	St. Stephen's Community Services	\$1,502,235
Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities - Multi System Youth Program	\$201,498	St. Vincent Family Centers	\$1,202,486
FuturePromise	\$14,411	Stepping Stones of Ohio LLC	\$26,125
Gateway to Success	\$217,913	The Dream Center for Girls	\$36,666
GEMS Group Home	\$103,900	The Nutter Center for Empowering Women	\$50,000
George Junior Republic	\$255,953	Uncle Bee's House	\$25,025
Gordrell Enterprises LLC	\$108,050	Unified Dwelling	\$658,274
Grace Hearts	\$230,600	United Methodist Children's Home Family Services	\$1,019,087
Gracehaven	\$27,800	Unk's Place Inc.	\$485,291
Guiding Path for Girls	\$383,100	Utopia Beginnings LLC	\$611,285
Halt Violence	\$50,000	Victory House LLC	\$554,955
Healing Pathways Transitional Homes	\$127,467	Village Network	\$3,887,626
Hittle House LLC	\$164,400	Willow Branches of Healing	\$127,520
Home of Journeys LLC	\$29,700	Youth Advocate Services	\$1,205,052
House of New Hope	\$110,618	Youth Intensive Services	\$110,122
		Youth Opportunity Investments LLC	\$216,900
		Youth Villages	\$2,180,262

<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$56,120,803</b>
<b>Payment to Children Services Adoptive Homes</b>	<b>\$4,521,167</b>
<b>Other Purchased Social Services</b>	<b>\$300,942</b>
<b>Total Purchased Social Services</b>	<b>\$60,942,912</b>

## FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

# 2023 Commissioners, Board & Committees

### Franklin County Commissioners

John O'Grady, President  
Kevin Boyce  
Erica Crawley

### Franklin County Children Services Board

Tammy Wharton, Chair  
Elon Simms, Vice Chair  
Maggie Lewis, Secretary  
Lolita Augenstein  
Rev. Dr. Michael Bean  
Wilson Browning  
Karen Days  
Tiffany Hunt  
Elizabeth Martinez  
Necol Russell-Washington

### Citizens Advisory Committee

Lolita Augenstein, Chair  
Verdaynea Eason, Vice Chair  
Patti Aronhalt  
Nicole Murphy  
Matt Utt  
Peyton Watts

### Volunteer Services Advisory Committee

Patti Aronhalt, Chair  
Norman Brown  
Aisha Q. Dunning  
Heather Treanor  
Carla Williams



FCCS staff, friends, and family at the 2023 Columbus Pride parade

