Message From The Director:
The Challenge Ahead

Over the past few years, the number of children entering court ordered, out of home placement has increased slightly. However, the children entering care need increasingly more intense and costly services. In addition to providing for their basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) our tax dollars provide foster children with needed mental health, behavioral, substance abuse and vocational services. These services are essential to preparing families and children for reunification and permanency back in the child’s community.

You need to know that Athens County foster children are exceptionally well cared for when they cannot live at home. We can never thank our foster parents, social workers and support staff enough.

The challenge ahead is two-fold: Maintaining quality services to children in care, and recruiting new Athens County families to become foster parents for these children. In 2004, ACCS will initiate an aggressive foster parent recruitment campaign. Our theme, developed by a group of community advocates and ACCS staff, will be “Our County, Our Kids…Our Hope.”

We are thankful to the residents of Athens County for their unwavering support and their confidence in our ability to protect our most valuable resource, the children of our community.

Scott Ferris, MPA, LSW
Executive Director
Athens County Children Services

Adoption

A child may be placed in the permanent custody of the agency if a parent willingly surrenders the child, the child is abandoned, or has spent the past 12 out of 22 months in agency custody with the court awarding permanent custody. There were 23 adoptions in 2003.

Community Presentations

The staff of Athens County Children Services educates the community through presentations regarding the agency, child abuse/neglect, foster care and adoption, and other topics.

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There were 39 presentations in 2003. Speakers are available to address community groups. Call for information.
Help Me Grow

Help Me Grow is a child development program serving families with children age birth to 3 years and pregnant women.

Help Me Grow Service Coordinators work with families by providing child development information, home visits, information and referral, and support. They help families develop goals that will enhance their abilities to be parents. Help Me Grow received 179 referrals during the year, and worked with an average of 211 cases per month.

Parent/Nursing Visits occur when a baby is born. The worker meets each new mother and her baby at O’Bleness to give them information about community resources and parenting a new baby. There was an average of 20 Parent/Nursing visits completed per month.

Couples who have filed for divorce or dissolution are required to attend a one time Domestic Relations Clinic to learn child support laws and to discuss how parents can help their children through this difficult time. There were 21 clinics held during 2003.

Preparing For Their Future

If a child reaches the age of 18 without achieving permanency, services are provided to prepare them for life on their own. An independent living caseworker will work with teens in agency custody and give them the support needed to succeed on their own. All children aged 16-18 in the custody of Children Services are required to have Independent Living services. Various topics are covered which will help the youth to function independently within the community. 14 young adults (6 female, 8 male) were served by this program in 2003.
Protecting Children

A referral is an allegation of child abuse or neglect and can be made verbally or in writing. It includes, but is not limited to, allegations involving individuals, families, and out-of-home care settings. Athens County Children Services received 1409 referrals in 2003 for an average of 117 referrals per month.

Regional Training Center

The Ohio Child Welfare Training Program is a comprehensive, competency-based, in-service training program that provides high quality, culturally responsive, family-centered, job related training for staff in public child welfare agencies throughout Ohio. In 2003, the Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center presented 213 workshops (approx. 218 days of training) totaling 1309 training hours, and served 2848 participants.

Charitable Giving

Did you know that Athens County Children Services raises money for community charities and families through a Casual Day fund? Since 2000, agency staff have raised over $11,000. This money benefited Neighbors Helping Neighbors, fire victims, assisted with burial costs, Lace up for Kids, school supplies, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, purchased DVD players for local Military divisions in Iraq, Habitat for Humanity, Bowl for Kids Sake, purchased special equipment needed for a disabled child, Ohio Valley Christian Assembly for a new kitchen, the Cat Shelter and other deserving community families and organizations. In addition, Athens County Children Services is an annual pacesetter for United Appeal.

Family Support Unit

The Family Support Unit provides assistance and services to help preserve families. Services include parenting services, home/health management skills, and transportation. All services can be provided in a family’s home. Visitation services are available for those families who are involved with the agency and whose children are living in either kinship care or foster care.

There were 899 monitored or supervised visits at our recently renovated visitation center in 2003.

Parenting Services served approximately 105 parents in 2003 including:

- 54 intensive mentoring classes
- 30 parent instruction cases
- 21 short term outreach

Family Info Center

The Family Info Center (FIC) is located in Nelsonville. It is a resource center for families with programming that includes family support groups, a clothing bank, soup meals, playgroups, Girl Power!, and Guy Time. The average number of people served by the center was 360 per month in 2003.

Girl Power! provides support and fun activities for young girls ages 12-15 while also reinforcing positive, healthy values. There were approximately 47 Girl Power meetings held in 2003.

Annual Report