

Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

MEETING	Wednesday, April 1, 2026 4:00 pm -6:00 pm
ATTENDEES	Gloria Blevins, Gabriella Celeste, David Crampton, Bianca Crawford, Andrew Garner, Delaney Jones, Veranda Rodgers, Daniel Smith, Beverly Torres (DCFS), Lakecia Wild Guests – Dorothy Ajamu (Cleveland Documenters), Jamie Harmon (Cleveland Documenters),
MINUTES	Available Online –Deborah Barber will post minutes upon approval
RECORDER	Deborah Barber

AGENDA ITEMS

	Introduction and Welcome
Minutes will be posted on the DCFS Advisory Board website	• Andrew Garner opened meeting • Call to Order and Introductions • Public Comment - None • Motion to accept meeting minutes from February 4, 2026 • Lakecia Wild – 1st • Daniel Smith– 2nd • Minutes Approved

	Director's Report – Bev Torres for Jacqueline Fletcher
	Workforce & Operations • There are 38 staff vacancies as of March 27, 2026 • Average caseloads: ○ Short-term services: 18.79 ○ Extended services: 15.34 • Hiring freeze partially lifted: ○ Up to 20 frontline positions being filled Service Data • Hotline calls (2025): 38,712 • Screened for investigation: 7,854 • Children in custody: ~2,040 • Children receiving in-home services: ~1,032 Highlights & Initiatives • Social Work Month (March) celebrated with staff recognition events • Media & outreach:

	○ County podcast: <i>"Let's Talk"</i> ○ Coverage on 261 adoptions in 2025 ○ Promotion of Kin First Initiative • Participation in: ○ IdeaStream's <i>Sound of Ideas</i> • Staff awards event held March 26 Upcoming • April: Child Abuse Prevention Month ○ Events to be shared with board Budget Outlook • FY 2026–2027 budget challenges: ○ Staffing retention ○ Mandate compliance ○ Funding for out-of-home care Discussion Data & Reporting • Board dashboard and flash reports available via county website • Dashboard to be presented at next meeting Board Orientation & Governance • No formal onboarding currently in place • Suggestion: ○ Reinstate orientation or "buddy system" • Governance Committee to address onboarding and future member recruitment Discussion of Recent High-Profile Case • Is there a way for the board to be apprised of high-profile cases before they reach the media? Would this draw undue attention or break confidentiality?
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	• Governance – Andrew Garner for Verna Darby Responsibilities: ○ Board structure and bylaws ○ Recruitment (priority due to upcoming member turnover) New members are encouraged to join at least one committee Resources shared: ○ Advisory Board website

	○ Past dashboards and reports Offer of informal mentorship from current members ● Intervention – Bianca Crawford – Focus: Respite care systems Goals: ○ Define respite care locally ○ Develop county-specific model ○ Advocate for family stabilization crisis center Meeting schedule: ○ Thursdays, 2:00–3:30 PM (virtual) ● Prevention – Gabriella Celeste - Focus areas: ○ Child Protection System improvements ○ Case reviews for systemic learning ○ Crisis response systems (MRSS) Partner collaboration: ○ Ohio Guidestone (MRSS coordination) Meeting schedule: ○ Every other month (next: May 15)
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Information Sharing/Adjournment	
	● Updates – Empower Me Conference (April 18–19) ○ Serving ~400 girls ○ Includes mentorship, speakers, and recognition ceremony ● Community Meeting (April 13) ○ Focus: prevention and crisis response systems ○ Includes policymakers and community partners ● Youth Justice & Mental Health Events ○ Multiple upcoming talks and recordings available Key Initiative Highlight ● Proposal for Family Stabilization Crisis Center ○ Short-term child respite (10 minutes–14 days) ○ No court or custody involvement ○ Wraparound services for families

- Adjournment

[Next Meeting:](#) June 3, 2026, 4:00pm – 6:00 PM

Location – County Headquarters, 2079 E 9th St., Room A, Cleveland, OH 44115