



# REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

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# 2025



Mahoning County  
Children Services

Protecting Children. Preserving Families.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

## Dear Neighbors, Foster Families, and Community Partners,

Over the past year, our work at Mahoning County Children Services has remained focused on what matters most—protecting children while strengthening families whenever safely possible. Each day, our staff respond when children are at risk, working alongside parents during difficult moments, and striving to prevent removals whenever we can do so responsibly.

When children must enter care, our priority is to place them in the least restrictive, most family-centered setting possible. Whenever safe and appropriate, we first look to kinship placements so children can remain connected to familiar supports.

When kin is not immediately available, we rely on our licensed and trained family foster homes to provide stability and care. For children who need additional support and more specialized services, we are increasingly turning to our treatment foster parents. Throughout this work, we remain committed to strong practice standards and responsible stewardship of community resources.

This year, we focused first on strengthening our family foster care program—the backbone of our placement continuum. We examined recruitment, training, communication, and day-to-day support for foster families. Foster

parents step in during some of the most difficult moments in a child's life, offering consistency when it matters most. They are not simply placements—they are partners and essential members of a child's team. By improving recruitment strategies, enhancing training, and providing more consistent support, we are building a stronger and more sustainable foster care program.

Building on that foundation, we launched our Treatment Foster Home Collaborative. We recognized that too many children with complex needs were facing institutional placements simply because appropriate family-based supports were limited. By aligning experienced foster parents with stronger clinical partnerships and more coordinated agency involvement, we are expanding our ability to keep children in families—even when their needs are significant.

Together, these efforts reflect a belief that continues to guide our work: children do best in families. Strengthening both family foster care and treatment foster care is helping us build a more responsive system that keeps children connected to family life whenever possible.

I remain deeply grateful to our foster families who open their homes, our community partners who stand beside us, and the dedicated staff who carry out this work with professionalism and heart each day. The progress we have made reflects a community that continues to show up for its children.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. Together, we are strengthening families, supporting caregivers, and building a safer future for the children of Mahoning County.

*Sincerely,*  
**Richard Tvaroch**  
Executive Director  
Mahoning County Children Services



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### WE ARE CHILD WELFARE LEADERS.

We take pride in working with families and our community with care and compassion. We provide quality services that respect each family's culture. We are fiscally responsible, effectively utilizing resources to benefit the families we serve. We educate the community on recognizing and preventing child abuse and neglect.

### WE RESPECT AND VALUE FAMILIES AND THEIR CHILDREN.

We respect families' strengths and provide individualized services. We empower parents and partner with families to ensure child safety, permanency and well-being. We recognize children are best served within their family and community.

### WE VALUE OUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY.

We recognize the need to work in collaboration with the community to protect children and preserve families. We support the well-being of children and families; it is a shared agency and community responsibility.

## OUR MISSION

Mahoning County Children Services, in partnership with the community, is committed to being the leader in protecting children while helping families.



IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD  
ABUSE OR NEGLECT

**REPORT IT**  
**330.941.8888**

24 hours/7 days a week

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

Our team responded to

4781

phone calls reporting abuse, neglect and dependency.

3315

children were served and

127

families were transferred to receive ongoing services.

41%

of children in care were successfully reunified with their primary parents or kin.

46

Children currently waiting to be permanently adopted

14 ADOPTION FINALIZATIONS

75 LEGAL CUSTODIES GRANTED

89 CHILDREN OBTAINED PERMANENCY



## STAFF COMPOSITION

At the conclusion of 2025, Mahoning County Children Services employed 114 employees to serve and support children and families in Mahoning County.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** All Child Welfare Caseworkers possess a bachelor's degree in social work, sociology, psychology, or a related social services field.

# CORE SERVICES

- The **INTAKE** Department responds to reports of children who are suspected of being abused, neglected or dependent. Through assessment and investigation of reports, case workers evaluate safety concerns and risks to children in collaboration with the family.
- Caseworkers in the **FAMILY SERVICES** Department partner with families to develop plans to address concerns related to child safety and wellbeing, while building upon the family's strengths. The goal is reunification whenever safe and as quickly as possible.
- The **RESOURCES** Department is responsible to identify safe and permanent placements for children. This is accomplished through Family Search & Engagement efforts to locate kin, the licensing and support of family foster homes and recruitment of adoptive homes when needed.

## FOSTER CARE

47

Mahoning County Licensed Family Foster Homes

14

Mahoning County Kinship Homes

23

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP) Foster Homes

2

Mahoning County Treatment Foster Care Homes

86

Total Resource Homes in 2025

# INTRODUCING THE NEW TREATMENT FOSTER CARE PROGRAM



In April 2024, Mahoning County Children Services (MCCS) joined a regional Treatment Foster Care pilot with Ashtabula and Trumbull Counties to expand local placement options for children with higher levels of need and to reduce reliance on out-of-county providers. After completing an evidence-based, trauma-informed training model, MCCS trained its first cohort of treatment foster parents in 2025 and licensed its first two treatment foster homes in October. Treatment Foster Care provides a family-based alternative to congregate care, offering specialized training and enhanced support to foster parents. The program helps keep children in their home communities, maintain school and service continuity, and strengthen family engagement and reunification efforts. To date, four children have been served through the program..

## MEET THE PARENTS



**STEPHANIE & ANDREW HUDDLESTON**

*FOSTERING SINCE 2010*

### **Q. What was the catalyst that made you want to become a foster caregiver?**

My grandmother was a foster caregiver in the 1950s and adopted my mother. My Aunt and Uncle were also foster caregivers. I felt it was just my calling in life. (Stephanie) I come from a large family and wanted to have a large family of my own, so fostering just seemed right. There are so many children in foster care with no where to go, so I thought if we could provide that forever home to a child, we would be helping a child and grow our family at the same time. (Andrew)

### **Q. What made you 'step up' and become a treatment foster caregiver?**

We have fostered several children who have been at treatment level and we felt we were ready to take additional training to help support them in more ways. There are not a lot of treatment level homes in our area, so our youth are further away from their own community. By becoming a treatment foster caregiver, we could keep these youth closer to their families.

### **Q. What are the skills or traits a person should possess to be a foster caregiver?**

Foster caregivers should love being around children and be patient, loving, nurturing, able to provide a safe and stable environment, compassionate, understanding, and empathetic.



**JENNY & BRIAN MOORE**

*FOSTERING SINCE 2021*

### **Q. What is the most rewarding aspect of being a foster caregiver?**

The most rewarding aspect of being a foster caregiver is being able to stay in touch with the youth and their families and be an added support to them.

### **Q. What didn't you know about fostering then that you know now?**

I wish we had known the emotional toll it would take on us. That a child's trauma can become secondary trauma for you and your family. I wish we had known that all the love in the world cannot undo their trauma.

### **Q. What would you say to someone who is unsure of becoming a foster caregiver?**

If you love children and have a passion for helping others, then you should consider becoming a foster caregiver. Do not let the fear of having them leave your home prevent you from fostering. These youth need people who are willing to love them, provide a stable and nurturing environment, and advocate for them. You may just be that one person who that youth can connect with.

### **Q. What was the catalyst that made you want to become a foster caregiver?**

We took care of our grandson who had Autism and ADHD. And then when he left, we realized we could help other kids that needed us.

### **Q. What made you 'step up' and become a treatment foster caregiver?**

Most of the kids we were fostering could have been classified as treatment foster kids. So why not, since I was doing all the extra for them.

### **Q. What are the skills or traits a person should possess to be a foster caregiver?**

We feel it just takes someone that wants to make a difference in a child's life. But also needs to be understanding of what they have been through and that it will not be easy.

### **Q. What is the most rewarding aspect of being a foster caregiver?**

For us it is knowing that we are making a difference in the kids' lives. And seeing them smile and enjoy being a kid again.

### **Q. What didn't you know about fostering then that you know now?**

That there is additional support out there for the kids and the foster parents like Ohio Rise plus getting a Behavior Specialists and connecting with other foster parents.

### **Q. What would you say to someone who is unsure of becoming a foster caregiver?**

We would say to do it. It is such a rewarding experience, even during the rough times it is something very special to be a part of. And do not always listen to the negative things that are being said.



# FINANCIAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DEC. 31, 2025

## 2025 EXPENDITURES

Salaries and Related Expenses 49%	\$9,996,652.46
Operating Expenses 9%	\$1,783,633.87
Public Foster Care 4%	\$806,976.63
Residential Placements 19%	\$3,843,768.90
Treatment Foster Care 0%	\$4,800.00
Therapeutic Foster Care 12%	\$2,446,398.95
Services 5%	\$1,060,592.06
Other Expenses 3%	\$639,960.85

**Total \$20,582,783.72**

## 2025 RECEIPTS

Levy 57%	\$13,982,481.54
Federal 24%	\$5,837,454.16
State 19%	\$4,794,557.10
All Other 0%	\$64,807.39

**Total \$24,679,300.19**

FOR THE FULL 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT  
**SCAN HERE**



## FOSTER CAREGIVER RETENTION & RECRUITMENT EVENTS

### Parent Café Meetings:

In collaboration with the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, the Early Childhood Resource Center, and Highway Tabernacle Church, Mahoning County Children Services (MCCS) helped launch monthly Parent Café meetings for kinship, foster, and adoptive families in Mahoning County. The meetings provided a supportive space for parents to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. All sessions were held at Highway Tabernacle Church in Austintown, Ohio.

### National Foster Care Month:

In recognition of May as National Foster Care Month, each MCCS Foster and Kinship caregiver received an Agency-branded tote bag and a gift card, along with a note expressing the Agency's gratitude.

St. James Episcopal Church, Boardman, hosted a "Family Game Night" featuring a shared meal, a drum circle, and other family-friendly activities that brought caregivers and children together in a welcoming environment.

### November: A Month of Gratitude

A variety of pies were hand-delivered to each of our foster families as a small but sincere thank-you for the love, care, and commitment they show every day. We are deeply grateful for all they do throughout the year to provide safe, nurturing homes for children in our community.

### Media & Advertising Campaigns

A year-long multi-media advertising campaign focusing on foster caregiver awareness and recruitment were launched via print, billboard, to traditional, streaming, and cable TV advertising spots and social media.



# 2025 COMMUNITY EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



## 2025 COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT AWARD



The Community Spotlight Award honors individuals and organizations that demonstrate exceptional service and commitment to improving the lives of children in Mahoning County. The 2025 Community Spotlight Award was presented to *Live Like Lindsey* for its ongoing commitment to Mahoning County children. Founded in memory of Lindsey Villanueva, the organization honors Lindsey's legacy by providing the Agency with new winter coats for children of all ages, ensuring they stay warm throughout the winter months.

## NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Each April, in recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Agency—in partnership with Akron Children's Hospital's Child Advocacy Center—hosts the Annual Pinwheels for Prevention Community Event. Now in its 20th year (2025), the event highlights the importance of prevention, education, and community collaboration in protecting children from abuse and neglect.

## MCCS & AKRON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COMMUNITY PINWHEEL GARDEN DISPLAY

is 'planted' during the month of April in Boardman Park. Pinwheel Garden Displays are planted in communities across the nation. The pinwheel is the national symbol for child abuse prevention. Over 1,000 colorful pinwheels were planted in 2025. They represent community members who advocated on behalf of an abused or neglected child in Mahoning County.

**Pictured:** Students from Boardman High School's Emerging Leadership Program.



## STATE REP. LAUREN MCNALLY MAKES SPECIAL AGENCY VISIT



**Pictured (left to right):** Susan Babinec, Rick Tvaroch, State Rep. Lauren McNally, Julie Rudolph, Nikaeda Griffie, Lynette Paris, Theresa Pancoe and Jennifer Kollar.

State Representative Lauren McNally (58th District) made a special visit to the Agency on October 24 participating in a "Ridealong" with a Mahoning County Children Services Caseworker. This is Rep. McNally's second visit to the Agency.

## OHIO WEARS BLUE CAMPAIGN

Ohio Wears Blue Day is held on the second Wednesday of April. Blue is the national color symbolizing Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention. Ohioans are encouraged to wear Blue to work, school or at a community event in support of Ohio WEAR BLUE DAY.

**Pictured:** Mahoning County Children Services staff



## CANFIELD FAIR

Staffing a booth in the Medical Building at the Fair is the Agency's biggest community outreach of the year! It's a great opportunity to meet members of our community and share important information about child abuse and neglect and the great need for more foster caregivers for Mahoning County children.



## NATIONAL ADOPTION CELEBRATION EVENT



**Pictured:** Jameer signifies his own adoption finalization with the tap of Judge Robert N. Rusu's gavel.

During *National Adoption Awareness* Month in November, Mahoning County Children Services and Mahoning County Probate Court co-host the Annual Adoption Day Celebration. Jameer's adoption was finalized at the Court House public event. In 2025, a total of 14 children were adopted into permanent, loving homes—reflecting the strength of cross-system partnerships and the shared commitment to achieving permanency for children.

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION: A MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENT

Five agency-involved youth graduated from local high schools in 2025. For youth in foster care, graduation represents more than an academic achievement—it is a significant milestone reached despite complex challenges and trauma. These accomplishments reflect resilience, support systems, and the importance of continued community investment in youth success.



**Congratulations & Best Wishes**  
Alajah, Zamier, Aubryana, Demya and Ashlynn!

## ANNUAL GIFTS FOR KIDS HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN



The Annual Gifts for Kids Holiday Campaign ensures that children served by the Agency experience the joy of the holiday season. Through the generous support of individuals, businesses, and community organizations, hundreds of children receive gifts—often the only ones they will receive during the holidays. This campaign reflects the community's shared commitment to supporting children and families during times of need.

## CHILD WELFARE WORKER APPRECIATION WEEK

was held September 8–12, 2025. The event is designed to recognize child welfare professionals who play a critical role in protecting and supporting children and families in their communities. A variety of special activities including an all-staff breakfast/coffee bar, scavenger hunt and MCCS T-shirt give-away were held to commemorate the week.

**Pictured:** Mahoning County Children Services Caseworkers Scavenger Hunt Team.



## AGENCY AWARDS & RECOGNITION

### OHIO START HONORS MCCS START CASEWORKER

**Kristen Ragozine**, a Mahoning County Children Services Caseworker, was recognized in the April 2025 Ohio START Newsletter for her outstanding work with families. Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment & Reducing Trauma) is a children-services led initiative designed to improve outcomes for parents and children impacted by child maltreatment and parental substance use disorders.



### HOMETOWN HERO AWARD



Mahoning County Children Services was selected as Highway Tabernacle Church's "2025 Hometown Hero." The Agency was also presented with an original painting created by Ron Moore, Jr., The painting features an American Eagle tending to her eaglets; artist-titled "Under His Wings."

### OHIO NASW RECOGNIZES EMERGING LEADERSHIP



**Faith Mundy**, a Mahoning County Children Services Caseworker, was named as a 2025 Ohio Region 4 National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Emerging Leader Award recipient. This honor recognizes social workers in the first five years of their career who demonstrate exceptional leadership, professionalism, and a commitment to empowering others.



2025

# EXECUTIVE STAFF, BOARD & COMMISSIONERS

## Administrative Executive Staff

**Richard Tvaroch, MPA**  
*Executive Director*

**Julie Rudolph, MPA, LSW**  
*Assistant Director*

**Bradley Smith, MSW, LISW-S**  
*Program Administrator, Intake Services*

**Angelica Polito, MSW**  
*Program Administrator, Family Services*

**Theresa Panceo, MSSA, LISW-S**  
*Program Administrator, Resource Services*

**Lynette Paris, MPA**  
*Program Administrator, Continuous Quality Improvement*

**Nikaeda Griffie, MSSA, LSW**  
*Program Administrator, Community Engagement, Recruitment & Program Development*

**Susan Babinec**  
*Human Resources Administrator*

**Denise Barnes-Carper**  
*Fiscal Administrator*

**Jennifer T. Kollar**  
*Public Information Officer*

## Mahoning County Children Services Board

**Daniel Wakefield, Chairman**

**Kriss Wolford, Vice Chairman**

**Maria Pappas, Secretary**

**Reverend Lewis Macklin**

**Dr. Sherri Lovelace-Cameron**

**Attorney Richard White**

**Ron Gerberry**

**Patricia Lyden**

**Julieann Cheng**

## Mahoning County Commissioners

**Geno DiFabio**

**Carol Rimedio-Righetti**


**Anthony Traficanti**



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



Foster Parent Inquiry

222 W. Federal St. 4th Floor  
Youngstown, OH 44503 

330.941.8888 

@MahoningKids 



Mahoning County  
Children Services

Mahoning County Children  
Services is Accredited by the  
Council on Accreditation



The 2025 Report to the Community is published by Mahoning County Children Services and is submitted in Accordance with Section 5153.14 of the Ohio Revised Code.