

Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

MEETING	Wednesday, June 3, 2026 4:00 pm -6:00 pm
ATTENDEES	Rachel Amick (DCFS), Gloria Blevins, Gabriella Celeste, David Crampton, Bianca Crawford, Verna Darby, Kara Davis (DCFS), Andrew Garner, Delaney Jones, Lara Parks (DCFS), Veranda Rodgers, Daniel Smith, Lakecia Wild Guests – Tisha Barnes (Cleveland Documenters), Jennifer Johnson (Canopy)
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 April 1, 2026 • Bianca Crawford– 1st • Gabriella Celeste– 2nd • Minutes Approved

	Director's Report – Kara Davis for Jacqueline Fletcher
The board members would like information about the graduation ceremony.	Staffing Updates Approval received to hire 20 new employees. New employee class begins on June 15 with 11 staff members. Additional hiring remains open through June 14 to fill remaining positions. Human Trafficking Pilot Program Cuyahoga County was selected as one of three Ohio pilot sites. Focus on improving identification, response protocols, and community partnerships. Dedicated staff resources and enhanced training underway. Youth Graduation Celebration 67 youth in care graduating Celebration is scheduled for July 29, 2026, at Cleveland State University. Caregiver Symposium Annual foster, adoptive, and kinship caregiver training and networking event

Subcommittees

- **Data Dashboard – David Crampton / Rachel Amick, Lara Parks (DCFS)**

Data Dashboard Discussion

Quarter 1 intake: 8,008 calls received and 2,322 screened in.

Neglect and physical abuse remained the most common allegations.

95.4% of investigations initiated within required timeframes.

35% of children were initially placed with relatives.

Discussion focused on permanency outcomes, placement capacity, and family engagement.

Extensive discussion centered on high-acuity youth, trauma, aggressive behaviors, and placement challenges.

Motion by David Crampton to approve the Data Dashboard for posting

Gabriella Celeste – 2nd

All approved the Data Dashboard for posting

- **Governance – Andrew Garner for Verna Darby**

Verna Darby shared that increased professional responsibilities would require her to step back from chair duties while remaining involved with the board.

A vote was taken to elect a new chair outside the Governance Committee. All members agreed.

Motion by Lakecia Wild for Bianca Crawford to serve as chair

Daniel Smith – 2nd

All approved

- **Intervention – Bianca Crawford –**

The Intervention Committee met but the other members did not attend. They will conduct a survey of what dates work best for a future meeting.

- **Prevention – Gabriella Celeste –**

The Prevention Committee met May 15th. This meeting segment focused on behavioral health respite services, prevention resources, case discussions, and updates from the Medical Child Protection Team (CPT).

1. Behavioral Health Respite Services

Committee members followed up on respite services after a prior discussion.

It was discovered that Beyond Healthcare no longer contracts with DCFS for respite services due to low referral volume.

Behavioral Health Respite, funded through OhioRISE, is now being actively promoted statewide.

Current providers in Cuyahoga County reportedly include:

- Beech Brook
- Ohio Mentor
- NYAP
- The Village Network
- Additional providers may be added as the state releases updated information.

2. Purpose and Benefits of Respite Care

Respite services can be provided:

- Daily living support
- Self-care assistance
- Social and emotional skill development
- Recreation and leisure activities
- Skill-building opportunities

Services may occur in homes or community settings.

Participants emphasized respite as a prevention tool, helping caregivers avoid crisis situations by providing temporary relief and support.

Examples included:

- Taking children to community activities for several hours.
- Giving overwhelmed caregivers a break before family conflict escalates.

3. Eligibility and Access

Families generally must be enrolled in OhioRISE and have a completed CANS assessment.

Hourly respite services can typically be provided in short increments, often up to about three hours per day.

Referrals can be made through providers or through the Child and Family Health Collaborative system to help track utilization data.

4.

Discussions

The committee briefly discussed:

- A child who had been missing for several years and was later recovered.
- Challenges faced by caseworkers when parents refuse face-to-face contact, creating compliance issues during investigations.

Members agreed that informal case consultations are valuable and should continue.

5. Medical Child Protection Team (CPT) Update

Jennifer Johnson provided an update on the CPT.

Funding has been finalized through 2027.

Reported activity:

- Approximately 200+ CPT cases in 2025.
- More than 100 cases from January–March 2026.

	Committee members noted increasing referral numbers and requested additional data and outcome information for future discussions. 6. Next Steps Increase education and outreach regarding respite services and how families can access them. Continue discussions on prevention-focused supports. Gather additional data regarding CPT referrals and outcomes. Next committee meeting scheduled for July 17. Key Takeaway The meeting's primary theme was that behavioral health respite services are emerging as an important prevention strategy, giving families support before situations escalate into crises or deeper child welfare involvement. The committee plans to improve awareness, referrals, and utilization of these services while continuing to monitor child protection and casework challenges.
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Information Sharing/Adjournment
• Adjournment

[Next Meeting:](#) August 5, 2026, 4:00pm – 6:00 PM
Location – County Headquarters, 2079 E 9th St., Room A, Cleveland, OH 44115