



Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

# Volunteer Handbook

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# Welcome

## Welcome letter from Executive Director

Every year, our agency becomes involved in the lives of over 30,000 youth, checking on their well-being, addressing and mitigating safety concerns, and offering support to caregivers when they have oftentimes hit dead ends elsewhere. Many of these youth and families need more than the clinical services we provide. They need a relationship with someone who cares about them.

All of us need to know that someone is in our corner, especially when we are facing challenges in our day to day lives. That is why our volunteers are such an asset to our agency. Whether the service provided is lending a kind word or listening ear to a youth at our 4071 E Main Street location or being the consistent mentor in a youth's life, your time and care can make a difference in how that child views themselves and the world around them. I want to thank you for taking an interest in our agency, our families and the incredible youth we serve. Together we can help our youth move from being at risk to at promise.

With gratitude,

***Chip M. Spinning***

## Words from the Volunteer and Enrichment Director

Friends,

Whenever I am asked what I do for a living, I have the simplest response: I have the best job in the world. Because of our volunteers, we have the singular privilege of spreading a message of hope, encouragement and care to our children and families who often feel alone and forgotten. When you give of yourself, when you disinfect toys at our Crisis Center, when you take time out of your day to share a meal, or when you make that phone call to just check in, you are disrupting previously held beliefs that our youth and families are alone, and no one cares.

Every day, I get to come to work and hear stories about people like you. The volunteer who attended the baseball game, took their youth to the grocery store to get the ingredients to cook a nice meal, who quietly stocked shelves or responded to being on call with our intake department. And though these acts of service will not prevent our youth from making mistakes, because they will, they do inoculate our youth from feeling as though those mistakes define them. The power of you and this program is that when our youth fall, we are there to tell them that they can and will get back up.

Thank you for starting on this journey with us. Without you, there is no us.

***Beth Crabtree***



Children Services is regulated by statutory mandates of the state and federal governments and regulations of the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. Children Services is governed by an 11-member volunteer board that establishes policy for the agency. The Executive Director is responsible for agency operations. The agency is a member of the Child Welfare League of America and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children. Franklin County Children Services is one of only a few public county children services boards in Ohio and the nation to be accredited. This accreditation means that Children Services meets rigorous national standards with their quality of services and with sound management practices. In 2016, the Council reaccredited the agency.

# Committees

## Volunteer Services Advisory Committee

Volunteer Services Advisory Committee (VSAC) is a twelve- member committee comprised of active FCCS volunteers representing each volunteer program, and/ or representatives from other social service and volunteer agencies. VSAC advises and assist Franklin County Children Services Board, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and Children Service’s staff in development, implementation, and management of the Volunteers Services Program. One member of VSAC also serves on the CAC.

## Malaika Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Malaika Advisory Committee (MAC) is to advise and assist in the development, implementation and management of Malaika programs, and the recruitment and retention of members. As a collective voice, MAC advises the Volunteer Department, VSAC, Simba Advisory Committee (SAC) and the CAC on the disparities faced by Black girls in Franklin County and provides recommendations on ways to address systemic and structural inequalities.

## Simba Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Simba Advisory Committee (SAC) is to advise and assist in the development, implementation and management of Simba programs and provide support on the best practices for establishing and maintaining good mentoring relationships. We also help with the recruitment and retention of mentors. As a collective voice, SAC advises the Volunteer Department, VSAC, MAC and CAC on the familial trauma faced by Black male children in Franklin County and provides recommendations on ways to address systemic and structural inequalities.

## The Citizens Advisory Committee

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is a group of volunteers whose membership is appointed by the Franklin County Children Services Board.

The purpose of the CAC is to:

- Recommend and participate in studies of the effectiveness and the need for services to children in Franklin County.
- Advise Franklin County Children Services Board on policies pertaining to the provision of services to children.
- Assist in disseminating to residents of Franklin County information concerning services to children in the county.
- Promote and support the “Mission Statement” adopted by Franklin County Children Services Board.

# Agency 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 families and culture.

## The Guiding Principles of Franklin County Children Services

### We are Child Welfare Professionals

- 1 We constantly pursue excellence.
- 2 We recognize the importance of providing effective and timely services.
- 3 We value, respect and support each other.
- 4 We are proud that we improve the quality of life for families in our community.
- 5 We are fiscally responsible.
- 6 We aspire to be culturally competent.

### We Value Every Child

- 7 We respect the individuality of each child we serve.
- 8 We advocate for each child's safety, permanency and well-being.
- 9 We honor each child's family and culture.

### We Honor Families

- 10 We respect families' strengths.
- 11 We understand families are the experts of their own experience.
- 12 We recognize that children are best served within their family and community.
- 13 We separate what parents do from who they are.

### We Value Partnerships

- 14 Families have the right to be a part of the decision-making team.
- 15 Casework is the most important function of the agency team.
- 16 Families, communities and government share the responsibility to keep children safe.

## Agency Vision and Principles of Service

- Children and youth have a right to a safe and secure environment.
- Parents have the primary responsibility for their children and are partners with Children Services in helping children and youth.
- Children and youth should be raised in a family. Priority is given to protection within and preservation of families.
- Services are provided so that differing cultural and ethnic needs and backgrounds are recognized and addressed.
- Relationships with clients and service providers are built and sustained, and client confidentiality is respected.
- Case plans are individualized, and outcomes focused with the purpose of giving parents every chance to succeed.
- Placement of children and youth outside of their home occurs only when it is required to ensure their protection or adequate treatment.
- When out of home placement is required, it will be in the least restrictive setting that meets the child's needs. The placement will be as close to the child's home as possible, preferably in their own neighborhood, and outside of Franklin County only when special needs require it.
- Every child in the permanent custody of Children Services is adoptable.
- Collaboration and privatization of services with community agencies will occur whenever effectiveness and quality can be improved or maintained, and costs reduced.
- The Board and staff are accountable for and work for continuing improvements in productivity, both in effectiveness and in efficiency, to assure the economical use of resources.

Franklin County Children Services supports the community's efforts to prevent child abuse, neglect, dependency and behavioral concerns through advocacy and collaborative efforts. The agency protects and cares for children in cooperation with parents whenever possible, by providing services to alleviate the problems that led the family to the attention of Children Services.

These services may include:

- In-home counseling and community social and mental health services.
- Day treatment.
- Therapeutic arts.
- Youth in transition services.
- Volunteer services.
- Placement of children in temporary foster homes.
- And other supportive services that enable the family to maintain or resume their role of raising their children.

The Volunteer and Child Enrichment Department Vision is to recruit, assess, approve, match, and support caring adults from the community to voluntarily provide enriching and uplifting leadership and mentoring experiences to the children served by Franklin County Children Services. Volunteers and mentors will spend time with youth to afford them positive memories that provide cultural, educational, and recreational life experiences that will enhance the quality of life and development of the children and families we serve. A meaningful relationship between mentor/mentee is one marked by trust and mutual regard and understanding. Volunteers at our agency's Crisis Center provide overall supervision for children when they are brought to Intake to ensure a safe, secure and positive environment.

# Programs

## The Volunteer Department's seven programs include

**Friendship Program** is the founding program within the Volunteer Department. The program provides an opportunity for mentors and matched youth to build positive and meaningful relationships while engaging in fun and enriching activities.

**Crisis Center Volunteers** are available to assist staff at the agency's Intake location. They may clean and sanitize toys, stock shelves and occasionally provide childcare and other assistance, as directed by appointed staff at Intake. Volunteers are to provide overall supervision for children when they are brought to Intake to ensure a safe, secure, positive environment and experience.



**Malaika** is a culturally-specific program, matching Black girls with Black women to provide a unique and enriching mentoring experience. The program was created as one way to address disparities that exists with Black girls in the child welfare system. The Malaika program is rooted in African traditions and rites of passage and is committed to affirming the positive aspects of being an African American girl while easing the transition to womanhood.



**Simba** is a culturally-specific mentoring program, matching Black young men with Black men who strive to demonstrate leadership and communication with integrity, provide positive experiences, create avenues for positive, and productive self-expression. The Simba program is rooted in African traditions and rites of passage and is committed to affirming the aspects of being a child transitioning into adulthood.



**College Bound** is a program matching mentors with youth in the 9th to 12th grades with goals to develop long-term structured and trusting relationships. The purpose of these relationships is to provide support, guidance, instruction and advocacy to assist agency youth with career planning and achieving their dreams.

**Special Projects** volunteers provide needed services to the department and the agency supporting our activities and events.

**Holiday Wish** is a holiday gift giving program that ensures any child who participates or are referred to the program will receive a gift for the holidays. The Department engages and solicits support from the community for donations and with volunteers, assures those children receives a gift.





Mentoring through the Simba program has allowed me to view my work and life through a new perspective. Interacting and learning with and from my mentee has caused me to explore the sights and sounds of Columbus that I may not have participated in before this experience. In addition, I have been blessed to interact and learn from other black men who desire to improve and develop themselves, as well as their mentees.

CHRISTOPHER C. CLARK



# Mentoring

All of us have had someone in our lives who has invested in our growth and been there for us when we needed them the most. Sometimes it was with a smile, a kind word, a listening ear or wise advice. They may not have been paid to teach us or help us grow but what they gave to us was invaluable.

If you are looking for new ways to get involved outside of your assigned program and would like to contribute to our shared mission, there are other volunteer opportunities available. Please contact your coordinator with any questions you may have.

## Mentor Commitment

The mission of Franklin County Children Services is “Protect Children by Strengthening Families.” This is a shared responsibility for our agency and the greater community. Efforts to ensure the mission requires a community wide response. While several of our programs are focused on building relationships between children, youth and adults, there are numerous other opportunities to serve.

## The Benefits of Mentoring a Child

- Effective mentoring can help bring about changes in a young person’s behavior, attitude, health and academic performance.
- Studies show children with a mentor have fewer absences from school, better attitudes toward school, fewer incidents of hitting others.
- There has been a noted reduction in substance abuse and other high-risk behaviors with youth matched with a mentor.
- Youth matched with a mentor tend to have better peer relationships and a more positive attitude about helping others.

## Things to Keep in Mind

- Be genuine, honest and polite.
- Your coordinator is available to answer questions that you may have along the way.
- Become familiar with other volunteers and mentors as a way of staying connected.
- When looking for activities, a great place to start is in the mentee’s community.

Attending activities is encouraged by Franklin County Children Services Volunteer Department. Keep in mind trust evolves slowly through the simple process of being together on a regular basis and enjoying the experience. Eating together, laughing, roller skating, sporting activities and coloring are just a few examples of how to build a trusting relationship with the child you are mentoring. Engaging a child in fun activities encourages the child to talk and ask questions. Laughter goes a long way. Let’s all have some fun together!

## Activities

For information about upcoming volunteer events or for ideas about free and affordable activities, please visit our website at: <https://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov/how-to-help/current-volunteers>.



Being a Crisis Center volunteer has given me the opportunity to meet awesome kids who have such positive attitudes regardless of the situations they are in. Just to have that opportunity means the world to me!

CHRISTY CHOU



## Discipline

Many of the youth served by Franklin County Children Services have had life experiences that have often left the youth negatively impacted. It is important that all interactions with their mentors are used to inform, educate and teach their mentees. We encourage partnering with your mentee's caregiver on how best to help with behavior modification.

**Under No Circumstances Is Physical Punishment or Discipline Permitted.** (Physical punishment or discipline includes but is not limited to: hitting, spanking, using an implement or tool, torture, cruel or unusual treatment, hair pulling, excessive physical exercise, or emotional maltreatment.)

The following are suggestions to help avoid or stop negative behavior from a youth:

- Use natural or logical consequences. For example, "If you continue to act this way (be specific about what the negative behavior is), I will take you home." Remember that it is important to follow through with the consequence if the child continues to misbehave.
- Give clear expectations about what is acceptable behavior and what is not. It is important to not only tell them what not to do, but also what to do. For example, before you go into a store, let them know that it is important for them to stay with you, talk with an "inside voice," or whatever you think is important to stress.
- Use time outs. A general rule is one minute for each year of the child's age. For example, if the child is seven years old, then the time out period will last seven minutes.
- Praise your mentee when they behave well. Give your mentee specifics about what it is that you truly appreciated.

- Do not base your visits or excursions on child's bad behavior. Partner with the child's caregiver when there are behavioral concerns.
- Contact your volunteer coordinator if the behavior continues or is out of control.

## Hunting and Target Practice

While mentors are with their matched youth, neither the mentor or youth may engage in activities involving weapons, including, but not limited to target practice, hunting or the use of BB guns.

While we appreciate that safe practices will be used by mentors, these activities do offer an increased risk, and we cannot ensure that these same safe practices are implemented in other circumstances in our children's lives.

## Training

There are many different classes available (including training on discipline, culture, and working with birth families) for you to take through the Central Ohio Regional Training Center ([ocwtp.net/cortc/training.html](http://ocwtp.net/cortc/training.html))

Training is also available through Mentor Central Ohio ([mentorcentralohio.org](http://mentorcentralohio.org))

Notifications of trainings offered are emailed regularly to Children Services Staff. Please talk with your volunteer coordinator about how to register for these classes.

## Emotional Well-Being

When mentoring a child, it is helpful to understand the child's emotional well-being and to be mindful of how each child is impacted differently. As a mentor, it is important that you do not project your life experiences and feelings onto the youth. Mentoring a child provides an opportunity to enrich and enhance the child's life. Listening to the mentee's spoken and unspoken words is a great way to better understand his/her emotional well-being. Encouragement, praise and rec-

ognition is of utmost importance to the overall well-being of a child.

It may be important to note, when a child feels safe with an adult that child may relax, bond and establish a trusting / meaningful relationship. In having that trusting relationship, a child's self-esteem may be heightened. Seek to discover similarities and common interests that you share with your mentee.

## Ending a Mentor/Mentee Relationship

- When ending a relationship with your mentee, think about how you felt when relationships ended in your own life.
- Research shows relationships that end prior to six months and relationships that end without a formal closure can have a negative outcome for the mentee.
- It is important to have some communication with your mentee and their family prior to ending the relationship.
- Please have a closure meeting to allow time for both of you to discuss your thoughts and feelings in a healthy way.

## Cultural Competency

Franklin County Children Services is a public agency that serves children and families of diverse backgrounds. Those who provide services have an obligation to ensure the beliefs and traditions of the children and families served are respected. As a mentor, it is important that you are sensitive to the racial, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds of the child(ren) with whom you are matched.

When matched with a child from a different cultural background than your own, please try to learn something about their culture. It is important to note that some behavior patterns of children may be typical of their culture, and as a mentor an appropriate measure of sensitivity should be used.

Children's attendance at any given activity must be on a voluntary basis only. Mentors matched with individual children are permitted to worship together and to participate in religious activity when each party (i.e. mentor, parent, caretaker and child) all agree.

## Siblings

Mentors are sometimes asked to include a sibling in an outing. This is not required. As a mentor you may want to spend individual time with your mentee.

Should you allow a sibling to attend, please ensure the following guidelines:

- Obtain permission from the Volunteer Department prior to the outing. The specific outing authorized cannot be changed for another set of activities.
- Obtain the completed sibling permission form signed by caretakers before any event.

## Overnight visits

Overnight visits require parental permission. Overnights are discussed during the home study process with the mentor and the coordinator.

Please note overnights are not encouraged until the mentor and mentee have developed a relationship with one another that includes trust and appropriate boundary setting. Typically, waiting six months is recommended.

The mentee must have a separate room from all adults. If this is not possible or practical (i.e. camping, hotel room), the caretakers must be made aware and grant approval prior to departure.

A mentee may share a room with another child that is the same gender and age. A sofa, sleeping bag, cot, etc. is an acceptable sleeping arrangement for the child should a bed not be available.

## Travel

When traveling more than 50 miles outside of Franklin County a travel letter is required. The travel letter must be signed by the parent/guardian and/or legal custodian.

## Expectations and Responsibilities

Franklin County Children Services values mentors/volunteers and their contributions to support our vision and mission.

- Should a child you are mentoring express a desire to hurt him/herself and or another person, this must be reported to the caregiver immediately and to the volunteer coordinator within 24 hours.
- Should a child report to you he/she is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, this must be reported to the caregiver immediately

and to the volunteer coordinator within 24 hours. Do not transport a child to a planned outing when the child is said to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- Should a child disclose to you she/ he is/ has been emotionally, physically, sexually abused and/ or neglected, you must notify the agency hotline at 614-229-7000. Please inform your coordinator within 24 hours. The FCCS hotline is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week including weekends.
- Never sign for medical treatment or any other consent forms.
- Volunteers/mentors are expected to supervise and to be present with the child with whom they are matched. The youth is not allowed to be alone with anyone who is not officially screened and approved as a Children Services' volunteer.





I decided to become a mentor for Children Services with the hopes of making a difference in a child's life. Little did I know what a difference these kids would make in my life! I can't imagine not mentoring one of these special kids!

PATTI ARONHALT



## Court Cases

In court involved cases, if not subpoenaed, mentors are to refrain from attending court hearings that involve family's involvement with Franklin County Children Services.

## Fingerprint Responsibility for Approved Mentors

- You will be required to have a background check completed every two years.
- By signing the Request for a Criminal Background Check form, you will give FCCS permission to run your fingerprints every two years.

## Driver's License and Insurance Responsibilities:

- A mentor must have state minimum level of car insurance and hold a valid driver's license.
- A mentor will contact their coordinator within 24 hours should their driver's license be revoked, suspended or they no longer have the state minimum level of car insurance.
- Failure to report the above will result in termination from the program.
- Volunteers/mentors are to adhere to car seat laws; if there are questions regarding those laws they should be directed to Vol-

unteer Department staff. If needed, volunteers/mentors will be provided car seats.

## Criteria for Disqualifying Applicants

Franklin County Children Services reserves the right to reject a candidate for any reason which the above-mentioned agency, in its sole judgment determines the candidate will or may affect either the best interest of a client or Franklin County Children Services. Furthermore, Franklin County Children Services reserves the right to withhold the reasons for such refusal.

## Notifications

- Volunteers/mentors are required to notify their volunteer coordinator/program director of any changes to their living situation. This includes but is not limited to: changes in persons residing in the home, changes in residence, addition of firearms to the residence or known changes to the criminal history of anyone residing in the home.
- As required by law, every volunteer must report any criminal charge brought against them to their volunteer coordinator within 24 hours of the infraction. Failure to notify shall result in immediate dismissal.

- If the charges result in a conviction, the volunteer shall notify their volunteer coordinator/program director within twenty-four hours of the conviction. Failure to notify volunteer coordinator/program director of any conviction of any criminal offense shall result in the immediate dismissal of the volunteer or college intern from the agency. All volunteers and mentors will have fingerprint results on file at FCCS that are current within two years of the last check.
- Volunteers/mentors are to keep their volunteer coordinators/program directors apprised of their volunteer experience and any concerns or successes that occur. Volunteer coordinators/program directors will contact their volunteers/mentors monthly for the first six months and every other month after the first six months. It is expected that volunteers/mentors respond to these contacts so their journey can be supported and enriched by agency staff.



Mentoring is the selfless act of cheering for and advocating on behalf of the mentee, listening, being a positive role model and sharing unique experiences that will have a lasting impact in the mentee's life.

LASHANA CRONE





# Frequently Used Terms

**SOCIAL SERVICE AIDES (SSA):** oversee, assist and monitor clients being served by the Agency. They provide transportation assistance and support to caseworkers and child care to children during emergency placements. SSAs mainly work and guide the Crisis Center Volunteers during their shifts.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV):** violent or aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE:** the acts of parents, guardians, or custodians that harm or threaten to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

**NEGLECT:** When child who is abandoned or lacks adequate parental care because of the faults or habits of the child's parents, guardians, or custodian. Whose parents, guardian, or custodian neglects the child or refuses to provide proper or necessary subsistence, education, medical, or surgical care or treatment, or other care necessary for the child's health, morals or wellbeing.

**SEXUAL ABUSE:** illegal sex acts performed against a minor by a parent, guardian, relative, or acquaintance.

**DEPENDENCY:** A child who is destitute, homeless, or without parental care through no fault of the parents, guardians or custodians. Who lacks adequate parental care by reason of mental or physical condition of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian.

**SACWIS NUMBER:** Identification number assigned to each family receiving services through the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

**NYAP:** National Youth Advocate Program is a private agency provider whose staff provide child welfare services to children and families under the supervision of FCCS.

**PFSN:** Permanent Family Solutions Network is a private agency provider whose staff provide child welfare services to children and families under the supervision of FCCS.

**SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEW (SAR):** is a mandated review held every 90 days with all involved parties to review case plan goals and determine what additional services are needed to achieve the permanency goals for the child and family.

**KINSHIP:** are individuals related by blood or adoption, stepparents, step siblings, spouses and former spouses, non-relatives or someone who identifies as having a long-standing relationship with the child.

**U-10:** A law enforcement document used for documenting their activities in the field. Law Enforcement can use this document to grant Children Services custody of a child for safekeeping services.

**ECO:** Emergency Care Order: A magistrate's court order authorizing emergency custody of a child when the child may be at imminent risk of harm.

**TOC/TCO:** Temporary Order of Custody/ Temporary Custody Order: A magistrate's court order granting temporary custody of a child for up to 90 days.

**TCC/TC:** Temporary Court Commitment/ Temporary Commitment: A magistrate's court order granting custody of a child for 12-24 months.

**PPLA:** Permanent Planned Living Arrangement: A court order granting FCCS legal custody of a child without terminating parental rights when that child cannot return home within a reasonable time.

**PCC/PC:** Permanent Court Commitment: A Judge court order granting Children Services permanent custody of a child for the purposes of adoption.

# Safety Tips

- Before you leave home, lock all valuables away out of sight.
- Always have your FCCS Volunteer ID card.
- Keep doors locked and when entering your vehicle look in your back seat.
- Approach your car with keys in your hand.
- Park in a well-lighted area.
- Should you plan to visit an unfamiliar area, it should be explored in advance for safety.
- Always have your cell phone charged.
- Act confident, walk with purpose, and maintain appropriate eye contact.
- Make certain your car is in good repair and you have enough gas to get to and from your destination.
- If you see a vicious looking dog DON'T RUN, stay calm and try to put something between you and the dog to gain some protection.
- If someone seems hostile, dangerous, or drunk/ on drugs...leave IMMEDIATELY!
- If you see suspicious items that are drug related DON'T ask questions, rather report your observation to the volunteer coordinator or caseworker ASAP. If a drug raid occurs while at the mentee's home, comply with the authorities, then report it to your volunteer coordinator or caseworker ASAP.



# Staff

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# Office Locations

All agencies operate 8am-5pm Monday-Friday.

**24-HOUR HOTLINE: 614-229-7000**

**NON-EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER: 614-229-7100**

## **Franklin County Children Services**

855 West Mound Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43223  
614-275-2571

## **Assessments and Investigations (Intake) & Crisis Center**

4071 East Main Street  
Whitehall, Ohio 43213  
614-229-7100

## **East Region Office**

4071 East Main Street  
Whitehall, Ohio 43213  
614-575-3500

## **West Region Office**

1919 Frank Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43223  
614-278-5800

## **Volunteers & Child Enrichment**

855 West Mound Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43223  
614-275-2690



Franklin County  
**Children  
Services**

Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

855 West Mound Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43223  
614-229-7100

[childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov)