



LORAIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES ANNUAL CQI REPORT



2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 Introduction/ Agency Description and
County Demographics

04 Strategic Plan
Updates

07 Work with Children and Families

11 Internal CQI
Committees

12 Data

2022 AGENCY DESCRIPTION AND COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

Lorain is 9th most populous county in Ohio



Lorain County Children Services

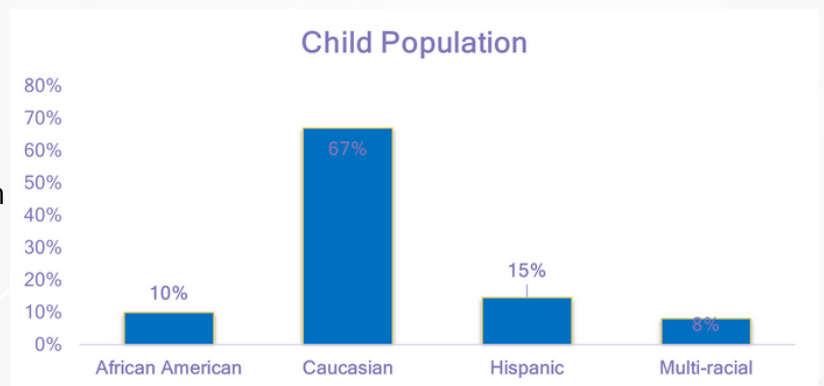
Ohio has a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. This means that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services through its Office of Families and Children oversees programs and services including those delivered by Ohio’s county public children services agencies (PCSAs).

Over the course of 2022, Lorain County Children Services staff worked together to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. While there were challenges with maintaining a fully staffed workforce, the agency staff was able to achieve best practice standards set by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The information to follow will highlight some of the work completed by agency staff in 2022.

Lorain County Highlights

Lorain County is the 9th most populous county in the state. Children make up 22% of the county’s population, 27% of children live in poverty (Casey family). Most children living in poverty live in Elyria and Lorain. In several areas of these cities, more than 40% of the residents live in poverty.

The chart at right details the racial makeup of children in the county.



OPERATION HIGHLIGHTS: STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

During 2022, work continued with staff to achieve strategic plan goals. The initiatives in the plan include 1) Diversity, Inclusion, Family, and Individual Rights, 2) Responding to Trauma/Advance Trauma-Informed and Resilient Professionalism and 3) Family First Act Implementation and Innovation.

The Diversity, Inclusion, Family, and Individual Rights group joined with the staff to review data on racial disproportionality of the children the agency has contact with, they began work on reviewing procedures to ensure diversity and culture were considered and added language to these procedures when necessary. The group members joined other child welfare agencies in Ohio to gain education and knowledge on race, bias, cultural differences, etc. This work will continue in 2023 with the goal to create a diverse and inclusive workspace, with respect for families and individuals of various customs and backgrounds.

The Responding to Trauma/Advance Trauma-Informed and Resilient Professionalism group worked on advancing this strategic initiative throughout 2022. This plan includes staff understanding how trauma affects the children and families that we work with and how experiencing secondary trauma can affect their own lives. The group recommended a workforce resiliency training for all LCCS staff and secured that training at the end of 2022. Staff on this committee also considered staff safety. The agency entered a contract with Guardian MPS system. This is an electronic key fob and app that all staff who go in the field must utilize if they find themselves in an unsafe situation and need immediate help. They can press a panic button to alert emergency services. The agency entered another contract with the Lorain County Sheriff's Department to have a full-time deputy at the agency who serves as a resource to all staff in office security.



One of the needs that was identified with the Responding to Trauma initiative involved children that have been separated from their families. Some of the children that are in Lorain County Children Services custody have experience complex trauma. As a result of the trauma, these children sometimes have difficulty adjusting to their new environments in a kinship placement or in foster care. The staff and management team agreed that a service that is needed in this area is a caseworker level position who can work with children and their caregivers on trauma. This includes educating caregivers on trauma and how it impacts a particular child and supporting the child as they begin to process the trauma. The goal of this initiative is to prevent disruptions from kinship or foster homes. The Short-Term Trauma Worker position was implemented in the fall of 2022. This worker assists families until a community mental health therapist is secured and will work with the child and their family on a longer-term basis.

The Family First Act Implementation and Innovation group completed work including staff training and drafting language into procedures that align with the Family First Prevention Services Act. This group monitored the work going on at the state level with OhioRISE (a specialized managed care program that focuses on children and youth who have complex behavioral health and multisystem needs).

LCCS Mission and Core Values

Mission Statement

In partnership with the community, the staff, foster parents and volunteers of Lorain County Children Services are committed to the safety and well-being of abused, neglected, and dependent children and will provide the highest quality protection, permanency, and prevention services for children and families.

LORAIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

CORE VALUES

We believe children do best in a family ● We believe a child should be better off because of our involvement ● We believe we should be involved with a child only for as long as needed ● We value the child as our client ● We value keeping siblings together ● We value a diverse and inclusive workspace, and respect the diversity and equity needs of the families and children we serve ● We value maximizing resources to achieve the best outcomes we can as timely as possible ● We value being a trauma informed agency ● We value seeing our children to ensure safety ● We value acting with urgency in our work with children ● We value high- expectations for our staff, foster families, and volunteers to accomplish the best outcomes for our children that we can ● We value independent and critical thinking ● We value that every child deserves to safely grow up in a family where they are valued, protected and have the opportunity for life-long well-being ● We value continuous improvement and accept change ● We value our collaborative role within the community's safety net for children.

Workforce

During 2022, Lorain County Children Services experienced challenges in maintaining and recruiting experienced caseworkers who had earned a master's degree in Social Work. After discussions with management staff and the members of the Lorain County Children Services Board, a decision was made to expand the master's level degree requirement to an advanced degree in counseling, psychology, education, and other human service-related fields. This change opened opportunities for a broader pool of applicants and the agency has benefitted from adding to the already outstanding casework staff. Although opening the advanced degree requirement helped in alleviate some of the workforce issues, this solution alone was not enough to maintain the number of caseworkers needed to keep caseloads manageable for caseworkers. Towards the end of 2022, additional conversations took place about requiring a bachelor's degree in Social Work. As a result of these discussions, the management team decided to allow for applicants with a bachelor's degree in Social Work to apply and work at the agency.

While the requirements opened to include a broader range of degrees that would be acceptable to be employed at the agency, the Human Resources Department implemented a campaign of employment websites making Lorain County Services more visible to individuals looking for employment in the social services field.

As Lorain County Children Services created solutions within the agency to recruit and retain caseworkers, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services promoted grants to county child welfare agencies to promote hiring and retention of caseworker and supervisory staff. Lorain County Children Services was awarded funding and has used the funds to retain, hire, and support caseworker and supervisory staff. Although no outcomes to these initiatives are known at the end of 2022, data will be available in 2023.

Council On Accreditation (COA)

Lorain County Children Services has maintained COA accreditation since the early 2000's. The Council on Accreditation is a national objective accreditation agency that assists agencies in ensuring that they are practicing under the current best practice standards in the social service industry. COA reviews each service and department within the agency including Human Resources, Fiscal, Continuous Quality Improvement, Direct Services, Foster Care, Adoption, Independent Living, Technology, Professional Development and Management.

Lorain County Children Services began the process to earn reaccreditation in 2022. The agency management team and other staff have spent a lot of time reviewing the work that is done within their departments to prepare for a site visit in the early summer of 2023.

Community Advisory Network (CAN)

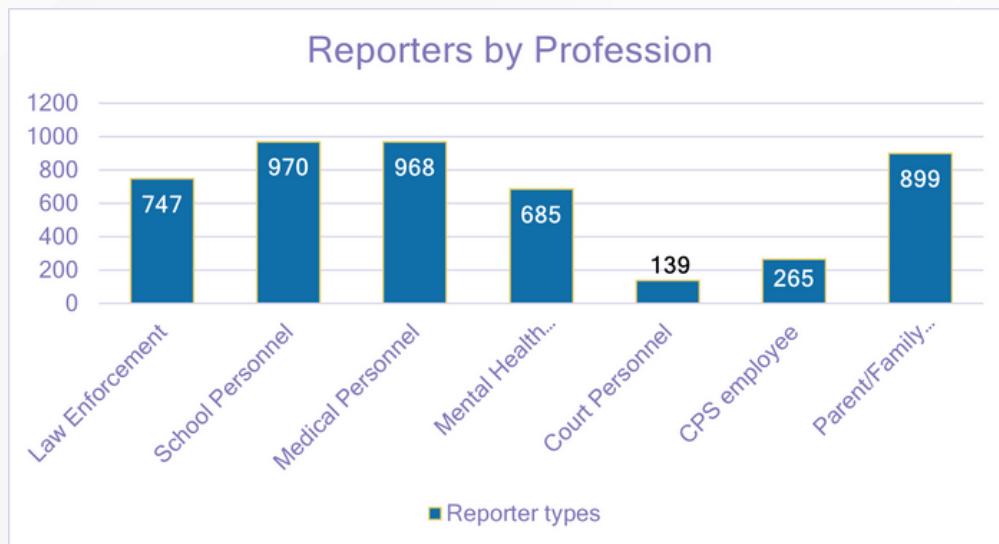
Collaborating and communicating with our community partners has been a long-standing practice at the agency. One of the ways that agency staff have incorporated this practice is through the Community Advisory Network meetings. The agency hosts several meetings a year to review agency practices and initiatives. It is also a time to hear from our partners about the work that is being done in the community on behalf of the children and families that we all serve. In 2022, there were three CAN meetings. Agenda items included reviewing the annual report in 2021, presenting data on intake reports and disproportionality, a lived experience foster care panel and an introduction to an alternative mandated reporting portal. Management places a high value on these meetings to continue positive relationships with our community partners.

WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

All Lorain County Children Services staff including administrative assistants, caseworkers, and supervisors dedicated much work to further our mission to children and families.

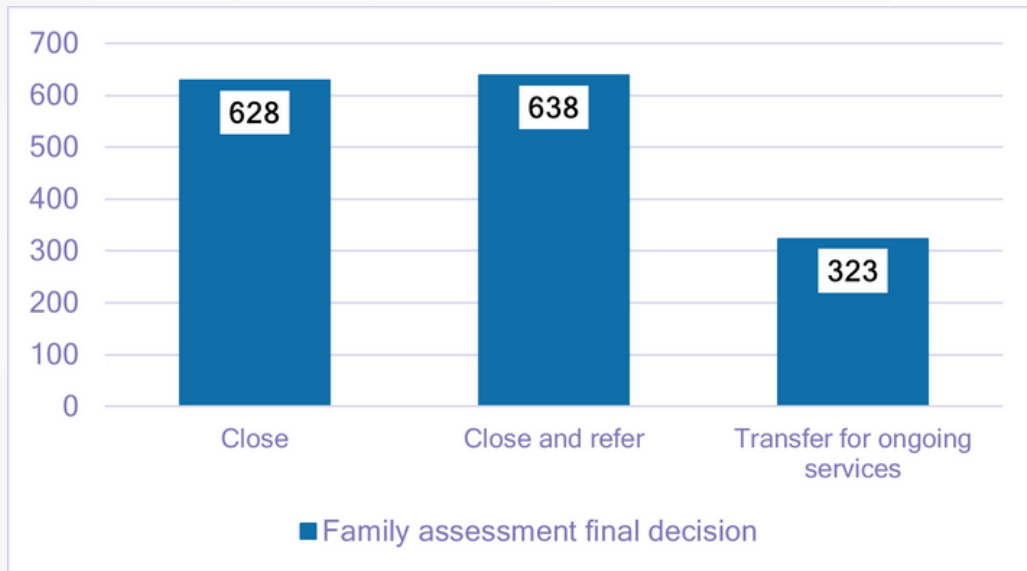
The intake referral specialists and afterhours hotline staff took over 5000 calls about concerns related to child abuse, neglect and dependency of children living in Lorain County. Of those calls, over 1800 were screened in and assigned to a caseworker to assess the concerns and work with the identified family to resolve the concern, make referrals to secure needed services, ensure safety for children and increase the well-being of the family.

Mandated reporters accounted for 78% of the reports made to LCCS. Mandated reporters are those people who are directed to make a report when they suspect or have reason to believe a child has been the subject of abuse or neglect. In 2022, we received reports from law enforcement, school personnel, medical professionals, mental health professionals, court staff and other child welfare agencies.



In 2022, the casework staff completed 1590 family assessments. The family assessment is a comprehensive evaluation that is completed with families that highlights strengths, areas of concern, historical information, and a current assessment of family dynamics to help in determining decisions on how to best work with the children and family.

628 family assessments had a final case decision to close the case with no further involvement. There were 638 assessments completed in which the caseworker determined to close the case but recommend the family and/or children to secure services to assist them in increasing functioning. There were 323 assessments completed where the caseworker transferred the case for ongoing services to work with the family on a case plan.



The Ohio Accelerated Safety Analysis Program (ASAP) is a real-time quality improvement approach that prioritizes high-risk cases that focus on ensuring safety for children. The coordinator provides support and consultation on ensuring safety for children by conducting a thorough case review and meeting with the casework team to go over recommendations and services that may improve family functioning. In 2022, the ASAP coordinator reviewed 103 cases.

The Custody Review Team is in place to approve/disapprove/review the potential custody requests of caseworkers and supervisors. It is a team decision meeting to review the reason that the casework team thinks that custody would be the preferred option for the child/children being reviewed in the meeting. This team consists of the caseworker, supervisor, members of the foster care department including placement caseworkers, supervisor, and kinship staff. Also represented are direct services managers and/or staff from the continuous quality improvement department. In 2022, 58 custody review team meetings were held. The decisions in those meetings could be to file for custody of the child/children in court, implement services not yet attempted with the family, denial of custody to continue working with the family to alleviate concerns and doing more work to locate relatives or kin for a child.

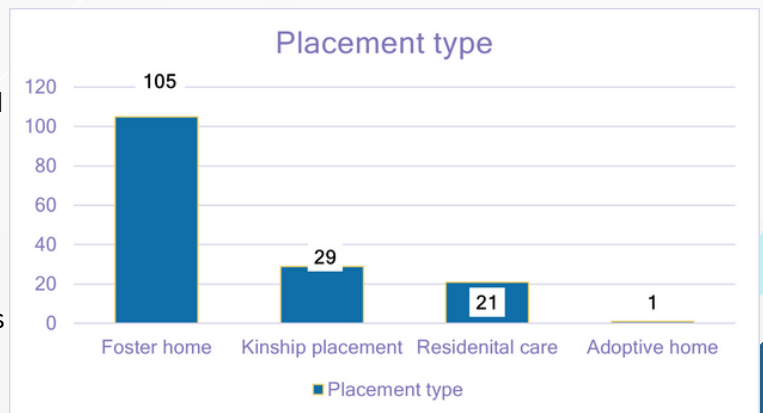
When children cannot stay safely in their home with biological parents, caseworkers and supervisors search for other family and friends to care for children. This is referred to as kinship care. Lorain County Children Services has a core value of believing children should be with family or friends before thinking about placing children in foster care.

In 2022, a total of 438 children were placed in a kinship placement at some point during the year. These placements include children who are on out-of-home safety plans and other children who are in the temporary custody of a relative while their parents work on the concerns the agency has regarding their ability to parent. 126 children entered foster care sometime during the year. There were 100 children who exited foster care during 2022. At the end of 2022, the agency had custody of 157 children.

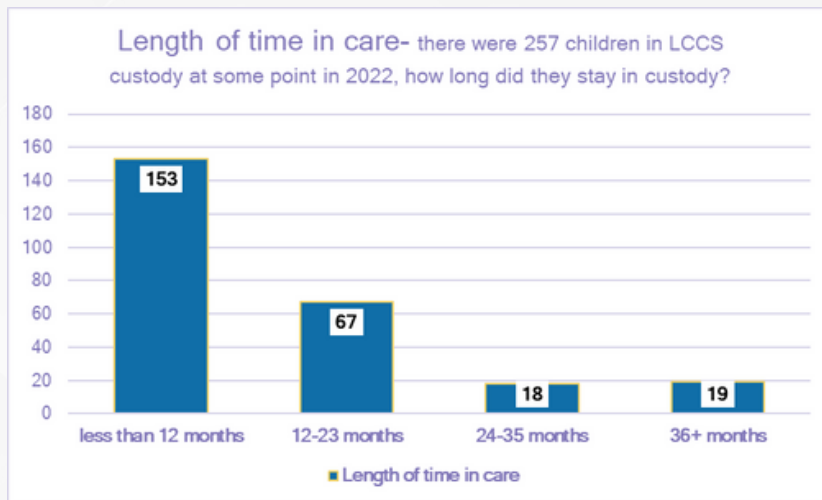
Lorain County Children Services had 74 approved foster families in 2022. One of the core values that staff share is the desire that each child that has a sibling is placed with that sibling if they are in foster care. In 2022, we met the goal of keeping siblings placed in the same foster home 80% of the time. The agency staff also work hard to keep children placed in Lorain County or an adjoining county. This was successful with 80% of placements in 2022.

The Kinship Department at Lorain County Children Services works with kinship caregivers by completing home studies, supporting caregivers, linking caregivers to resources in the community, etc. In 2022, the kinship department completed 260 home studies on caregivers who were willing to care for the children and/or friends in their families.

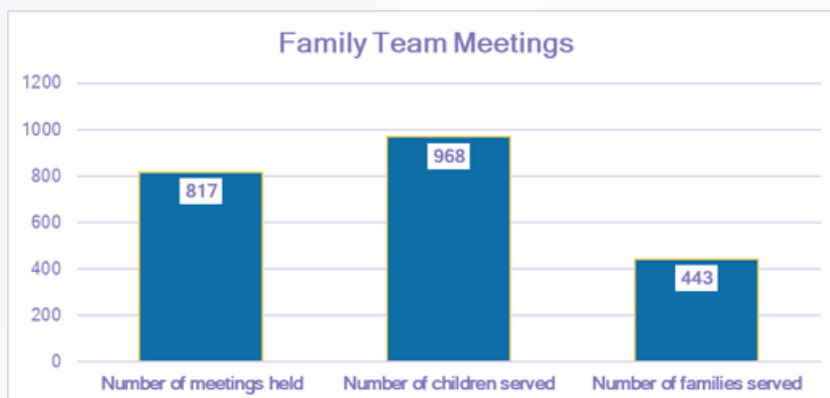
When children are separated from their primary family, they are placed in foster homes, group homes, residential facilities and with kinship families. At the end of 2022, many children in custody were living in a family foster home. There are also circumstances when children are in the agency custody and placed with kinship family or friends. The chart to the right details where children were placed.



Lorain County Children Services staff strive to achieve permanency for children in custody. There are several factors that impact the time a child spends in agency custody. Some of the factors include how parents are alleviating the concerns that the agency has regarding their ability to parent their children safely. Other factors include court decisions, input from service providers and other advocates for the children involved in a case. The chart to the right details how long children have remained in agency custody in 2022.



At Lorain County Children Services, **Family Team Meetings** are held to ensure that parents, older children, and their supports have a venue to talk about their involvement with the agency, have their questions about services answered and be part of the conversation about the concerns that agency staff have in parenting their children.



When children cannot be safely reunified with their biological parents and efforts to locate kinship caregivers have not been achieved, the agency files for permanent custody of the child. After the agency is given permanent custody, effort can begin to secure a permanent family for that child. In this case, the permanency goal is adoption. In 2022, 18 children had their adoptions finalized through the probate court.

COMMITTEE WORK

There are many committees at Lorain County Children Services that focus their work to further the mission at the agency.

The Clinical Risk Committee reviews items that are pertinent to casework practice in both direct services and foster care and adoption. This committee reviews concerns that are reported involving where children in custody are placed. This includes foster homes, group homes, and residential placements. The committee members review peer reviews and talk about administrative reviews. Clinical Risk members review all child fatalities and duty to warn situations. The members review the number of children on psychotropic medication and other data regarding our practice.

The Procedure Review Committee is charged with reviewing procedures that have been amended by the author of the procedure. This group reviews the procedure to ensure that it is understandable to the staff members charged with carrying out the work that is stated in the procedure. Although this group does not approve procedures, they make recommendations to the author of the procedure in an effort to make the work as efficient as possible.

The Administrative Risk Management Committee addresses areas of risk from the organizational perspective and will make recommendations as well as initiate strategies to minimize risk to the agency. This group consists of managers, directors and fiscal supervisor.

The Cultural Diversity Committee provides the leadership necessary for the development and implementation of cultural competence programming in order to increase staff knowledge, ability and skill needed to identify and address the issues facing LCCS and staff. This group also has a goal to increase the knowledge and growth of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the agency.

The Safety Committee reviews concerns presented by staff, supervisors and managers to maintain a safe space for all staff. The Safety Committee's work focused on safety within the agency and in the community as workers travel and make home visits.

The Wellness Committee promotes physical, mental, and emotional wellness of the Lorain County Children Services Staff. This committee focuses on self-care, recognizing the effects of secondary trauma, building resiliency, and facilitating a positive work environment.



DATA AND OUTCOMES

Child and Family Services Review is a federal oversight process to ensure that states and counties are conforming with federal child welfare requirements. Part of this oversight includes monitoring of key data outcomes that includes child safety and permanency. Lorain County Children Services management monitors county specific data. The charts below display how the agency performed in 2022. As work continues in 2023, the management team will monitor and strategize why some data points are not meeting expectations and implement improvements to gain better outcomes.

