



Richland County Children Services 2011 Annual Report to the Community

It's who we are. It's what we do.



Randy J. Parker, Executive Director

2011: Children Services met a growing community need

More children kept safely at home. More children placed with relatives rather than foster care. Fewer children entering foster care and the child welfare system. More services provided directly to children and families in need.

That is what Richland County Children Services promised to county residents in 2011 during a continuing tough economic time when the need for our agency's assistance grew more urgent than ever before.

And that's exactly what this child protective service agency delivered.

By anyone's standards, 2011 was a difficult and challenging year for child welfare in Richland County.

We had more calls for assistance (7,629) than ever before in our 129-year history. Our Differential Response Division conducted more investigations (3,019) than ever before. That's an average of 21 calls and eight new investigations per day, seven days a week.

Our Ongoing Services Division worked with an average of 600 families on a regular basis, totaling more than 1,400 children.

Despite the increased need, the agency still accomplished the goals we set for ourselves and the standards established by state and federal child welfare mandates.

For example, we reduced the number of children in foster care by year end to 41, a vast improvement over the 250 children in agency custody less than a decade ago. We reduced the total number of out-of-home days of care for all children to 16,113 – down 66 percent in just seven years. And we finalized nine more adoptions in 2011, ending the year without a single child waiting for an identified permanent home.

These goals were not reached by magic or by luck. In 2011, Richland County Children Services entered the first year of its new five-year strategic plan, a thoughtful planning document approved by the agency's board that establishes a clear blueprint for our success by focusing on five key areas – finance, personnel, intake enhancement, program and building & grounds.

Through prudent management and successful efforts to obtain one-time funding from outside sources, the agency maintained its solid financial position in 2011 even while not collecting on \$1 million in local property taxes and again spending more than \$500,000 with outside contracts to direct service providers within the county.

We continued to hire and train talented staff members. More than ninety percent of our employees have a bachelor's degree and more than 30 percent have a master's degree. Our employees attended more than 90 training sessions during 2011. Our diverse staff matches the demographics

2011 Board Members

Nancy Joyce
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Vice Chair

Jon Bell
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Joe Palmer
Treasurer

Ivy L. Amos

Connie Hoffman

Colleen J. McKinney, M.D.

Dean Wells

Pam Siegenthaler

Dave Leitenberger

Dave Metzger

2011 Administrative Staff

Randy J. Parker
Executive Director

Nikki Harless, MSW, LISW
Director of Operations

Marsha Coleman, MSW, LISW-S
Clinical Director

Kevin Goshe, MBA
Director of Finance

Elayna Rizer, JD
HR Director/Legal Counsel

Tim Harless, MSW
Program Director of External Affairs

Kevin Wharton, MSCJ
Program Supervisor, Differential Response Division

Scott Basilone, BS
Program Supervisor, Ongoing Division

Lori Feeney, MSW
Program Supervisor, ProtectOHIO Division

Kristi Schultz, JD
Agency Attorney

Edith Gilliland, JD
Attorney

J. Peter Stefaniuk, JD
Attorney

Carl Hunnell,
Communications Supervisor

Stop child abuse: Here's how you can help

The emotional and physical scars of child abuse and neglect can last a lifetime. Fortunately, all members of our community can play an active and vital role in stopping these tragic events and in helping Richland County Children Services start the healing process.

Report abuse or neglect when you suspect it – even if you're not certain.

Be the eyes, ears and conscience of our community. If you see any of the following signs of abuse or neglect, call us 24/7 at 419-774-4100. There is no need to wait until the next day or until the weekend is over – we are always here for your call.

Call us if a child:

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
- Has unexplained absences from school or a sudden change in school performance.
- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
- Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age.
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.
- Lacks adult supervision appropriate for their age.

of the community we serve and our turnover rate was far below the national average in terms of child welfare workers.

Our Differential Response Division collaborated with law enforcement and other child and family serving agencies in 2011, providing services to keep children safely at home even while an investigation was taking place. We expanded our Alternative Response effort where appropriate, working cooperatively with families to provide assistance rather than focus on finding fault.

Our Ongoing Services Division and ProtectOHIO units worked in conjunction with local schools, juvenile court, mental health providers and other local stakeholders to keep children safely at home or place with Kinship Caregivers where possible through prevention, intervention and treatment services.

Our Communications Department actively worked to educate the community in many areas of child welfare and helped our agency remain active in numerous community events, including the Richland County Fair, Lexington Blueberry Festival, Bellville Street Fair, Minority Health Fair, Shelby Bicycle Days, and the Mansfield Juneteenth Celebration, as well as the Mansfield Halloween, Holiday and Miss Ohio parades. We also staged our own community events to raise awareness of child abuse and neglect, including our annual Pinwheels for Prevention campaign, 24-hour Swim/Bike/Run and our 5K Run/Walk for Kids.

We also maintained a safe working environment for our employees and upgraded technology where appropriate, including additional laptop computers, Smart phones and a new Smartboard in our Differential Response Division.

Child welfare practices have changed dramatically since the first Richland County Children's Home was opened in 1883. It continues to evolve today and the agency's strategic plan provides a clear path for our agency to follow as we change with it. We acknowledge 2011 was a difficult year for children and families in Richland County. We recognize 2012 may be equally challenging.

But our agency's commitment remains as strong as ever to meet all of those challenges and accomplish our mission of protecting children and strengthening families.

It's who we are. It's what we do.

Randy J. Parker
Executive Director



RCCS receives high praise during U.S. Senate hearing

Richland County Children Services is well known around Ohio for the great work it does on behalf of children and families. That fame went national when the agency was honored in 2011 during remarks before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee.

On March 10, Crystal Ward Allen, the executive director for the Public Children Services Association of Ohio – a non profit membership organization serving Ohio's 88 county public child welfare agencies -- testified before the committee during a hearing in Washington, D.C.

Ward Allen testified about successful innovations in child welfare, using flexible Title IV-E waiver funding, including ProtectOHIO, a program used in Richland County and 17 other counties in the state.

As the result of her testimony, and similar comments from other states using federal waivers, Congress passed truly bipartisan legislation expanding the use of



Crystal Ward Allen, executive director of PCSAO with Tim Harless, program dir. of external affairs at PCSAO conference.

waivers. President Obama quickly signed the legislation into law in October 2011.

During her testimony, Ward Allen singled out Richland County Children Services for its achievements in using the ProtectOHIO waiver to create innovative new child welfare practices.

She said:
Richland County Children Services (Mansfield)– Whether developing a Multi-

Systemic Therapy program to work with troubled youth and their families in-home, investing in behavioral health assessments and services for families working on reunification, or achieving timely permanence for children when families cannot reunify (Richland CCS received an HHS Excellence in Adoption Award for timely adoptions), this agency is aggressive on behalf of the children it serves. Identifying, supporting and assisting relatives and other kin caregivers, including efforts to secure legal custody or guardianship, is another hallmark of Richland County Children Services. They believe children thrive better with safe familiar families and limited governmental intrusion. Use of the Title IV-E Waiver flexible funding has been invested in a variety of ways, and like Lorain County, Richland County has superb CFSR outcomes. The agency is very externally focused, engaged in partnerships with community service providers, the local YMCA, medical and law enforcement entities to prevent or safely receive abandoned babies, and others to help build awareness and resources in a community ravaged with unemployment.

Our Mission

Protect children at risk of abuse, neglect or dependency;

Provide children the opportunity to live in a safe, nurturing, permanent family;

Strengthen and support families in meeting the needs of children;

Join with the people of Richland County to provide the services necessary to protect children, strengthen families and promote well-being.



Keep children safe. Strengthen families.

Those are the daily goals for Richland County Children Services, poised to enter its 130th year as the local child protective agency.

Both of those broad tenants are spelled out in more detail in the agency's Vision and Mission statements, public documents adopted by the agency's board and reviewed every two years to make sure they are still on point with local child welfare issues.

The agency's Vision statement puts forth the long-term agency goals. It's the "in a perfect world" scenario, that while unobtainable, is worth pursuing diligently every day.

Several words are essential in the Vision statement. Permanent family. Safe loving environment. All needs met. Families with skills and resources. Community investment. Respect diversity. Support racial, cultural and ethnic heritages.

The agency's Mission statement is a specific, daily road map that will help guide the agency toward reaching the goals spelled out in the Vision statement.

Again, there are some key words and phrases. Protect children. Provide safe, nurturing and permanent families. Strength and support families. Join with others in the county to provide necessary services.

Both of these statements are shared with agency employees on a regular basis, keeping them top of mind as workers go about their daily tasks of working with families and children.

Keep children safe. Strengthen families.

As it's spelled out in the Vision and Mission statements, it's who we are and it's what we do.



Our Vision

Every child has a permanent family which provides a safe, loving environment that is emotionally and economically stable;

All children develop their full potential by having all physical, emotional, educational, cultural, spiritual, developmental and special needs met;

All families have the skills and resources to maintain their integrity, function to the best of their ability and be responsible to their family members;

A community that invests in the future of its children by providing services to empower families;

A community whose members respect diversity and support the strengths of the racial, cultural and ethnic heritage of families and neighborhoods.

Kinship Cares



Congratulations
Debbie Williams
of Ontario



"GRAND Magazine"
Grandparent of the Year Finalist

Ohio grandmother receives national honor for her work

An Ontario woman was selected as one of the "Grandparents of the Year" in 2011 by a national digital magazine for grandparents and their families.

Debbie Williams, 48, was nominated for the honor by Melodye James of the Mansfield Department of Regional Community Advancement, the community based contractor with Richland County Children Services for its Kinship Navigator program.

Grand, the digital magazine now in its seventh year online, selected 10 grandparents as finalists for its top award. Williams was selected among those 10.

In 2006, Williams' three grandchildren faced the prospect of being placed in foster care. Williams went to court with her daughter and asked if the children could be placed into her custody.

"The magistrate commented that would never happen because of Debbie's own

alcoholism," the nomination said. "Determined that her grandchildren would have an opportunity to remain with family, Debbie sought treatment and joined AA."

After being in AA for one year, completing the Second-Time Around Grandparents Raising Grandchildren course, seeking individual mental health counseling, becoming active in the local kinship support groups and working with her Children Services caseworker, Williams went to court again seeking custody of her grandchildren.

"This time the magistrate, seeing evidence of real change in Debbie and her willingness to 'become' the grandmother her grandchildren needed, ordered her to submit to mouth swabs. Debbie willingly paid for the swabs and had them done daily to (prove) her commitment to remaining alcohol-free," the nomination said.

In 2008, Williams was granted legal custody of her grand-

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New Kinship Family Center opens to assist relatives caring for children

Richland County Children Services has remained out in front of the rapidly growing state and national movement to Kinship Care vs. traditional foster care, thanks in large part to a three-year federal grant, which expires in October 2012.

Richland County was one of seven counties in Ohio receiving federal money through the U.S. Fostering Connec-

tions to Success Act. RCCS has been involved in Kinship Care since 2004, but the grant allowed that effort to grow rapidly in the last three years. Richland County is receiving more than \$500,000 from the grant during the three-year period.

In 2011, Richland County Children Services assisted in the opening of the new Kinship Family Center at 43 E. Fourth

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Mansfield Halloween Parade



Pinwheels for Prevention

Community

Richland County Children Services believes in community involvement, from community festivals and parades to ethnic and educational events.

"We think festivals, parades and other events are a great way to help out in the communities we serve and also a great opportunity for our agency to communicate our messages on child abuse and neglect prevention," said Carl Hunnell, communications supervisor for RCCS.

Chances are good you saw our agency at one or more community events during 2011, including:

January through March:

- Black History Month Celebration
- Rally for the Kids tennis event
- Breakfast with the Easter Bunny

April through June

- Minority Health Fair
- Mansfield Juneteenth Celebration



Downtown Mansfield Inc. Holiday Parade



Lakewood Racquet Club Rally for the Kids



Miss Ohio Parade



5K Run/Walk for Safe Children



Foster Parent Association Holiday Party

Involvement

- 24-hour Swim/Bike/Run
- Pinwheels for Prevention
- Miss Ohio Parade
- Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner

July through September

- Shelby Bicycle Days
- Richland County Fair
- Lexington Blueberry Festival
- Bellville Street Fair
- Fore Our Kids Golf Classic

October through December

- 5-K Run/Walk for Safe Children
- Mansfield Halloween Parade
- Downtown Mansfield Inc. Holiday Parade
- Staff Enrichment Pre-Game Pasta Dinner
- Foster Parent Association Holiday Dinner

We also trained county and municipal law enforcement, school districts, and day care facilities regarding their mandated reporter law requirements for reporting child abuse and neglect.



Breakfast with the Easter Bunny



Lexington vs. Mansfield Pre-Game Pasta Dinner



Richland County Fair

Kinship Family Center from pg. 5

St. in Mansfield. The center is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It is staffed with five Kinship Navigators through contracts the agency has with the City of Mansfield Department of Regional Community Advancement and the Mansfield Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program.

These Navigators assist grandparents, aunts/uncles, adult siblings and other significant others work through the system needed to care for a child who cannot safely remain at home with his or her mom and/or dad.

Kinship Care givers may have difficulty understanding what resources are available in the community, how to navigate those systems, and how to effectively advocate for the children for whom they are caring in order to get all needs met. The support provided by local kinship navigator provides necessary assistance to address those concerns.

Clients are also informed how to access legal services. The local kinship navigator has partnered with a local attorney who provides legal services to kin caregivers seeking legal custody, power of attorney, or general legal questions.

"Our goal remains the same: Allow families to take care of themselves and one another," said Tim Harless, the agency's director of external affairs and a recognized state leader in the Kinship effort.

"There are times when these grandparents and others may need resources along the way, but the ultimate goal is to keep children with people with whom they already have

established relationships," Harless said.

Challenges faced by kinship care families vary significantly depending on their legal relationships and needs.

"Some families need assistance obtaining counseling; others need help obtaining mental health services, transportation, medical/dental assistance, financial assistance, affordable housing, day care, respite care, custody issues, and educational needs," Harless said.

All research points to better child welfare outcomes in Kinship Care vs. foster care or other living arrangements. Kinship Care helps to maintain family relationships and cultural ties while providing the child with the opportunity for permanency, safety, wellbeing and stability. These children are also more likely to be successfully and safely reunited with their own parents than those placed into foster care.

In addition to the Kinship Navigators, Richland County Children Services has a team of social workers dedicated to working solely with Kinship Care providers who are also involved with the agency either on a voluntary or court ordered basis. Social workers on this team are trained in the special needs of Kinship Care providers and community resources available to them.

Kinship Care providers and children in their care can apply for monthly cash assistance through Ohio Works First (OWF) and health care coverage through Healthy Start and Healthy Families.

Grandmother from pg. 5

"...This legacy is what makes grandparenting such a powerful source for good."

children. She marked five years of sobriety last month. "Because of Debbie's strong commitment to family ties and her willingness to do whatever it takes to give her grandchildren the security and legacy of family preservation, Debbie should be the 2011 Grandparent of the Year," the nomination said.

When learning of the honor, Williams said, "It is truly a blessing to be raising my grandsons and only by the grace of God am I here today. They truly helped save my life from my addiction."

Williams was part of the magazine's September/October edition.

"Every nominee is a special person in the lives of their family and community, meriting special attention and consideration," the magazine said.

"All of (the) judges were deeply moved by the true stories of strength and compassion, sacrifice and passion, and an almost universal sense

of service over self.

"The common thread of every nomination was that love, freely shared without judgment, is the clearest expression of who we are in our finest days. This legacy is what makes grandparenting such a powerful source for good."

Crystal Ward Allen, executive director the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, praised Williams and the kinship program.

"While we know these fortunate kids have better outcomes with kin (than unrelated foster parents), we also know these loving kinship caregivers need help successfully managing the arrival of an unplanned family to raise -- help with finances, legal issues and complex family dynamics," Ward Allen said.

"The Kinship Navigator Program is supported through a federal grant as policy makers recognize the importance of supporting kinship families."



The Kinship Family Center offers bi-weekly support groups for Kinship caregivers. Sessions include guest speakers on topics that are important to caregivers.

Richland County Children Services honors outgoing board members

Richland County Children Services honored two outgoing board members at the end of 2011 as Joe Palmer and Connie Hoffman ended long and successful tenures.

Palmer, executive director of the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library, served for 12 years on the volunteer board. Hoffman, who worked at the agency as a social worker and administrator for more than 30 years before retiring, served for seven years on the board.

Both received proclamations from the agency administrators and employees and other awards. Agency Executive Director Randy Parker announced the agency had created a library/resource room inside the agency named in Palmer's honor. He also announced a college scholarship in Hoffman's name would be awarded annually, based upon funds she donated to the agency over the years.

Palmer said caring for children is an important part of his life.

"It's been a honor to serve on the board, working for children and protecting children and making sure children are safe in Richland County," Palmer said. "It's been a priority of mine professionally on the board and personally as an adoptive parent.

"This has been a very successful time on the board and it's positioned for the future, especially in the Kinship program. It's just been rewarding to be a volunteer for the community on the Children Services board," Palmer said.

Hoffman said she is proud of her work as a board member and an agency employee.

"As a board member, I have watched the agency grow so much and become so much more fine-tuned. The financial situation is great ... so improved over the years. We have added so many more social workers and added more services and programs," Hoffman said.

"The agency has become so much stronger over the years in terms of services to children and families in Richland County, either out of our facility or in referrals to other agencies we can assist," Hoffman said. "When I started as a full-time worker, we had a little section of the fourth floor of the courthouse. It was a pleasure to see that growth as a worker and then as a board member."

The agency received national and state honors during the duo's tenure on the board, including a U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Excellence in Adoption award, which acknowledged the timely efforts of the agency to provide safe, permanent homes to children in need.

Their leadership also helped the agency collaborate with several other Ohio county child protective service agencies to apply for and receive a federal Fostering Connections grant, which has enhanced local Kinship efforts.



Connie Hoffman (right) worked for Richland County Children Services as a social worker and administrator for 34 years before retiring. She is a licensed social worker holding a masters degree in social work. Connie's passion for education will be honored by awarding an annual scholarship in her name to a high school senior pursuing a degree in social work.



Joseph Palmer (center) with adopted son Andrew, and wife Vickie cut a ceremonial ribbon to the Joseph C. Palmer Library located in the Richland County Children Services building. The library contains reference books, periodicals, and informational brochures. It serves as a research area for social workers. Mr. Palmer is executive director of the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library and served on the Richland County Children Services Board for 12 years.



RCCS implements Alternative Response to working with families

No two children, or families, are alike. They all have different strengths and weaknesses.

Alternative Response recognizes that child maltreatment reports have different levels of severity, which require different levels of response.

Instead of conducting a traditional family assessment, social workers using alternative response respond with an "alternative family assessment response," in which they assess the needs of the child or family – in a non-threatening, non-adversarial manner – and then offer services to meet those needs.

Instead of working to determine who is to blame for a given situation, an AR social worker could ask, "What's wrong and how can we help?"

Research has shown that Alternative Response results in increased child safety and well-being; fewer repeat cases of abuse and neglect; lower placement rates of children in foster care; reduced costs over time; and increased satisfaction, both by families involved with the child welfare system and child welfare workers.

"In our current child protection model, all accepted reports of child maltreatment must be investigated," said Marsha Coleman, the RCCS clinical director. "Under an Alternative Response system, child welfare agencies have the capacity to respond to reports of maltreatment in a manner that is consistent with the level of risk and that corresponds to the severity of the presenting concern."

Coleman said AR will not replace the traditional response.

"The traditional investigative response will continue to be used to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred and if children must be removed from their homes and placed in foster care," Coleman said.

"Alternative Response is for use with families who may need supports and services in order to keep their children safe. Alternative Response helps connect these families to the community orga-



Kevin Wharton, program supervisor, Differential Response Division and Charity Hamler, alternative response supervisor, review incoming calls on SMART Board technology.

nizations and agencies that can provide the services they need," she said.

Alternative Response, used around in a number of states, began as an 18-month pilot program in 10 Ohio counties and was quickly expanded. Richland County, added in the second wave of the project, uses AR as well as traditional response, both within the agency's Differential Response Division.

"The results – across the board – of the Ohio Alternative Response Pilot were sufficiently favorable to recommend that Ohio should develop a comprehensive plan and proceed with statewide implementation of alternative response in all 88 counties," said Caren Kaplan, director of child protection reform for American Humane's Child Welfare Programs and lead project consultant.

It began in Richland County in September 2010 with 23 cases handled with alternative response in the final four months of the year. It grew to 142 cases and the agency expects to handle 430 cases with alternative response in 2012.

The agency's Differential Response Division now includes a team of four social workers and a supervisor designated to work AR cases. If a case needs to be continued to provide services, it will stay with the assigned social worker rather than be transferred to a worker in the Ongoing Services Division as it does in traditional response.

Studies of Alternative Response in Ohio have found:

- Child safety is not compromised with the use of this approach; children who have come to the attention of the child protection agency are as safe with the alternative approach as they are with the investigation approach.
- Families that received an alternative response approach were more satisfied with services received than those families that received an investigation.
- Reports of participating a great deal in decision making occurred more frequently for alternative response families than for control families.
- Families that received an alternative response approach were more likely to report that they were very satisfied with treatment by their workers.
- Almost 40 percent of county staff involved with the pilot reported that alternative response had increased the likelihood that they will remain in the field of child welfare.
- Subsequent reporting of families for child abuse and neglect declined under alternative response, particularly among minority families, the most impoverished families in the study.
- Removals and out-of-home placements of children declined.

12 agency employees reach milestones

Richland County Children Services ended 2011 with 118 employees, including 70 social workers.

Other employees are involved in administrative roles, including operations, legal, human resources, communication, finance, clinical and support.

The agency employees constitute one of the most well educated workforces in Richland County. There are 100 employees with bachelor's degrees and 33 with master's degrees. Fourteen employees have earned LSW or LISW status.

A dozen employees achieved milestone anniversaries with the agency during 2011:

Angie Poth, records & risk management, 10 years
 Carla Glover, support 3, 10 years
 Jennifer Jacocks, social worker 3, 10 years
 Tiffany Sommers, social worker 2, 5 years
 Pat Markley, social worker 2, 5 years
 Brandi Berry, interim supervisor, 5 years
 Jeanetta Elia, interim supervisor, 5 years
 Christine Dunn, social worker 2, 5 years
 Kristin Galownia, supervisor 1, 5 years
 Stephanie Hughes, support, 5 years
 Drew Miller, assistant finance director, 5 years
 Greg Kahl, communications supervisor 1, 5 years

We also would like to acknowledge our quarterly H.E.R.O.E.S. (Honoring Employees by Recognizing Outstanding and Exemplary Service).

1st Quarter

Miriam McAlexander – social worker
 Amanda Davis – supervisor
 Audrey Ousley – support staff

2nd Quarter

Heather Higgins – social worker
 Courtney Dunlap-Knoll – supervisor
 Michelle Spain – support staff

3rd Quarter

Heather Petty – social worker
 Brandi Berry – supervisor
 Shane Hedricks – support staff

4th Quarter

Paula Johnson – social worker
 Teresa Coll – supervisor
 Audrey Ousley – support staff

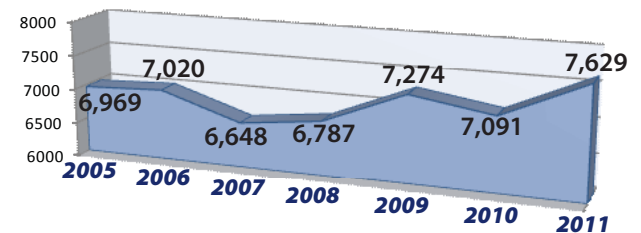
Revenue

Federal	\$5,509,772
State	\$803,152
Income from Levies	\$2,331,338
Parental Support	\$9,838
Other Revenue	\$63,425
Total Revenue	\$8,717,525
End-of-Year Balance	\$6,131,457

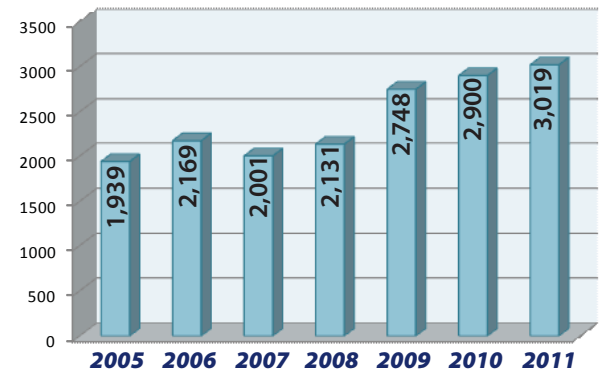
Expenses

Personnel	\$6,541,482
Placement	\$907,655
Adoption	\$326,418
Purchased Services	\$542,442
Administration	\$474,191
Total Expenses	\$8,782,187

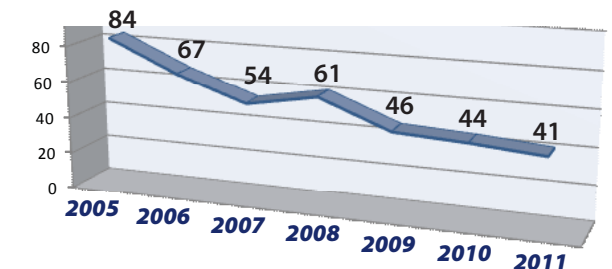
Calls Answered



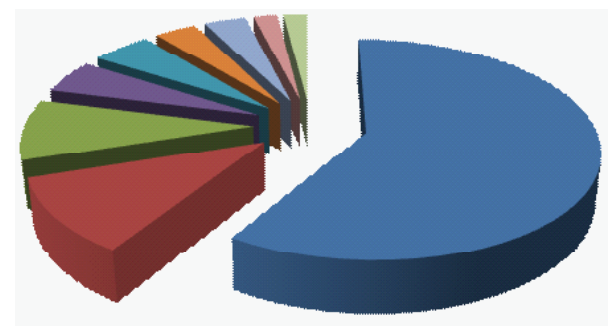
Number of Investigations



End-of-Year Placements



Reasons for Placement



Dependency	59%
Physical Abuse	11%
Delinquency	9%
Child's Behavior Problems	5%
Drug Abuse (Parent)	5%
Neglect	3.5%
Sexual Abuse	3.5%
Deserted Child	2%
Unruly	2%



Richland County Children Services
731 Scholl Road
Mansfield, Ohio 44907

419-774-4100 • fax 419-774-4114
www.RichlandCountyChildrenServices.org

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