



PARTNERS  
FOR OHIO'S FAMILIES

## OFC policies and supports should be strength-based and recognize the uniqueness of each community and agency.

### OFFICE OF FAMILIES & CHILDREN

#### Table of Contents

From OFC Deputy Director Carla Carpenter – 1/5/18 .....	1
New Year Reflections .....	2
Global Emails .....	2
Northeast Ohio Samaritan Brightens Holidays .....	5
COI Corner .....	6
Bridges: From the Mailbox .....	6
Missed an issue of First Friday? .....	7
Rule Review Update .....	8

#### Principle of the Month

OFC policies and supports should be strength-based and recognize the uniqueness of each community and agency.

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#### From OFC Deputy Director Carla Carpenter – 1/5/18

It was fun to see this issue of First Friday come together. Maybe we should switch up every issue a bit and spend less time on what's on my mind and more on yours? I would love to hear your suggestions for topics or questions you'd like to see answered. Don't wait for a January reflection issue: email us any time.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the "New Year Reflections" article that begins on page 2. We asked our staff and partners three important questions and were thrilled so many of you took the time to respond, especially during such a busy time of year. Like me, as you read the comments, I bet you'll find that, regardless of our different roles, we often share the same viewpoints. I especially was glad to see that many of those viewpoints align with OFC's 2018 initiatives.

On Jan. 23, we have the first meeting with the pilot and control counties participating in the four-year Quality Improvement Center on Workforce Development (QIC-WD) project. QIC-WD is a service of the U.S. Children's Bureau. The goal is to identify strategies for strengthening recruitment, retention and development challenges. I so appreciate the counties that have stepped forward to help us tackle this problem. We look forward to rolling up our sleeves.

Also this month, we begin our

dive into Program Improvement Plan development, with a Jan. 29 meeting of the 15 CFSR counties, representatives from the Title IV-E courts, and an array of other partners. I hope we'll achieve what one of our New Year Reflections contributors described as "more big-picture and partnership thinking...[to] have larger outcomes." Certainly, we will be heeding your advice regarding making performance data more accessible and easily understood.

Don't forget the kickoff of the new Ohio Child Welfare Learning Collaborative (OCWLC) this month. The OCWLC is an initiative of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Team and Statewide CQI Community Subcommittee. On Jan. 24, they'll be presenting the first of a new monthly webinar series focusing on Ohio's child welfare practice profiles. See page 6 for more information.

When I recently attended a PCSAO Board of Trustees meeting, I heard loud and clear that agencies would like to see more OFC staff in the field, so they can better support agencies in their work and better understand their challenges. Good idea! When we kick off CPOE 11 in January, you'll notice several big changes, including increased opportunities for collaboration between PCSAs, OFC's technical assistance specialists and other OFC staff. During recent strategic planning conversations,

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many OFC staff expressed a similar desire. Let's see how we can make that happen.

The Partners for Ohio's Families (PFOF) Advisory Board continues to examine ways to maximize placement options for children. Next month, we hope to see a demonstration of an application similar to one you may have used when selecting hotel rooms. By entering parameters such as age, restrictions and proximity, it provides real-time data on available beds. We're still in the early development stages, but this could potentially help with shortage challenges, by allowing existing options to be used most effectively.



## New Year Reflections

Many consider January a good time for reflection and resolution. We agree! We asked OFC staff and many of our partners three questions:

- Outside of more money and staff, what do you think is most needed to improve child welfare outcomes?
- What is going to be your (or your agency's) professional focus in 2018?
- What do you view as your biggest accomplishment of 2017? Something to keep in mind/watch for in 2018?

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. Space doesn't allow us to include all the thoughtful and insightful answers we received, but we're sharing as many as we can. OFC staff and visitors: We'll be streaming all the answers on our office monitor this month. You'll find many common

As I write this, I am only one day returned from experiencing the winter wonderland that was northwest Ohio over Christmas. I've gotten used to Columbus' occasional snow dusting and had forgotten the beauty – and white-knuckle driving – of six inches of freshly fallen snow. I hope that your Christmas joy even partially equaled that of my dogs when they jumped out of the car to discover it! If you can believe it, we are already five days into 2018. I think it's going to be a good year!

threads, including the need to intervene earlier with families, have more flexibility, be creative and focus on the basics. Another common theme: We accomplish more when we work together.

### **Outside of more money and staff, what do you think is most needed to improve child welfare outcomes?**

More cooperation, more creativity and more caring friends, family members and neighbors willing to step forward to help children in need. Although we may disagree at times on the best way to solve our child welfare challenges, I think we all agree on one thing: All of us want what's best for Ohio's children. By working together, I believe we can find creative solutions to those challenges.

*–Cynthia Dungey, Director  
Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services*

## Global Emails

The following emails were sent in December to PCSA directors and/or private agency directors. They are organized below by mailing date and key words.

**12/7/2017** – Citizen Review Panel – Well-Being Survey

**12/7/2017** – Citizen Review Panel – Permanency Survey

**12/7/2017** – Permanency Docket Quarterly Report – State Data and Individual County Data

**12/ 8/2017** – National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

**12/11/1027** – CAPMIS Evaluation Report

**12/13/2017** – Bridges Launch Update and Bridges Court Café

Our state, counties and out-of-home care agencies produce and collect an enormous amount of data. ODJFS has provided funding and leadership to help counties and, recently, private agencies, to make this data actionable to their management and direct service staff. During 2018, I am hopeful we can produce more platforms for private agencies to access data in user-friendly formats. Our child welfare system is incredibly strained, and access to data is key to finding answers.

*–Mark Mecum, CEO, Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies*

- Going back to the basics of child welfare practice: Engagement, Assessment, Quality and Frequency of Visits, Appropriate Case Plan Services, Linkage and Follow-up
- A simplified, statewide focus on a few practices that can

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have wide-reaching results on many outcomes.

- Focusing on strengthening skills at the supervisory level – i.e. clinical supervision skills, mentoring/coaching training for supervisors on how to support their staff, key safety-related patterns to assess in cases during supervision

–Lindsay Williams, Predictive Analytics Manager, OFC Bureau for Systems and Practice Advancement

We need a “movement.” We need to help the public appreciate and openly support the good works of both public and private child welfare on behalf of traumatized children, youth and families. As part of this, we need to recruit more treatment foster homes who have bought into a foster caregiver’s mission.

–Jeffrey Greene, Executive Director, House of New Hope

Flexibility in how we approach some of the issues that we continue to struggle with instead of thinking that we just need more of what we’re doing.

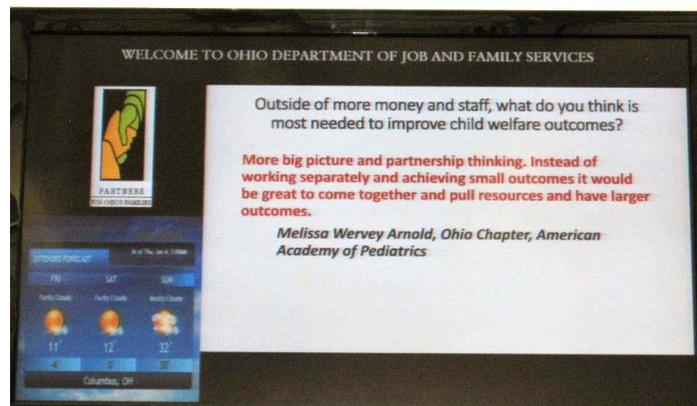
–Kristin Gilbert, Chief, OFC Bureau of Young Adults and the Courts

My experience as a PFOF chair has proven to me that Ohio’s capacity to assure all children are protected, with a permanent stable family in communities that support their long-term well-being is absolutely an achievable vision when we continue to increase opportunities to involve all stakeholders in these important visioning, collaboration and prioritizing conversations.

–Scott Ferris, Director, Lorain County Children Services

Finding a balance between the increasing need of documentation, legal requirements and spending time with families to improve their situations.

–Jeanne Evans, CQI Coordinator, Permanent Families Solutions Network



All responses to the “New Year Reflections” questions will be streamed on this OFC office monitor throughout January.

Focus needs to be on creating an environment in which families get the support they need before harm occurs. Families live in dynamic communities and come into contact with many entities that can offer support – day cares, schools, hospitals, workplaces, etc. Partnerships among all the entities that touch a family’s life will create a supportive, caring environment that can work to stabilize families before harm ever occurs.

–Kristen Rost, Executive Director, Ohio Children’s Trust Fund (OCTF)

More big-picture and partnership thinking. Instead of working separately and achieving small outcomes, it would be great to come together and pull resources and have larger outcomes.

–Melissa Wervey Arnold, CEO, Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Accessible information for the general public. This information should be concise and provocative in the sense that it should grab people’s attention. The type of PSA campaigns [the OCTF] has been discussing are along these lines. An awareness of the issue is the first step, but then empowering individuals, communities and organizations/agencies to know how THEY can have an effect on the outcomes.

–Chris Bennett Hudak, Miami University, OCTF Board Member

Access to services. In some of our counties, families are struggling because they have no access

to the services they need. For example, in smaller counties that neighbor a major metro, there are no counseling service providers for drug treatment. For someone struggling with addiction, it’s much easier to not get help than it is to find a ride or drive to a neighboring city for the services they so desperately need. Outside of major metros, there is no bus line for families to use, and getting to an appointment a county away can be impossible. We need our major counseling sites and our medical providers to have satellite offices in rural areas so that everyone has access to services.

–Lucy Gobble, Human Services Developer, OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations

I believe that the members of our office would benefit from reconnecting with our partners within the community. Although a majority of our staff have worked in direct service prior to working at the state level, things are ever changing. It would serve as a great benefit if we were in the field a few times a year.

–Chynna Kelley, OFC Bureau of Young Adults and the Courts

### What is going to be your (or your agency’s) professional focus in 2018?

The rapid growth and expansion of family dependency treatment courts (FDTC) in Ohio has been remarkable over the last three years. As an intervention

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recognized for improving treatment completion rates and child welfare family outcomes for parents with substance use disorders, Ohio's state partners remain committed to continuing to increase the number of FDTCS in Ohio, as well as infusing FDTCS best practices into the case planning and intervention for all Ohio families affected by substance use disorders in the child welfare, treatment and court systems.

–*Monica Kagey, Specialized Dockets Manager, Supreme Court of Ohio*

The professional focus of the Bureau of Automated Systems for 2018 will be to continue to include stakeholders in the prioritization, design and implementation of SACWIS functional enhancements. The team will also continue to work hard to make meaningful changes for caseworkers and other SACWIS users. On a personal level, I hope to enroll in LeanOhio Boot Camp this year.

–*Kevin Bullock, Chief, OFC Bureau of Automated Systems.*

Supporting the implementation of the Adoption Assistance Connections to 21 Program, providing much-needed fiscal training to assist counties in using funding to maximum advantage, assisting ProtectOHIO counties in their transition back to traditional claiming, ramping up technical assistance efforts in preparation for the upcoming Title IV-E federal eligibility review in 2019, and the office's budget.

–*Alicia Allen, Chief, OFC Bureau of Fiscal Operations*

Our focus in 2018 will be on having properly trained, seasoned staff to work with families. We will be again working with families involving substance abuse in their environment.

–*Kathy Oliver, Director, Seneca County Dept. of Job and Family Services*

1. Partnering to address socio-economic factors affecting

- health outcomes
2. Improve infant mortality rate by developing community partnerships
  3. Opiate prevention programming
  4. Reducing health care disparities
- Meliss Klorer, Northwest OCTF Coordinator*

Collaborative work with biological families.

–*Rachel Young, Director of Clinical Services, House of New Hope*

My professional focus will be to continue to encourage youth and parental voice in state- and local-level decision making. Our families are the experts in their histories, as well as their futures, and we need their insight to truly make a difference in the work we do.

–*Colleen Tucker-Buck, OFC Bridges Program Manager*

**What do you view as your top accomplishment of 2017? Something to keep in mind for in 2018?**

Ohio now has CASA programs serving children in 51 counties. Although this is a significant expansion over the last several years, we are not done. Ohio CASA will continue to work towards the goal of having a CASA volunteer accessible to all children in need in all 88 counties.

–*Doug Stephens, Executive Director, Ohio CASA*

I have been working with an agency with many significant practice deficits identified (and have been identified for a long time). I was able to have enough of an impact with the agency, in that significant strides are being made to remedy issues. This took a really long time to get to this point. I believe I was successful because I did not stop at the identification of the issues, but continued discussions regarding solutions, so much so that the agency was able to see the benefit of making changes. I have been present at the agency weekly, and the feedback I have received is that

the agency is beginning to view my involvement, as the "STATE," in a positive light. The staff are able to see how much I was willing to work with them (and not just telling them what to do) in order to make improvements. This collaboration is my biggest accomplishment.

–*Melissa Flick, Technical Assistance Specialist, OFC Bureau for Systems and Practice Advancement*

The Ohio Family Care Association has shown how primary families whose children have been returned home can be utilized with the child welfare system to assist in the support of parents who are struggling to get back on track with their families. This program, Succeed, will be continued with new counties joining in this service in 2018.

–*Dot Erickson-Anderson, Ohio Family Care Association*

I have truly appreciated being able to participate in the Statewide CQI Advisory Team. It has given me the opportunity to partner with and learn from some highly knowledgeable (and motivated) public and state child welfare workers. We are truly in this together and it will take this collaboration to continue to improve outcomes for the families and children of Ohio in 2018 and beyond.

–*Shannon Harnichar, Homes for Kids, Inc*

We have initiated a forum for providers across our region to come together to begin to problem solve together how we can best develop a more effective and efficient system of care. We have also expanded our prevention activities in the community and schools, and are aligned with the state's priorities in this area. We are excited about our incorporation of the OCTF grant activities into our overall strategy to influence prevention and early intervention services, as early intervention for child abuse is aligned with a range of positive outcomes across child development domains.

–*Nancy Cunningham, Center for Child and Family Advocacy*

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Oesterlen's focus will be on the state of Ohio's Behavioral Health Redesign and transition to managed care. Additionally, Oesterlen will be focusing significantly on the Bridges program through OACCA's Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio.

–Donald L. Warner, Executive Director,  
Oesterlen Services for Youth, Inc.

Our most significant accomplishment was developing an adversity screen, training staff on motivational interviewing, and piloting a project with the Mayerson Center for Safe and Healthy Children where we had early child care providers administer the adversity screen and conduct motivational interviews as a part of their Strengthening Families efforts. Early child care providers were able to uncover a deeper understanding of family stress and develop even stronger connections to families through this pilot.

–Carolyn Brinkman, Strategic Director,  
4C for Children

Since my arrival at Knox County JFS in January 2016, we have experienced a near 100% turnover rate within our social work division. Normally, that would be considered a significantly devitalizing premise. However, we have overcome those orchestrated departures by restructuring our employee selection process, enabling us to fill those vacancies with intelligent, dedicated, and curious line staff and managers. Although a number of my staff are relatively new to the professional social work arena as well as to one another, I am confident that my management team will effectively develop and shepherd their respective units toward our overall goal of establishing a more pronounced level of family safety, permanency and well-being during the forthcoming calendar year and beyond.

–Scott Boone, Child Welfare  
Administrator, Knox County Dept.  
of Job and Family Services

## Northeast Ohio Samaritan Brightens Holidays

Ohio's child welfare community is made up of a large and dedicated network of people who share a common attribute: generosity of spirit. That community includes professionals, family members, friends, mentors, volunteers, neighbors and others who simply care about the well-being of children. We'd like to share a recent letter about the good work of one community member in particular:

*I would like to recognize a member of our community, Karen Ayers-Ward of Mentor, Ohio, for her tireless work to provide children in the foster care system some extra love around the holidays. Karen was inspired to help this population of kids after her sister became a foster parent in 2001, and she saw the need firsthand.*

*For 17 years, Karen has been organizing a Holiday Stocking Program for all children in the custody of Lake County Children's Services, which is usually about 100 kids ages birth to 19. Karen gets the ages and sizes of the children each year and either purchases or makes each child a 4-foot stocking to be filled with gifts and delivered just before Christmas. She works hard for months prior to Christmas every year, using social media and word of mouth to get members of the community to "adopt" a child and fill a stocking.*

*In early years, she would fill many of the stockings herself, but over the years her program has become so well-known she has folks*

*approaching her to see which child they will be buying gifts for! She collects the stockings at her home and delivers them to Lake County DCFS to be distributed by the kids' caseworkers. The attached photos show just a portion of what her home looks like in December!*

*Due in part to the generosity of the community who were so eager to help brighten the season for our local foster children, Karen decided to expand the Holiday Stocking Program to include Ashtabula and Geauga Counties. She will be providing stockings for over 300 foster children over 3 counties!*

*Karen began to coordinate a similar program for the children during Easter, and has been able to provide each child an Easter basket every year for the past 5 years. She also collects donations throughout the year for Project Hope, a local shelter, and Lake House, a men's sober living community.*

*We hear a great deal of negativity these days, and I just wanted to pass on a good news story and recognize a member of our community for her generosity, love and commitment to helping those in need. These are the stories that deserve to be shared!*

–Kim Hearn-Vance, MSSA, LISW-S  
Clinical Supervisor, Behavioral  
Health Services, Lake Health

Our thanks to Karen and the many Ohioans like her who work hard every day to improve the lives of children and families.



Karen Ayers-Ward's Mentor home overflows during the holidays with stuffed stockings for children in foster care.

## CQI Corner: Butler County

*This month we highlight Butler PCSA's use of CQI to improve a fundamental case work practice: visits with parents and children.*

In early 2015, Butler Quality assurance staff began reviewing the SACWIS Comprehensive Visitation Report twice a month to ensure that staff were aware of their mandated visits and so supervisors could track their successful completion. In addition, the report was reviewed to identify any potential complications that could prevent a worker from completing a monthly visit.

"Caseworker visitation has always been a high priority for Butler County," said Kenyetta Lomax, Quality Assurance coordinator. "Most importantly, we strive to make good faith efforts to ensure

that we are making every possible effort to engage with our families to ensure the safety of the children that we serve."

One of the biggest contributing factors to Butler's success has been the monthly recognition of staff who reach 100 percent compliance on completed visits with children in custody, between 95 and 100 percent compliance on completed visits with children not in custody, and completed visits with adults (children in custody/children not in custody) for the month.

"Quality casework begins with the face-to-face contact we make with children and families," said Assistant Director Julie Gilbert. "Making this a county priority only enhances our overall performance."

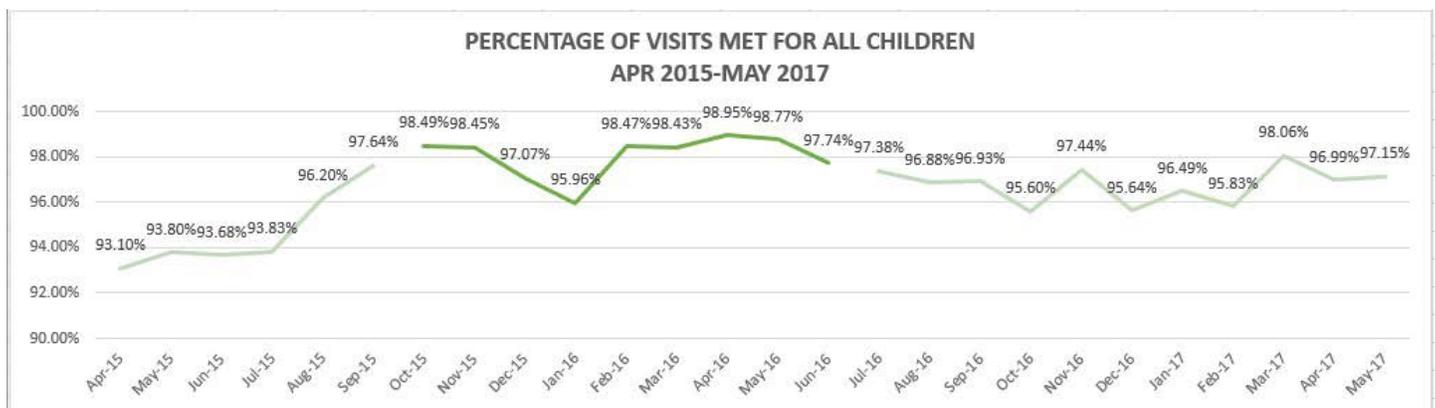
For more information on the

SACWIS Comprehensive Visitation Report, click on the links below:

**Generating the Comprehensive Visitation Report**

**Keys to Populating Data to the Comprehensive Visitation Report**

Have you made your New Year's resolution yet? Consider joining the 2018 Practice Profiles Challenge! OFC is encouraging public and private agencies to go "Back to Basics" in 2018. There's no better way to start than by brushing up on the 10 fundamental worker skill sets. We'll be highlighting them in the upcoming Practice Profiles Webinar Series. Sign up for the Jan. 24 session [here](#).



### Bridges: From the Mailbox

Each month we share a few emails sent to the [Bridges@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Bridges@jfs.ohio.gov) mailbox. This issue we also have included a few questions that were posed during the December 19 Court Cafe hosted by the Supreme Court of Ohio. **Click here** if you wish to view this or other sessions. Thanks to everyone who has taken the time to share questions, opinions and ideas. All emails are answered.

**Q:** When it comes to Medicaid access until age 26, how will that work for young adults enrolled in Bridges? Will their county caseworker still fill out the 1958 form to refer them for Medicaid prior to emancipation? Once they have been approved, will the young adult still need to complete the application form and reapply each year?

**A:** To ensure that there is no disruption in coverage while young adults transition to Bridges, caseworkers still must complete the ODM 1958, "Referral for Medicaid Continuing Eligibility Review," prior to each youth's emancipation. Depending on the county's established process, caseworkers also may need to help youth complete the ODM 7216,

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“Application for Health Coverage,” and the ODM 7236, “Your Rights and Responsibilities.” Then all completed forms should be submitted to the county department of job and family services.

Bridges participants will need to complete an annual Medicaid redetermination. The Bridges liaisons can help with this.

**Q:** When can I enroll in Bridges?

**A:** Applications will be accepted beginning Feb. 1! County agencies will receive information in January regarding the enrollment process and local contact information, but if you’re eager to learn more now, check out **bridgestosuccess.jfs.ohio.gov**. This new website explains how to apply, provides local contact information and answers frequently asked questions. While there, be sure to watch the videos featuring former foster youth!

**Q:** I still don’t understand how the juvenile court will retain jurisdiction if custody must first be terminated in order for the youth to be eligible for Bridges.

**A:** To be eligible for Bridges, a young adult must have been in the custody of a PCSA at the age

of 18. Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 2151.353, the juvenile court that had jurisdiction over the young adult when he/she turned 18 retains jurisdiction while the young adult participates in the Bridges program. It is the Bridges vendor’s responsibility to notify the court when the young adult enters and leaves the program.

The court should include this provision in the judgment entry when a young adult’s custody is terminated after having reached 18. A Bridges workgroup comprised of judges and magistrates has recommended that the language should describe the young adult’s potential eligibility and note that the court retains jurisdiction if the young adult elects to participate in Bridges.

It is understood that the young adult may enter and leave the program and that the court will be actively engaged with the young adult only while he or she is enrolled. Sample language and a sample judgment entry will be available in the Bridges Program Toolkit that has been developed by the workgroup and the Family and Youth Law Center at Capital Law University and published by the Supreme Court of Ohio. Watch for it to be posted on the Supreme Court of Ohio and Bridges websites in January.

**Q.** How will the court know if a young adult leaves the program?

**A.** The Bridges program is voluntary; young adults can leave and re-enter it at any time until their 21st birthday. If they have to leave because they no longer meet program requirements, they still can re-enter the program if they meet the requirements prior to their 21st birthday. Bridges liaisons should complete the JFS 1620, “Notice of Termination,” form and give it to the young adult to notify them of the termination.

If a young adult leaves the program, voluntarily or not, the Bridges vendor must notify the court. The court should then sign an entry stating that the young adult has terminated participation in the program. This will suspend the court’s responsibility.

If the young adult later signs a new voluntary participation agreement, the Bridges agency will notify the court that the agreement exists. The court must then schedule a new best interest determination hearing. If the young adult has moved, the Bridges agency will notify the court that has jurisdiction over the young adult that there is a new voluntary participation agreement and that the young adult has moved to a new county. The court may then transfer venue to the new county.

Please continue to send your questions and suggestions to **Bridges@jfs.ohio.gov**. Your insight will be invaluable to continued development of the program.

The screenshot shows the Bridges website header with the logo and navigation menu. The main content area features a large image of hands holding a yellow sticky note that says "To Do: Apply for Bridges". Below the image, it says "Enrollment Begins Feb. 1, 2018". At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a teal banner with the text: "We support former foster youth as they build a bridge toward a brighter future."

**Missed an issue of First Friday?**

No problem. All First Friday updates are posted on the OFC website under the Partners for Ohio’s Families button. **Click here** to check them out!

## Rule Review Update

The following Ohio Administrative Code rules were posted to [ohiorulereview.org](http://ohiorulereview.org) from Dec. 6, 2017, through Jan. 4, 2018:

### Chapter 5101:2-5 Child Services Agency Licensing Rules

- 5101:2-5-04.1, "Acceptance of accreditation in lieu of certification requirements"
- 5101:2-5-14, "Treatment or diagnostic services"
- 5101:2-5-15, "Volunteers and college interns"
- 5101:2-5-32, "Occupancy limitations and accessibility"
- 5101:2-5-34, "PCPA and PNA case plans and administrative case reviews for direct placements"

### Chapter 5101:2-7 Foster Care

- 5101:2-7-11, "Socialization and education"
- 5101:2-7-15, "Transportation"

### Chapter 5101:2-9 Children's Residential Centers, Group Homes and Residential Parenting Facilities

- 5101:2-9-04, "General maintenance of a residential facility"
- 5101:2-9-07, "Emergency planning and preparedness"
- 5101:2-9-09, "Emergency medical plan and first aid supplies"
- 5101:2-9-15, "Residential facility handbook for residents and their families"
- 5101:2-9-18, "Recreation and leisure activities and equipment"
- 5101:2-9-26, "Living rooms, dining area and lounges"
- 5101:2-9-31, "Laundry facilities"
- 5101:2-9-35, "Additional programmatic requirements regarding behavior management"

Please continue to visit the site periodically for new postings. We welcome your input and hope you use this opportunity to share your experiences and suggestions. The website received 1,140 page views in December.