Executive Team Members Sarah LaTourette, Mark Mecum, Karen Hill

Martin Luther King III and Mark Mecum, CEO, at 47th Annual Conference

Staff Visit to Community Agency, The Village Network

Board of Directors Appreciation Dinner
Dear Ohio Children’s Alliance Supporters,

As we reflect on the Ohio Children’s Alliance in 2023, I am filled with gratitude for the collective effort and unwavering commitment that made our 50th anniversary year truly unforgettable. Together, we reached new heights, achieving unprecedented public policy successes, program growth, and convening our largest conference for child advocates.

While the year presented its share of challenges, our resilience and strategic vision fortified our initiatives and propelled our mission forward. Alliance and Collaborative programs and grants flourished, allowing us to empower even more children and families and advance Ohio’s System of Care.

2023 was also a state budget year, in which the Governor and Legislature established their policy and funding priorities for the next biennium. We are so proud of the collective advocacy that occurred. Unprecedented investments in child welfare and behavioral health were attained.

Throughout the year we expanded our network of partnerships and collaborations with community-based agencies, foundations, advocacy groups, and youth groups. Our network of funders expanded to include the Ingram-White Castle Foundation and bi3, and we earned a recognition from the Aging Out Institute with their prestigious Phoenix Award and a $100,000 investment in our advocacy.

Looking ahead, our focus sharpens on deepening our commitment to expanding Ohio’s System of Care through innovation, advocacy, and collaboration. Together with our statewide network of supporters, we will partner with new leadership in the Ohio Legislature and Governor’s Administration to secure resources to further empower children and families to reach their goals.

Join us as we embark on a journey into our next 50 years of progress!

Sincerely,

Mark Mecum
CEO
Every child deserves a family, and every family deserves a chance for success. These principles guide the mission of the Ohio Children’s Alliance, Ohio’s oldest and largest nonprofit organization dedicated to child advocacy.

For over fifty years, the Ohio Children’s Alliance has been a changemaker in the child and family services sector. The organization advances public policy, best practices, and collaborative strategies aimed at producing better outcomes and a stronger Ohio.

Ohio’s System of Care has grown significantly over the past several years despite a historic workforce shortage. The Alliance has been pivotal in advocating and implementing much of this growth. Through advocacy, development, and collaborations, the Alliance is equipping and empowering Ohio’s next generation of leaders.

Today, the Alliance is leading and administering approximately $30 million of programs that advance outcomes across behavioral health, foster care, family services, higher education, and workforce development. These efforts are supported and funded by the State of Ohio, health insurance companies, community foundations, and philanthropy.

MISSION

The Ohio Children’s Alliance applies the collective strength of its members to sustainably improve the provision of services to children, young adults, and families through policy advocacy, performance improvement, and member support.

VISION

The best system for better results.
Up Front, In Front, AND PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

Public policy advocacy is the primary strategy that the Ohio Children’s Alliance pursues its mission. In a time of rapidly changing policy and financing, kids, families, and community-based agencies need leadership and support. The Alliance fills this role through its collaborative advocacy efforts focused on child welfare, behavioral health, and related sectors.

In 2023, our advocacy strategies were effective in shaping state and federal policy and producing big wins for Ohio. We amplified the voices of children and families across Ohio through state and federal financial investments to the sector, the OhioRISE special managed care plan implementation, various Medicaid efficiencies, and improved foster care policies. Across the board, the Alliance was at the forefront of all major public policy efforts affecting child and family services.

A cornerstone of our advocacy work has been in the creation and implementation of OhioRISE. This new Medicaid program is rapidly growing and expanding care coordination and treatment for children with complex behavioral health needs. With a focus on ensuring continuity of care for kids and reducing complexities for families, our team provided crucial advocacy to address barriers to accessing funding and supports.

Through partnerships at the Ohio Legislature, the Alliance championed numerous legislative initiatives. These include successful efforts to expand Ohio’s treatment foster care workforce and create a more equitable system for vulnerable children. With support from two community foundations, we formed a Children’s Mental Health Budget Coalition to seek new investments in behavioral health and improvements to Ohio’s K-12 wellness program.
TOP STATE BUDGET
FISCAL WINS

$296 MILLION
Medicaid Funding Increases for Behavioral Health

$64 MILLION
Multi System Youth Funding

$50 MILLION
Pediatric Behavioral Health Service

$30 MILLION
Adoption Grant Program

$14 MILLION
Prevention and Wellness Funds

$2 MILLION
Added Funding for Ohio Bridges Program

OTHER NOTABLE BUDGET SUCCESSES

> **Increased funding** and guidelines for the **Student Wellness and Success Program**, promoting partnerships between schools and parents with behavioral health providers.

> **Development** of statewide workgroups on the **Children Services Placement Crisis** and **Alleged Perpetrator Registry**.

> **Creation of new youth Mental Health Peer Support Medicaid benefit.**

> **Establishment** and design of the **new Ohio Department of Children and Youth**.

> **Protection of safety protocols in OhioMHAS** rules which safeguard patients, families, and direct care staff.

> **Prevented** an initiative which could have added burdens and complexities to hiring practices among foster care agencies.
Ohio Children’s Alliance Programs

Learning and Development
Administering training sessions and conference workshops focused on diversity equity and inclusion, and best practices in behavioral health, child welfare, leadership.

Ohio Reach
A support network program in higher education institutions across the State of Ohio designed to support former foster youth as they pursue a certificate or degree.

Center of Excellence
The Ohio Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Center of Excellence is Ohio’s statewide program to assess, improve and expand service and care coordination capacity for children with complex behavioral health needs and their families.

Early Childhood Mental Health
Furthering trauma prevention and community supports by connecting child care centers and families with high-quality mental health services.

Foster Home Recruitment
Partnering with ODCY It Takes Heart Ohio™ Campaign to increase awareness and the number of qualified kinship, foster care and adoptive families across the state.
Ohio Reach

Ohio Reach is a collaborative partnership between the Ohio Children’s Alliance and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) dedicated to supporting the higher-education goals of former foster youth.

Ohio Reach is building a campus support system at community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities to help these youth overcome the challenges of emancipating from foster care, secure an education, and become employed. Last year, the program supported former foster youth in significant ways:

Partnered with ODHE to develop a first-of-its-kind state designation for postsecondary institutions demonstrating unwavering support of foster care-connected students. 28 colleges were awarded the Ohio Reach Postsecondary Designation and $126,000 award payments were distributed.

Released scholarships for foster care alumni to pursue higher education; 9 student awardees of $9,000 in scholarships to provide tuition and school expense supports.

Supported Ohio’s Family First Prevention Services Plan by releasing $20,000 in funding to community behavioral health agencies expanding access to intensive family preservation services for families without Medicaid coverage.

Improved the provision of Title IV-E prevention services by providing technical assistance and improving billing efficiencies in automated systems.

Released grants to support clinicians across 7 community-based organizations to advance best practices in the delivery of mental health services over telehealth platforms.

Commissioned a report on use of health information technology in the children’s behavioral health sector.

Fostered inter-system collaboration to advance use of the CANS functional assessment tool.
Early Childhood Mental Health

The Ohio Children’s Alliance administers three innovative early childhood programs that support young children enrolled in child care programs, and their families, by expanding access to quality mental health services. This work is funded by the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association and the Ohio Department of Children and Youth.

Therapeutic Child Care program consists of 7 participating behavioral health agencies that integrate therapeutic practices in partnering child care classrooms to build children’s crucial executive functioning skills in real time.

Mental Health Bridge is a program that breaks barriers to mental health treatment for kids and families enrolled in child care programs. Through use of a referral platform, the program makes critical connections between the child care centers, behavioral health providers, and families.

Professional Education trainings were produced in the Ohio Professional Registry learning management system to advance the quality of care across child care and behavioral health professionals.

FAST FACTS

THERAPEUTIC CHILD CARE
• 335 Kids Served Across 10 Counties
• 29 Behavioral Health Staff, 155 Child Care Staff
• 77.6% Reduction in Child Care Staff Turnover from Q1 – Q2
• 30% Decrease in Classroom Incidents from Q1 – Q2
• 94% of Incidents Resulted in Return to Normal Activity

MENTAL HEALTH BRIDGE
• 140 Referrals over 29 Counties
• 44 Active Child Care Centers, 18 Behavioral Health Agencies
• 60% Referrals Accepted
• 21 Days from Referral to First Appointment

Data as of December 2023

Through these programs, critical mental health services expanded to hundreds of children.

Foster Home Recruitment

Through a strategic collaboration with the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, the Ohio Children’s Alliance leads an evidence-based marketing campaign to increase the pool of qualified foster parents across the state.

The Foster Home Recruitment program leverages the State of Ohio’s It Takes Heart Ohio™ campaign. In just two years, the program has achieved the following goals:

• Spearheaded a brand-new digital advertisement campaign which garnered more than 26 million views.
• Saw over 317,000 visitors to the It Takes Heart Ohio™ website.
• 3,900 interest forms completed by prospective foster parents, with the numbers steadily rising month over month.
• Conducted groundbreaking study of Ohio foster parent recruitment and retention strategies.
• Developed the Foster and Adoptive Family Journey, a family-centric tool for recruiting foster and adoptive families, and led training opportunities for public and private foster care agencies.
Connecting to Share
EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION

The Ohio Children’s Alliance is dedicated to fostering a respected community of collaborators. Our educational programs are a resource for direct service professionals, clinicians, and leaders to expand best practices and the quality of care.

Hosted 26 professional education events

Hosted 38 state department leaders in conferences, meetings, and events.

102 continuing education hours to certified social workers, therapists, and counselors.

Convened 2 Alliance statewide conferences

Convened 2 statewide conferences in partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to advance Trauma Informed Care

reaching 2,150 behavioral health and child welfare professionals.

700 participants

featuring 100 presenters

50 workshops

Connected with and shared resources from over 30 statewide and federal coalitions and workgroups.

725 participants

featuring 69 presenters

39 workshops
The behavioral health care and social service sector is rapidly changing in Ohio and across the country. In 2017, we started this Collaborative of community agencies to work together to advance value-based care and social services innovation. The Collaborative consists of more than forty community agencies spanning every region of Ohio.

**Clinically Integrated Health Care Network**
Empowering behavioral health providers to be competitive, the Health Care Network administers value-based care programs in partnership with Medicaid Managed Care Organizations.

**Bridges Program**
Ohio’s program that supports young adults aging out of foster care with education, housing, health and well-being, and employment, and empowers them to actively take part in building a better future for themselves.

**Respite Care**
Our network of respite care practitioners assist CareSource and OhioRISE members with normal activities of daily life in order to meet the needs of the children and parents served.

**Same Day Access & Telehealth**
Through expert consultation and development of our own proprietary toolkit, we have established improved capability to provide mental health assessments to children without appointments.
Health Care Network

The Child & Family Health Collaborative of Ohio is the first and largest clinically integrated network of community mental health agencies dedicated to serving children and youth in Ohio.

2023 was a momentous year for the Health Care Network. By year-end, the network expanded to include 34 community based mental health agencies, all dedicated to advancing health outcomes. Together, the Health Care Network successfully administered several value-based programs and pilot projects with Medicaid managed care plans. A new data analytics platform was implemented that visualizes value-based performance and supports quality improvement strategies.

Perhaps the greatest achievement during 2023 was the robust technical assistance delivered to participating agencies, who were all undergoing changes due to Ohio’s Next Generation Managed Care program. Part of this work was developing a Billing and Coding Committee to facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices, and solutions in navigating the new ODM Provider Network Management (PNM) system.

A unique program of the Health Care Network is focused on providing respite supports to families nearing a crisis in their household. During 2023, the Respite Care program accepted more than 500 referrals from Aetna OhioRISE children and their families. Much of the program’s rapid growth was due to generous grant support from Aetna Better Health of Ohio which enabled us to establish a $50,000 Respite Referral Incentive. This funding supported behavioral health agencies growing their capacity to provide therapeutic relief to families.
Bridges

One of our greatest opportunities to impact Ohio’s system of care is through our longstanding leadership role of Bridges, Ohio’s extended foster care program. The program meets foster youth where they are to empower them to develop and achieve life goals for their transition into adulthood. This work includes securing safe and stable housing, pursuing higher education and career opportunities, and promoting personal safety, mental health, and more.

Through a grant from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, the Alliance subsidiary, the Child & Family Health Collaborative of Ohio (“Collaborative”), achieved phenomenal success in equipping close to 3,000 foster youth to successfully transition into adulthood. Bridges is implemented through partnerships with 19 community-based organizations, a collective workforce of approximately 250, and numerous public and private stakeholder collaborations.

After leading the program for its initial six-year term, during 2023, the Collaborative was competitively selected by the Ohio Department of Child and Youth to continue our leadership over the program for another term. This positions the Collaborative to develop even more ambitious goals for program improvement and youth empowerment.
PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS – 2023

92% of Bridges survey respondents expressed satisfaction with the program’s services and support.

100% of youth served, by age 21, exited the program in stable housing, significantly outperforming statewide and national averages for similar populations of former foster youth.

The program meets foster youth where they are to empower them to develop and achieve life goals for their transition into adulthood.
Board of Directors

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Terry Jones
Eastway Behavioral Healthcare

Charity Wheeler
Journey Home Foster Care

Richard Graziano
The Village Network
Full Members

We welcomed 8 new community-based organizations into Alliance membership during 2023. These distinguished organizations are now a part of Ohio’s oldest and largest alliance dedicated to advancing child and family services. We are excited to add their unique strengths and perspectives to our rich and diverse network.

A Loving Heart Youth Services
A New Leaf
A Place of Hope
Abraxas Youth & Family Services
Adopt America Network
Adriel
Advocates for Families
Agape for Youth
Anew Behavioral Health
Bair Foundation
*Beech Acres Parenting Center
*Beech Brook
Beltmore Pines Hospital
*Best Point Education & Behavioral Health
*Buckeye Ranch, The
Cadence Care Network
Camelot Community Care
Caring for Kids

Charlie Health
Children’s Center of Ohio
CHOICES
Choices Coordinated Care Solutions
Christian Children’s Home of Ohio
Chrysalis Family Solutions

Clear Creek Farm
*Cleveland Christian Home
Community Teaching Homes
DTA Centers of Ohio- Formerly Hittle House
Dunganin Ohio
Eastway Behavioral Healthcare
Family Pride of Northeast Ohio
Focus on Youth
Fox Run Center for Children & Adolescents
*Genacross Family & Youth Services
Ground Work Play Therapy
House of New Hope
I Am Boundless
Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
Isaiah’s Place
Journey Home Foster Care & Adoption
JusticeWorks Youth Care
Kids Count Too
Life Start
Lighthouse Youth and Family Services
*Marsh Foundation, The

Mayo Home for Youth Development
Mended Reeds
Mohican Young Star Academy
National Youth Advocate Program
Nationwide Children’s Hospital
Necco
New Beginnings Residential Treatment Center
New Mercy Outreach
*New Path Child & Family Solutions
Northeast Ohio Adoption Services
*Oesterlen Services for Youth
*Ohio Guidestone
Ohio Mentor-The Mentor Network
Omni Family of Services
Pathway Caring for Children
Positive Education Program
Positive Leaps
Pressley Ridge
PsyCare
Quality Care Residential Homes
Quality Moments
Ravenwood Health
Reach Counseling
Safely Home
Shelter Care
Sojourner’s Care Network
South Community
Southeast Healthcare Services
Specialized Alternatives for Families & Youth
St. Vincent Family Services
Talbert House
The Village Network
Thrive Therapeutics
*UMCH Family Services
ViaQuest
Wellmore Centre
Wingspan Care Group - Applewood Centers
*Wingspan Care Group - Bellefaire JCB
Wingspan Care Group - Bluestone Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital
Wingspan Care Group - Lifeworks
Wingspan Care Group - Wuliger Wellness Center
Youth Advocate Services
Youth Villages

*Denotes charter member of the Alliance (1973)
Denotes new member
Represents Full Members as of April 10, 2024
Member Engagement Data

The Ohio Children’s Alliance offers community-based organizations a dynamic array of engagement opportunities. These include professional development, advocacy, peer learning committees, a clinically integrated health care network, and specialized programs that fill gaps in Ohio’s system of care. Through these avenues, community-based organizations are actively leading and shaping the direction of our initiatives, contributing invaluable expertise and perspectives that strengthen our collective impact on child and family well-being.

Committees

STANDING COMMITTEES

- Leadership Roundtable
- Foster Care and Adoption
- Behavioral Health
- Residential Center-Group Home
- Billing and Coding

TOP 5 MOST ACTIVE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- The Village Network
- The Buckeye Ranch
- Lighthouse Youth & Family Services
- Pressley Ridge
- Focus on Youth

(Alliance) Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Readiness

Participating Organizations:
- The Buckeye Ranch
- Cadence Care Network
- CHOICES Inc.
- National Youth Advocate Program
- Ravenwood Health
- South Community
- UMHF Family Services
- The Village Network

Learning Community: (Collaborative) OhioRISE Care Management Entity

Participating Organizations:
- Cadence Care Network
- Lighthouse Youth & Family Services
- National Youth Advocate Program
- The Village Network

Over 250 professionals come together every month to learn news in their respective fields, advocate with state policy makers, and collaborate with peers and system experts.
### Program Collaborations

#### Early Childhood Mental Health

**20**
Participating Community-Based Organizations
- Adriel School, Inc.
- ANEW Behavioral Health
- Bellefaire JCB
- Best Point Education and Behavioral Health
- Cadence Care Network
- Family Pride of Northeast Ohio
- Focus on Youth
- Harbor
- Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
- National Youth Advocate Program
- Ohio Guidestone
- Ohio Mentor
- Pathway Caring for Children
- Psycare Inc.
- Quality Moments
- Solutions Community Counseling and Recovery Centers
- St. Vincent Family Services
- The Buckeye Ranch
- The Village Network
- Unison Health

Early Childhood Total Funds Distributed to Members:
$1,293,799

#### Ohio Reach

**27**
Participating Institutions of Higher Education
- Adult Career Center, MCCTC
- Aultman College
- Belmont College
- Canton City School District Adult Community Education
- Clark State College
- Cleveland State University
- Collins CTC
- Columbus City Adult & Community Education
- Columbus State
- Cuyahoga Community College
- Cuyahoga Valley Career Center
- Defiance College
- Gallia-Jackson-Vinton JVSD
- Hocking College
- Kent State University - Purple Umbrella Network
- Miami University
- Mid-East CTC
- North Central State College
- Ohio University
- Ohio State University Mansfield
- Rhodes State College
- Stark State
- The Ohio State University
- University of Akron
- Washington County Career Center
- Washington State Community College
- Youngstown City School District

Ohio Reach Total Funds Distributed to Newly Designated Institutions:
$126,000

Total Student Scholarships Distributed: $9,000

#### Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health Center of Excellence

**6**
Participating Community-Based Organizations
- Cadence Care Network
- Crossroads Health
- Beech Brook
- Family Pride of Northeast Ohio
- Maryhaven Recovery Center
- National Youth Advocate Program

Total Funds Distributed:
$34,216

#### Foster Home Recruitment

**7**
Participating Community-Based Organizations
- National Youth Advocate Program
- The Village Network
- The Buckeye Ranch
- Northeast Ohio Adoption Network
- Sojourner's Care Network
- Isaiah's Place
- NewPath Child & Family Solutions

Foster Home Recruitment Total Funds Distributed to Members:
$981,062
Program Collaborations

Health Care Network

34 Participating Community-Based Organizations
- Abraxas Youth and Family Services
- Adriel School, Inc.
- ANEW Behavioral Health
- Beech Acres Parenting Center
- Beech Brook
- Best Point Education and Behavioral Health
- The Buckeye Ranch
- Cadence Care Network
- CHOICES, Inc.
- Christian Children’s Home of Ohio
- Eastway Behavioral Healthcare
- Family Pride of Northeast Ohio
- Focus on Youth
- Genacross
- Greene County ESC
- Ground Work Play Therapy
- Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
- Lighthouse Youth Services
- Marsh Foundation
- National Youth Advocate Program
- NewPath Child & Family Solutions
- Oesterlen Services for Youth
- Ohio Mentor
- Pathway Caring for Children
- Positive Leaps
- Pressley Ridge
- Psycare Inc.
- Quality Moments
- South Community
- Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth
- St. Vincent Family Services
- The Village Network
- Thrive Therapeutics
- UMCH Family Services
- ViaQuest

Total Value-Based Incentive Funds Distributed: $330,884

The number of Community-Based Organizations receiving technical assistance through Foster Home Recruitment:

24 Private Agencies

The number of inquiries received from Prospective Foster or Adoptive caregiver is:

4,124

Respite Care

14 Participating Community-Based Organizations
- Adriel School, Inc.
- Beech Brook
- The Buckeye Ranch
- Cadence Care Network
- Lighthouse Youth Services
- National Youth Advocate Program
- Oesterlen Services for Youth
- Ohio Mentor
- Pathway Caring for Children
- Quality Moments
- Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth
- St. Vincent Family Services
- The Village Network
- UMCH Family Services

Respite Care Total Value of Program Claims Payments: $2,413,843

Total Incentive Funds Distributed: $45,000

Bridges

19 Participating Community-Based Organizations
- Adriel School, Inc.
- Agape for Youth
- Beech Brook
- Cadence Care
- CHOICES, Inc.
- Focus on Youth
- Marsh Foundation
- NECCO
- NewPath Child & Family Solutions
- Northeast Ohio Adoption Services
- National Youth Advocate Program
- Pathway Caring for Children
- Pressley Ridge
- Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth
- Shelter Care
- Sojourner’s Care Network
- South Community
- Southeast Healthcare

Bridges Total Claims Distributed to Members: $14,727,934

Bridges Total Value Based Incentive Funds Distributed to Members: $374,885
Memberships and Partnerships

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**
- Social Current
- SPARC Network
- Association of Children's Residential Centers
- Child Welfare League of America
- Family Focused Treatment Association
- National Organization of State Associations for Children
- Partnership for America's Children

**PUBLIC PARTNER MEMBERS**
- Greene County ESC Behavioral Services
- Licking County Department of Job and Family Services
- Muskingum County Children Services
- Trumbull County Children Services

**STATE ORGANIZATIONS**
- Advocates for Ohio’s Future
- Coalition for Healthy Communities
- Ohio Adoption Planning Group
- Governor’s Council on Juvenile Justice
- Ohio Children’s Mental Health Budget Coalition
- Ohio Independent Living Association
- Ohio Opioid Education Alliance
- Parity at 10 Coalition
Corporate and Financial Partners and Sponsors

RETURNING SUPPORTERS

Aetna Better Health of Ohio
Amerihealth Caritas
Best Point Education & Behavioral Health
Binti
CARF
CareSource
CareSource Foundation
Circulo Health
Etactics
Ohio Department of Higher Education
Ohio Department of Children and Youth
Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Opeeka
Positive Leaps
ServeOhio
UMCH Family Services
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio

WELCOME NEW SUPPORTERS:

Belmont Pines Hospital
Binti
Charlie Health
CompanyMileage
Connect Our Kids
Family Focused Treatment Association
Focus on Youth
Glenwood Behavioral
ITA Audio Visual Solutions
LightForce Engraving
LYFT Learning
Marsh Foundation
National Youth Advocate Program
Nonprofits Insurance Alliance (NIA)
Ohio Child Care Resources and Referral Association
Omni Family Services
OrionNet Systems
PAXIS Institute
Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth
The Ohio State University College of Nursing
The Village Network
This End Up Furniture Company
Wingspan Care Group
WSI Technologies
St. Vincent Family Services
Youth Intensive Services
Ohio drivers can show you care for Ohio’s children and families with the Ohio “Kids First” specialty license plate, which is available for purchase through the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles and oplates.com. Sales of the plate benefit the Ohio Children’s Alliance.
To learn more about our work, donate, or become a member, visit www.ohiochildrensalliance.org