

Mahoning Kids Matter



Mahoning County
Children Services

THE EXCLUSIVE PUBLICATION FOR STAFF, STAKEHOLDERS, DONORS & FRIENDS

SPRING 2020



**Report Child Abuse
Because Kids Can't**

Protecting Children, Preserving Families

Mahoning County
Children Services **REPORT LINE 24/7
330.941.8888**

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THANK YOU TO ALL WHO FOSTER



**MAY IS NATIONAL
FOSTER
CARE
MONTH**

Thank You To All Who Foster!

Mahoning County
Children Services
330.941.8888 • mahoningkids.com

Agency Develops COVID-19 “Pandemic Response Plan”

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the Agency to quickly develop and follow a “COVID-19 Pandemic Response Plan” in order to:

- (1) help slow transmission of the virus in Ohio’s communities;
- (2) reduce the risk of exposure by our employees;
- (3) protect the health and safety of the families we serve; and
- (4) maximize the continuity of child protection operations to the fullest extent as is safely possible.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 | PANDEMIC PLAN

COVID-19

AGENCY SERVICES & ACCESS

1. Mahoning County Children Services **will CONTINUE providing** child Protective Services to the public during this unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19 virus.
2. Continue to **Report** any Suspicions of **Child Abuse or Neglect** to our **REPORT LINE AVAILABLE 24/7: 330-941-8888**.
3. To protect the public's health and slow the rate of transmission of COVID-19, **some services** we provide to families may be *postponed or modified*.
4. If you have a scheduled event or activity with Children Services: a Family Visitation, Case Review meeting, or other appointment: **Call your Case Worker** via our **General Information line: at 330-941-8888** to determine any changes.
5. **At this time, the Children Services building will be OPEN to the public.**
6. Anyone seeking entrance **will be subject to a COVID-19 Screening Procedure**. *Entrance may be denied dependent upon the results.*

MISSION: Mahoning County Children Services,
in partnership with the community, is a committed
leader in protecting children while helping preserve

About Us

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Agency Prepares COVID-19 Shelter for Emergency Child Placements

PANDEMIC PLAN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Agency's now over 20-page "Pandemic Response Plan" provides detailed guidance with input from various local and state agencies including: the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Governor and the Director of the Ohio Department of Health, the Youngstown Health Department as well as communication with the Directors of Public Children Services Agencies.

There are many issues and concerns facing Ohio's 88 public children services agencies during COVID-19 but at this time this is top priority:

Child Placements: The Agency is anticipating and preparing that as infection rates increase there may be substitute caregivers who refuse to take in new foster placements to help prevent spread of COVID-19 in their homes. In addition, the Agency must prepare for foster caregivers who refuse to facilitate bio parent/child visitation based upon legitimate concerns that doing so could expose the child they're caring for and/or their own family.


Children Exposed to COVID: The Agency must also be prepared to provide care for children exposed to or infected with COVID-19 until a foster home can be found. The Agency has secured isolation emergency shelter facilities which are stocked with essential items necessary for potential overnight stays. The goal is to reduce the trauma of the removal as much as possible while keeping the community, staff and children safe.





COVID-19 PREPARATIONS

MAHONING COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES must be prepared to provide care for children exposed to, or are infected with, COVID-19 until a foster home can be found. The Agency has secured isolation facilities stocked with essential items necessary for potential overnight stays. The goal is to reduce the trauma of the removal as much as possible while keeping the community, staff and children safe.

 Mahoning County
Children Services

Mina's Foster Closet Provides Vital & Essential Items for Agency's Emergency COVID-19 Shelter Facility



The Agency secured isolation facilities stocked with essential items necessary for potential overnight stays. The goal is to reduce the trauma of the removal as much as possible while keeping the community, staff and children safe.

Thank You Mina's Foster Closet for these Vital Donations:

6 Air Mattresses | Blankets/Sheets/Pillows | Diapers/Pull-ups |
Formula/Pediasure
Bottles/Sippy Cups | Dinner/Tableware | Hygiene items
| Games | 2 Kindle Tablets



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Assistant Director

Rona Curtis

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Family Services Department

Julie Rudolph, Program Administrator

Placement Services Department

Anthony Paris, Program Administrator

Fiscal Officer

Denise Barnes-Carper

Human Resources Department

Susan Babinec, Manager

Information Technology Department

Joshua Cayson, Manager

Public Information Department

Jennifer T. Kollar, Public Information Officer

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Agency

HEALTH & SAFETY

Committee News

COVID-19

Committee Developing "Return to Traditional Work Environment Plan"

The Agency's Health & Safety Committee is currently working to develop a **"Return To Traditional Work Environment Plan"**. The Plan will address health, safety and hygiene policies and protocols. Part of that plan will also include determining personal protective equipment (PPE) needs and how and when to safely re-assimilate staff who have been working remotely back into a traditional office environment at the Agency.

Mahoning County Children Services Health and Safety Committee is dedicated to maintaining the safety and well-being of all Mahoning County Children Services Board (MCCSB) employees. The committee meets monthly to discuss and make recommendations to help improve the overall safety of staff, as well as the work environment of the Agency. If staff have a question or concern, contact a committee member:

The Health and Safety Committee Members:

Cynthia Berend

Rona Curtis

Marisa Litch

Christine Powell

Meghan Tarantino

Kimberly Wilson

Dave Workley



Mahoning Kids Matter

The official publication of Mahoning County Children Services and published by the Agency's Public Information Office.

Current and previous Newsletter editions can be found on our website: <http://www.mahoningkids.com/news-media/>

MAHONING COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

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CHILD PROTECTIVE/CHILDREN
SERVICES WORKERS

EVERYDAY HEROES

We Salute YOU!

Thank You for the tireless work you do EVERY DAY
PROTECTING CHILDREN & PRESERVING FAMILIES.



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Mahoning County Children Services Achieves National Re-Accreditation

Mahoning County Children Services has achieved national re-accreditation through the New York-based Council on Accreditation (COA). Based on their findings, COA's volunteer-based



Accreditation Commission voted that Mahoning County Children Services successfully met the criteria for accreditation.

Organizations pursue accreditation to demonstrate the implementation of best practice standards in the field of human services. COA evaluated all aspects of Mahoning County Children Services' programs, services, management, and administration.

COA accreditation is an objective, independent, and reliable validation of an agency's performance.

The COA accreditation process involves a detailed review and analysis of an organization's administration, management, and service delivery functions against international standards of best practice. The standards driving accreditation ensure that services are well-coordinated, culturally competent, evidence-based, outcomes-oriented, and provided by a skilled and supported workforce. COA accreditation demonstrates accountability in the management of resources, sets standardized best practice thresholds for service and administration, and increases organizational capacity and accountability by

**COA
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administration.**

creating a framework for ongoing quality improvement.

To achieve COA accreditation, Mahoning County Children Services first provided written evidence of compliance with the COA standards. Thereafter, a group of specially trained volunteer Peer Reviewers confirmed adherence to these standards during a series of on-site interviews with trustees, staff and clients.

An endorsement of COA and the value of its accreditation process is reflected in it being named by the US State Department as the sole national independent accrediting body under the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption to accredit intercountry adoption service providers. In addition, COA is the only national accreditor designated by the U.S. Department of Defense to develop accreditation standards and processes for human service programs provided to military personnel and their families.

Founded in 1977, COA is an independent, not-for-profit accreditor of the full continuum of community-based behavioral health care and social service organizations in the United States and Canada. Over 2,000 organizations successfully achieved COA accreditation. COA has a total of 47 service standards that are applicable to over 125 different types of programs. To learn more about COA, please visit www.coanet.org.



NEW STAFF!

Isabelle Lures – Child Welfare Case Worker-In-Training.

Malikh Carter – Clerical Specialist providing support to the Adoption Unit.

Tina Cvetkovich – Family Peer Mentor.

Salinda Williams – Child Welfare Case Worker-in-Training.

Do Your Part to **PREVENT** Child Abuse & Neglect **REPORT IT**

When Suspected

Report it...

CONTACT

Your County's Child Protective/
Public Children Services Agency
or local Law Enforcement.

**Mahoning County
Children Services
24-Hour Report Line
330.941.8888**

April Marks National Child Abuse PREVENTION

Social Media Helps Disseminate Child Abuse PREVENTION Messages, Campaigns Amid COVID-19



Ohio's Public Children Services Agencies (PSAs) are utilizing social media more than ever to help disseminate child abuse prevention messages during COVID-19. With

Ohio's Stay-at-Home Order, many PCSAs cancelled their annual public events commemorating Child Abuse Prevention Month. Instead, Agencies are relying on cyber audiences to raise awareness to educate the public about the Warning Signs of child abuse and how to report it. While It is always important for individuals to be vigilant and report suspicions of child abuse, it's specially now more than ever during COVID-19 Stay at Home order.

Click on the Ad below to Learn Warning Signs:

Child Abuse Warning Signs

Do You KNow The Signs??



No Pinwheel Garden Display for Child Abuse Prevention Month



FILE PHOTO: 2019 Pinwheel Garden Display in Boardman Park

April 2020 marks the first time in 15 years Mahoning County Children Services and Akron Children's Hospital did not plant its Annual Pinwheel Garden Display due to COVID-19 pandemic and Ohio's Stay-at-Home Order.

Both organizations also sponsor and host the *Annual Pinwheels for Prevention Community Event Luncheon* was also cancelled. This event publicly commemorates Prevention Month. 2020 marks the Event's 15th Year Anniversary.

Each year, thousands of pinwheels are 'planted' to help raise awareness for National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month in April.

The Pinwheel Planting Event scheduled for April 1, was cancelled due to the State issued Stay-at-Home Order.

Our community needs to remain even more vigilant during this Pandemic. Families are facing unprecedented isolation, fears and anxiety is running at an all-time high. Many of these stressors place children at GREATER risk for child abuse and neglect.

OUR COMMUNITY

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State-wide Social Media Campaign **Ohio Wear Blue** Day is Huge Cyber Success



This year's **#OhioWearsBlue** Day on April 8 was even more successful than in previous years. With many public children services associations, child advocate organizations and stakeholders working from home, there was an even more concerted effort to show support of child abuse prevention cyberally.

Ohio Wears Blue day is a state-wide awareness campaign that takes place on the second Wednesday of every April to raise awareness of National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Ohioans are encouraged to wear blue to show support for PREVENTING child abuse and neglect.

This year Ohioans were encouraged to wear blue and post photos to the Public Children's Association of Ohio's (PCSAO) Twitter hashtag: **#OhioWearsBlue** Day. PCSAO represents and advocates on behalf of many of Ohio's 88 public children services agencies. Agencies shared posts from staff, friends, family, pets and stakeholders wearing blue to support Child Abuse Prevention.

To see the photos posted see page 6 or visit: Children Services Association of Ohio's Twitter page: **#OhioWearsBlue** Day

In Case You Missed It: Mahoning County Children Services *in the News*

PRINT/TV NEWS

Referral Decline Growing into Bigger Problem at Children Services
<https://www.wkbn.com/news/local-news/referral-decline-growing-into-bigger-problem-at-children-services/>

Child Abuse Experts Call Pandemic 'Perfect Storm'
<https://www.wfmj.com/story/42012820/child-abuse-experts-call-pandemic-perfect-storm>

Agencies Dealing with Vulnerable Children Face Challenges During Virus Crisis
https://www.wkbn.com/news/local-news/valley-agencies-dealing-with-vulnerable-children-face-challenges-during-virus-crisis/?fbclid=IwAR3TV_11DTVMTEqGXN84-nl2V6tJzuQ4HuD8jPgtr9V30FgE_KJujDBUIH4

Agency Vigilant During Child Abuse Epidemic
<https://www.vindy.com/news/local-news/2020/04/agency-vigilant-during-child-abuse-epidemic/>

Pinwheel Garden Won't Be Planted in Boardman; Child Abuse More Prevalent During Pandemic
<https://www.wfmj.com/story/41963339/pinwheel-garden-wont-be-planted-in-boardman-this-year-child-abuse-more-prevalent-during-pandemic>

Stay at Home Order May Put Children At More Risk for Abuse/Neglect
<https://www.wkbn.com/news/coronavirus/stay-at-home-order-may-put-children-at-more-risk-for-abuse-neglect/>

Mina's Foster Closet Provides Help and Hope
<https://www.vindy.com/news/local-news/2020/04/nicoles-closet-of-help-and-hope/>

Keep Connected With Us @



Website: Mahoningkids.com



[Mahoning County Children Services @MahoningKids](#)



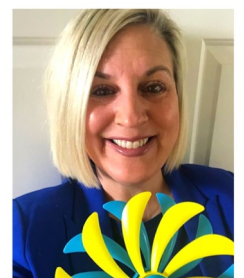
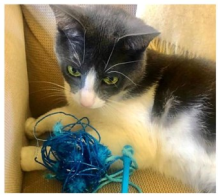
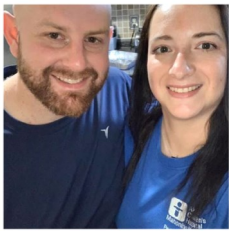
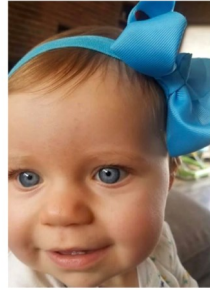
[MC Children Services @MahoningKids](#)



Instagram: [mahoningkidz](#)

OUR COMMUNITY

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Our Community

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Check Out Our New TV Campaign!!!

Featuring Local Foster Parents & Former Foster Youth

Click on Each Photo to Watch! Or visit <http://www.mahoningkids.com/news>



Featuring Mahoning
County Children Services
Licensed Foster Parents:

Kristy

LeAnn

Nicole

Naydean

*Emancipated Youth
Formerly in Foster Care*



The Agency Remains in
URGENT Need for GREAT
Foster Parents.

Call

330.941.8888

Website:

[http://
www.mahoningkids.com/](http://www.mahoningkids.com/)



Group TV Spot



May is National

FOSTER CARE MONTH



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Easter Baskets Donations Bring Joy to Many Children During COVID-19 Stay Home Order

Thank You Easter Bunnies!



As the saying goes—timing is EVERYTHING! This year Easter Basket donations reached the Agency — just in the nick of time.

When Mahoning County Children Services' donors **Linda Romisher**, **Darlene Malaska** and **Deb Varnarsdale** of **Delta Kappa Gamma** delivered Easter Baskets in early March, little did they know that within a week the entire state of Ohio would be under a Stay-at-Home Order.

Linda has been creating and donating Easter Baskets for three consecutive years. She donated over 130 baskets this Easter alone! When she contacted the Agency several years ago, all she wanted to do was to "help kids in some way." At that time, the Agency had several projects for her to consider. She selected Easter Baskets as her project—and she never looked back. This annual spring project, Linda will tell you, has become her 'niche.' She

works year-round securing donations and shopping for a variety of fun items in order to make baskets for children ages infant to 18 years of age.

Retired teachers comprise the membership of Delta Kappa Gamma. DKG members have also been annual Easter Basket donors for the last two years. Both Linda's and the DKG Easter Baskets are not the average run-of-the mill Easter Baskets. In fact, they're masterpieces. Each one with a theme and carefully crafted and created with love. The Baskets contain age-appropriate items and candies and are wrapped up in clear cellophane and topped with colorful bows. The baskets feature items for children and teens of all ages. The baskets contain non-traditional items like basketballs and footballs, kites, glow sticks, jewelry, lotion sets, summer games, Barbies, plush animals, etc.

Delivery to Kids: And many thanks to the tireless dedication of the Agency's **ESSENTIAL Workers: Casework Staff and Transportation Aides** who ensured that Easter Baskets were delivered to children on their case-loads during the COVID-19 Pandemic.



THANK YOU! Donor Linda Romisher donated over 130 Easter Baskets this year alone!



THANK YOU! Delta Kappa Gamma Members created and donated Easter Baskets. Pictured: Darlene Malaska, President and Deb Varnarsdale, V.P., Delta Kappa Gamma.