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Dean M. Sparks, MSW, LISW

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**Term ended during 2011*

Our Mission: To lead the community in the protection of children at risk of abuse and neglect. This is accomplished by working with families, service providers and community members to assess risk and coordinate community-based services resulting in safe, stable and permanent families for children.



Switchboard: **419.213.3200**

To report child abuse/neglect: **419.213.CARE**

Foster care/adoptions: **419.213.3336**

Fax: 419.327.3291

www.lucaskids.net




Lucas County
Children Services

**REPORT TO THE
Community
2011**



Protecting Children, Promoting Families

Dear Lucas County Resident:

It is wonderful to again have the opportunity to share information about Lucas County Children Services in its Report to the Community.

First and foremost, we thank Lucas County residents for renewing LCCS' 1.4 mill operating levy. These local levy funds allow this agency to maintain quality child protection services as well as link families with child abuse prevention resources throughout the county.

LCCS' mission of, "Protecting Children, Promoting Families," reflects the values of our community. Like you, we believe that all children should be safe from harm, but we also recognize the important role that families play in providing this safe environment. LCCS remains focused on ensuring the safety of children by providing services and supports that strengthen families. The agency has taken many steps to work more cooperatively with families to keep children safe.

Lucas County's economic climate has placed additional stresses on families as well as on the agencies that serve them. We are committed to supporting LCCS in its efforts to ensure the safety of our most precious citizens.

Sincerely,
Board of County Commissioners
Lucas County, Ohio

Pete Gerken, President

Carol Contrada, Commissioner

Tina Skeldon-Wozniak, Commissioner



Lucas County Children Services (LCCS) investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect, and offers protective and other support services to children and their families. We work closely with families to help them address the factors contributing to abuse or neglect and help them care for their children. Our partnerships with other community organizations provide critical support in areas such as substance abuse treatment, managing stress, health care and housing.

We rely on members of the community to report suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect. Those who regularly work with children are required by law to do so. Fifty-six percent of all referrals come from these "mandated reporters," with the balance coming from private or anonymous sources.

A Focus on Collaboration

In 2011, "Alternative," or "Differential" Response (DR) became the primary way our caseworkers engaged families. In the past, LCCS would seek to substantiate a perpetrator and a victim of abuse regardless of the nature of the allegation. With DR, caseworkers in all but the most serious cases met with families to discuss their problems, strengths and weaknesses with the goal of developing family-based solutions to the risks that children might have been facing. In 2011, we were able to help three-fourths of the families we encountered in this more collaborative way. This radically decreased the number of substantiated victims of child abuse or neglect, but should not be interpreted as a significant reduction in the number of children impacted by abuse or neglect in our community.

That said, LCCS investigated 4,148 allegations of abuse and neglect in 2011, down eight percent from 2010. These reports involved 6,046 children, also eight percent fewer than in the previous year. We also provided 675 voluntary referrals for service to families whose issues did not meet the criteria for an abuse or neglect allegation.



Children Belong in Families



Lucas County Children Services believes that children belong with their families. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the children we helped received services while in the care of their parents or a relative. Most of the others lived in foster or adoptive homes, with just five percent living in group homes, residential treatment or other situations.

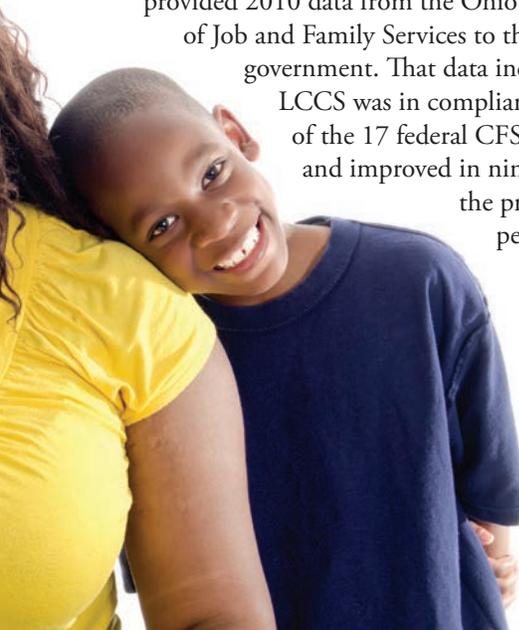
When problems in the home were too severe for the children to be reunited with their parents, we developed permanent plans for them. Those plans may have included living with a relative, adoption, or a long-term foster placement until the child reached adulthood. In 2011, this agency finalized the adoptions of 99 children.

Our Staff

Facing declines in state and federal funding, LCCS reduced its staff by about 25 positions through attrition in 2011, without compromising client services. Of the agency's 374 staff, 178 served as caseworkers, with the remainder providing a variety of support and administrative services. Caseworkers average nine to ten years of experience. Caseworkers must have a bachelor's degree in a human services-related field and take 90 hours of training during their first year of service, as well as a minimum of 36 additional hours of training annually.

Continuous Quality Improvement

LCCS measures its performance using Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) standards issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Due to changes in data collection and reporting, LCCS provided 2010 data from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to the federal government. That data indicated that LCCS was in compliance with ten of the 17 federal CFSR measures, and improved in nine areas from the previous review period.



Special Initiatives and Programs

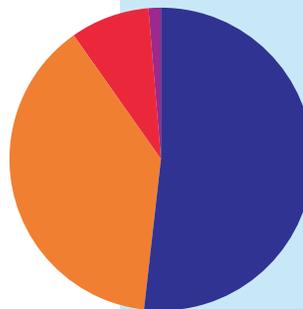
In addition to fulfilling its core mission of protecting children and promoting families, in 2011, LCCS supported several special initiatives.

- **Family Engagement** – Staff from several key departments identified four core concepts of engagement as part of a two-year project designed to improve relationships between families and staff, as well as among agency peers.
- **Fatherhood Initiative** – This ongoing effort has focused on engaging fathers in the lives of their children and connecting them to community resources.
- **Visitation Program** – Following a year of research into best practices, the agency has begun to implement a program designed to optimize the visits that parents have with their children to make the time more meaningful and to learn new parenting skills.
- **Parent Partner Action Committee/Building a Better Future** – These programs have involved parents who have been previously involved with the agency to help parents with current cases better understand their situations.

Revenue and Expenses

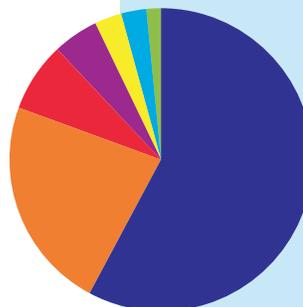
Agency expenses for 2011 were \$43,129,195, compared to revenues of \$38,035,181. Revenues declined by more than \$3.3 million from 2010 due to reductions in levy collections and federal funds. We used \$5,094,014 of agency reserves to balance the budget, leaving LCCS with a fund balance of \$13.8 million at the end of the year. Two countywide levies totaling 2.4 mills generated 51.8 percent of our revenue. Voters renewed the 1.4 mill levy in November 2011; the 1.0 mill levy will expire at the end of 2013.

Agency expenses increased by 1.6 percent from 2010 to 2011. Employee compensation and placement costs represented 80.6% of agency expenditures.



2011 Revenue

● Levy.....	\$ 19,698,189.....	51.8%
● Federal	\$ 14,618,458.....	38.4%
● State	\$ 3,214,047.....	8.5%
● Other.....	\$ 504,487.....	1.3%
TOTAL = \$ 38,035,181		



2011 Expenses

● Salaries & Benefits.....	\$ 24,932,999.....	57.8%
● Placement Costs.....	\$ 9,817,557.....	22.8%
● Other Operating Costs.....	\$ 3,204,414.....	7.4%
● Child Welfare Contracts....	\$ 2,094,508.....	4.9%
● Other Client Costs	\$ 1,247,213.....	2.9%
● Day Care	\$ 1,161,498.....	2.7%
● Other Contracts.....	\$ 671,007.....	1.5%
TOTAL = \$ 43,129,195		

Dear Lucas County Citizen:

In 2011, Lucas County Children Services engaged more than 5,100 families to help them keep their children safe. While we continued to do everything possible to keep families intact, sometimes it was in the child's best interest to have them temporarily enter the custody of a relative or the agency so that parents could focus on addressing the factors that put their children at risk.

Returning children to their mothers and fathers in a timely manner is one of the most difficult challenges our agency faces. Year after year we work with families, hoping to reunify children and parents within a year, but because of the severity of the problems that these families face, it can be difficult to make this happen as quickly as it should.



Dean M. Sparks

We also have to continue to work to ensure that children who return home to their parents are able to remain there safely. In the coming year, LCCS is focusing on helping children successfully reunify with their birth families. We want to help the parents we work with become better prepared to care for their children so those children never have to return to foster care.

We are going to great lengths to make this happen. First, we are adding a visitation coach to our family visits area. This individual will mentor parents when they visit with their children, teaching them skills that help improve the quality of the time they spend together.

We are working to improve transition support, making sure that parents and other family caregivers are prepared for their children's behaviors and the level of supervision needed when children return to their family (or a relative's) home.

Our *Building A Better Future* program is helping parents become better advocates for themselves and their children as they work through their case plans. We are helping parents work more constructively with agency staff and court personnel to increase their likelihood of being reunified with their children.

We are increasing access to trauma-related counseling services before and after reunification so children and parents have a way to work through the emotional issues associated with abuse, neglect and separation. We are also working closely with families to develop post-reunification plans that clearly outline steps that parents need to take to successfully care for their children.

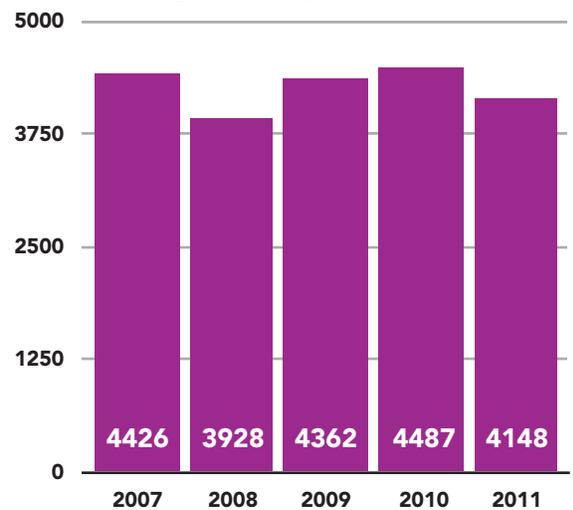
Finally, we are making sure that every family is linked with community resources that can help them look to the future – child care, mentoring, substance abuse services – whatever it takes to keep that family unit intact.

Each of these efforts ties into our agency's commitment to protect children and promote families. As we look ahead to 2012, we will continue our focus on providing services that enhance family life in Lucas County.

Sincerely,

Dean M. Sparks
Executive Director

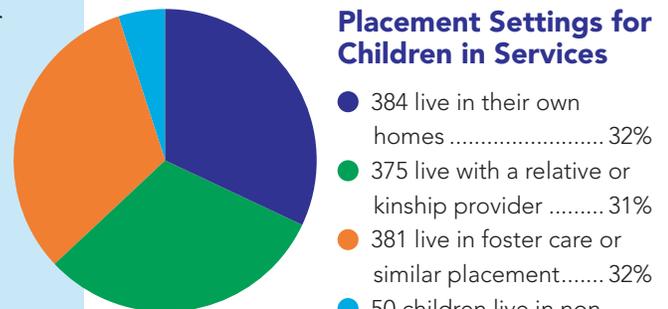
Investigations by Year



Investigations by Type of Abuse



Placement Settings for Children in Services



2011 At A Glance

- New Referrals – 4,148
- Alleged Child Victims – 6,046
- Substantiated Victims - 587*
- New Cases Opened - 428
- Average # of Children on Caseload - 1,190
- Adoptions Finalized - 99

*In Differential Response cases, no perpetrator or victim is identified. Differential Response accounted for 76% of cases in 2011.