

WASHINGTON COUNTY FAMILY & CHILDREN FIRST COUNCIL
SFY 2008 ANNUAL PLAN
June 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 2, 2006 was the "tipping point" for Washington County Family and Children First as Council participated in an all-day retreat facilitated by consultant, Jacqui Romer-Sensky. During this planning process, Council members as well as Council and Help Me Grow staff, assessed needs, priorities, gaps and resources for children and families in Washington County. The outcome of this planning gave birth to the *Connecting Teens Initiative*.

Retreat processing identified the growing concern for students who lack a career path upon graduation and the dwindling number of students entering skilled trades. This concern was coupled and supported by the workforce segment that voiced concern regarding the lack of a local qualified workforce to fill skilled labor job openings in the area. From this, the "Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation" focus was formed under the *Connecting Teens Initiative*. Council committed to recognize this initiative as a part of their House Bill 289 Annual Plan development.

To begin this effort, eighteen community stakeholders met on August 28, 2006 to form the *Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup*. Council members, agency staff and leaders from education, business, workforce development, economic development, and chamber of commerce converged to initiate the task of data collection, gap and resource analysis and strategy development around the initiative. A survey was developed and implemented within the county's six school districts to gather baseline data. Over 750 surveys were completed by area students and evaluated by the workgroup.

While the Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup was immersed in their directive, Council met again for their annual retreat on April 18, 2007. With consensus of Council, the retreat was broadened to include the stakeholders of the Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup. Jacqui Romer-Sensky once again facilitated the retreat and assisted the large group in focusing on outcomes and strategies for further development around career planning.

The afternoon of this retreat however, focused on another area of on-going concern for our county: *services to multi-need youth*. The Access to Better Care (ABC) Initiative of Ohio Family & Children First has supported this direction, however, a more concerted, collaborative local effort was needed to move forward. Our county has continually struggled over the years to meet in-county placement needs for multi-need youth. We firmly believe and commit to the

wrap-around philosophy to support maintaining children in their own homes/community, and have increased these supports over the years. However, we continue to lack the higher level of coordinated, intense, specialized services and in-county placement homes needed for this population who present with more demanding, intense, mental health and court involvement needs. It was identified that coordinated efforts and resources from all entities are needed to collaboratively address this issue as the needs of these youth have escalated and risen beyond our current resources. Council committed to find a way to overcome the barriers and issues present and address the problems facing our county to support our multi-need, multi-system youth.

With the end of Council's second retreat, a group consensus identified to include the "multi-need youth" into our Connecting Teens Initiative and the Council's Annual Plan. Therefore, Washington County's Plan for SFY 2008 shall focus on the **Connecting Teens Initiative**, which includes:

- 1.) *Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation*
- 2.) *Services to Multi-Need Youth.*

The past year has proven to be a positive emergent learning phase for the Washington County Family and Children First Council. With a strong commitment to the new initiative, data to support decisions, broadened participation and collaboration from new stakeholders, strengthened involvement from education and a focus on Commitment #6, "**Youth Successfully Transition Into Adulthood**", Washington County is poised to make a difference in the lives of our youth. The welcomed involvement and partnership of new stakeholders, including business, will also impact positively on local workforce and economic factors, thereby effecting more positive changes for our community and families. The chosen Indicators: "*Youth are prepared to enter a career path upon graduation*" and "*Youth successfully transition in and out of out-of-home placement*" represent a commitment for which we shall be accountable. We sincerely thank all those who have been a part of this Initiative (see attachment 1) and are committed and prepared to move forward regardless of barriers that may remain in our path. A clear decision has been made to identify ways to say "we can" and no longer say "we can't". It truly does take a village to raise a child and we are prepared to come together for the benefit of the children and families in our community. They are depending on us.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PLANNING PROCESS

Washington County Family and Children First Council was founded August 3, 1995. The Washington County Commissioners serve as the Administrative Agent for Council. In the beginning years, the Family Stability Incentive Funds grant, awarded in 1996 became the focus of the work of Council, along with the Wellness Block Grant designed to prevent teen pregnancy. As time went on, Council began to incubate and staff programs such as the CARES Information and Referral phone line. In 2001, the Help Me Grow program became part of the duties of administration for Family & Children First and since 2003 the Council office has housed the Help Me Grow staff. The FCF Council Director also serves as the Help Me Grow Project Director.

Through the nearly 12 years of existence of Washington County Family and Children First, many initiatives, directives, laws and mandates have supported and strengthened the role of the Council as a collaborative entity. While true collaboration is extremely difficult work, Council has maintained a wonderful record of mandated members meeting on a monthly basis. Partnerships and involvement of mandated members has increased over time.

An area that has been difficult for Council is that of strategic planning and the collaborative efforts of council partners around planning. Because Washington County is a smaller rural county, many agencies engage in their own initiatives around planning. When presented with opportunities to strategically plan as a Council, the opportunity has not been seized as it was felt that the efforts were duplicative.

Fast forward to August 2, 2006. This became a “turnaround” day for Washington County Family and Children First Council as members participated in the Annual Council Retreat. Twenty-three (23) attendees including Council members and Family & Children First and Help Me Grow staff, met for an all day retreat facilitated by well-known consultant Jacqui Romer-Sensky. A commitment was made that day to define a direction and initiative for Council and our county in accordance with the mandates of House Bill (HB) 289. We were ready to move forward with strategic planning.

The facilitator lead those present with a planning framework to guide them through the process of identifying needs, resources and gaps for the children and families in our community. The retreat membership, as a focus group, carefully reviewed the 6 commitments to child well-being and the seventy (70) associated indicators.

Council identified that numerous programs and services were occurring in Commitment areas 1 through 3, including programs such as Help Me Grow, Head Start, and WIC. Council also recognized the work that had been put forth since 2003 in commitment areas 4 and 5 through the processes developed under the Washington County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board’s State Incentive Grant (SIG) Grant and the strategic planning through Communities That Care® (CTC). This successful initiative embraced new partners in efforts to promote positive youth development. The byproduct of this effort resulted in the formation of The Right Path Board and the Youth Involvement Group (YIGZ).

This coalition continues to offer planning and events for the youth of our community and supports the implementation of the evidence-based *Positive Action* program in the county school districts. These efforts support the two identified focus areas of "Poor Academic Performance" and "Community Disorganization and Low Neighborhood Attachment". Much data was collected and reviewed during the CTC process and a decision was made to not duplicate efforts in this area.

Focus turned to Commitment #6 – *Youth Successfully Transition Into Adulthood*. The group participated in brainstorming activities, group work and individual efforts to identify their top three concerns for children and top three opportunity moments. A final process allowed those present to identify with a color-coded sticker their most important concerns. Group processing occurred to finalize and concur on the targeted area for action. At the end of the process, Council identified that effort was needed in the area of teen career development. It was noted that there is a growing concern for students who finish high school with no career path. Council members, who were knowledgeable about workforce development, including a County Commissioner, noted the ever-growing concern from the business sector that was having a difficult time filling local skilled labor job positions. The group pointed to the numerous recent newspaper articles that detailed the lack of a skilled workforce in our county. (See attachments 2-6).

As conversations continued during the Retreat, it became evident that there was a clear connection in these two areas of concern. After a voting process by those present, Council identified to put forth effort in this area and the "***Connecting Teens Initiative***" was born. Council determined that to move forward with the initiative, which may later involve other areas relating to teens, a specific workgroup would be formed and known as the "*Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation*" Workgroup. Two school superintendents from the largest school districts in the county, along with the County Commissioner who also serves as the Council Chair, agreed to co-chair the workgroup. Other Council members joined the workgroup with a commitment to broaden the membership. Council acknowledges and appreciates the leadership and commitment of the Workgroup Co-Chairs.

On August 28, 2006, just 3 weeks from the retreat, eighteen (18) diverse community stakeholders met for the first time as a focus group to identify the critical and prevalent issues that would help define our community priorities and indicators related to this initiative. An overwhelming response for involvement at this meeting was apparent as evidenced by the attached organizational chart (see attachment 1). There was a clear effort by the co-chairs to bring business, workforce and economic development into the process, as well as all school districts in the county. Influential business leaders of our community, as well as the Chamber of Commerce Director, Executive Director of the Southeast Ohio Port Authority, Economic Development, School Superintendents, County Commissioner, Health Commissioner, Community Action, agency staff and others agreed to become the *Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup*. Council acknowledges the participation and value of these new stakeholders.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

DATA COLLECTION

With receipt of HB 289 Planning Funds, Council and the Workgroup agreed to contract for a data specialist to perform data collection and survey development. In the fall of 2006, Jenny Wiese was contracted to begin gathering available data on all 70 indicators under "Ohio's Six Commitments to Child Well-Being". The indicators data was then presented to the FCF Council and the Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup. (See attachment 7). With this additional data to inform the Initiative, the Workgroup moved forward with plans to gather data specific to the chosen indicator.

During the October 2006 meeting of the Workgroup, members toured the Washington County Career Center for a first-hand review of the career services available. Efforts then began on developing a student survey to gather baseline data for the commitment area and to inform decisions. The Workgroup identified to survey all eighth and twelfth graders in the county regarding career planning.

During November, the consultant and Family & Children First Council Director further developed and refined the student survey. The survey was modeled after the Mon Valley Education Consortium survey conducted in Pennsylvania in 2004. The purpose of the survey was to collect information on the following:

- What careers are they interested in exploring
- How have they learned about career options
- Their knowledge about Washington County Career Center and possible barriers to enrollment
- Their future plans

Council notes appreciation to Warren Local School District for allowing the use of their professional membership to the on-line survey program of *SurveyMonkey* for survey implementation. Once the survey was finalized and formatted on-line, the consultant contacted each of the six school districts in the county to arrange for implementation of the survey. While all schools were offered the opportunity to participate, not all districts did so and some districts were unable to get the survey completed by all 8th and 12th graders, while others experienced some technical glitches during implementation. However, ultimately, an adequate sampling of county students occurred with 418 seniors and 341 eighth graders completing the survey. This denotes approximately half of the student population in these grades.

Results of the surveys were presented to the Workgroup in February 2007 and reviewed. (See attachments 8 and 9). The workgroup extracted the following key information from the *12th Grade Surveys*:

- When asked, "Check how often you have discussed your career choice with each of the following people", a majority of students most often discussed with their **Mother**.

- When asked, "What resources/programs/activities could have helped to assist you in making your career choice?", the top 2 answers were **Job Shadowing** and **Work Experience**.
- When asked, "Who or what has had the biggest influence on your career decision?", the top 2 answers were **Personal Experience** and **Mother**.
- When asked what they are currently enrolled in, 29.7% indicated **General Coursework**.
- When asked, "At what age did you decide on your career choice?", **14% were still undecided and 50% answered either 17 or 18 years**.

The following key information was extracted from the 8th Grade Surveys:

- When asked, "Check how often you have discussed your career choice with each of the following people", a majority of students most often discussed with their **Mother**.
- When asked, "What resources/programs/activities would help to assist you in making your career choice?", the top 2 answers were **High School Course** and **Job Shadowing**.
- When asked "Do you know what kind of classes you should take in high school to help prepare you for a chosen career?", **42% were not sure**.

One week prior to graduation a follow-up survey was conducted with 12th and 8th graders to glean additional information related specifically to resources, programs and activities and their past participation. (See attachments 10 and 11). This information is most important when addressing seniors as it clearly indicated pertinent information regarding what was helpful in their career choices and their future plans. Due to the short timeframe for developing and implementing this survey, it was only conducted within Marietta City Schools, the largest school district in the county. We appreciate the concerted efforts of Marietta High School and Marietta Middle School in completing this survey with very short notice at the end of a busy school year. This second survey was compiled to offer baseline data for tracking chosen indicators and developing strategies.

From the 158 respondents on the second 12th grade survey conducted one week prior to graduation:

- **60%** had a personal experience that made them want to explore/enter a specific career.
- **17%** participated in Job Shadowing while in high school.
- **75%** were employed during high school.
- **78%** completed the coursework that will lead to their career path.
- **62%** knew specifically what their career path will be upon graduation.

From the 154 respondents on the second 8th grade survey conducted one week prior to the end of the school year:

- **12%** had participated in job shadowing.

- **44%** knew what coursework to take in high school to lead to their career path.
- **78%** had a personal experience that made them want to explore/enter a specific career.
- **55%** know what their career path will be once they graduate.

In addition, information gathered during this phase of planning also included review of the following resources and data sources:

1. *2006 Washington County Community Health Council Needs Assessment*
2. Year 3 Evaluation Report on Positive Action: Washington County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board. *Pride Survey Results - 2006*
3. *2005 Ohio High School Transition Report* – Indicates 57% of recent Ohio high school graduates enroll in college in the fall anywhere in the US (2004 data).
4. Washington State Community College 2007 presentation on *Higher Education in the Economic Equation* provided the following informational charts.

<i>Skill Level for Employment</i>		
<u>1950</u>		<u>2007</u>
20%	Bachelor's Degree	20%
15%	Skills beyond high school	65%
65%	Unskilled Labor	15%

<i>Ohio's College Attainment</i>	
<i>Percentage of adults over 25 who have a college degrees</i>	
21%	Ohio
24%	U.S.
12%	Appalachian Ohio

For every 100 Students Who Begin 9th Grade in Ohio:	
■	70 graduate from High School in 4 years
■	39 enter college right after High School
■	29 begin the second year of college
■	17 earn a college degree (2 or 4 year) in 6 years

5. *National Association of Manufacturers* – According to a survey of more than 800 high school juniors and seniors nationwide coordinated by the Ferris State University Career Institute for Education and Workforce Development: (See attachment 12).
 - 51% can identify no one in high school who has been a mentor or especially helpful in advising them on career or job options.
 - 78% credited their parents as the top adult influence.

- 41% attribute a sense of embarrassment to voc-ed training programs.
 - 45% said pursuing technical training might limit their career options.
6. Data collected from *Washington County Career Center* indicated that over the past ten (10) years, enrollment in the following trades has decreased:
- Masonry – reduced by 44%
 - Welding – reduced by 21%
 - Carpentry – reduced by 15%

The following data and information sources from Washington County Career Center were also reviewed:

- *“Choices & Chances – Help Wanted Issue 2005”*
 - *Ohio Career Development Program Trend Data – 2001-2004* (See attachment 13)
 - *“Vocational – Technical Education Today”* – published by the American Vocational Association (See attachment 14)
 - *“Poll Shows Support for Early Career Preparation”* – Vocational Training News.
7. *Employee Workforce Assessment Report: June 2007* – A business survey was completed and compiled in June 2007. (See attachment 15). The full report will be released to the public in the near future.

With the utilization of the above information and data sources; the local student surveys; Council's identification of the need area; Workgroup/Focus Group consensus of the need area; and community input and concern for lack of a skilled workforce as identified by the attached newspaper articles, the initiative was now ready to move forward.

PRIORITIES / INDICATORS / SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

From the work completed during the Needs Assessment and Data Collection phase, the group was now prepared to identify priorities and indicators. Thus far the initiative was dedicated to Commitment #6 – “Youth Successfully Transition Into Adulthood” with the priority area of “Youth are prepared to enter a career path upon graduation”.

The Workgroup met to discuss and identify the short-term outcomes. After much discussion and review of data, this Workgroup agreed to choose one outcome for which to put forth effort in the upcoming year. The area that data indicated would have the biggest impact on career decisions was youth's first-hand experience with career options. Therefore, the short-term outcome identified is *“Youth participate first-hand in career option experiences.”* In order to measure the success of this outcome the following two success measures were identified:

- 1) *Percent of seniors who have participated in first-hand career option experiences*
- 2) *Percent of eighth graders who have participated in first-hand career option experiences.*

Therefore, with informed data, Washington County would expect to see an increase in the percent of students participating in first-hand career experiences. Baseline data would be generated from the second student survey conducted in May 2007.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT / GAP ANALYSIS

During the resource assessment phase of the planning, it was noted that various types of career activities were occurring in the school systems (see attachment 16) however, funding for career planning has diminished over the years and schools must furnish these activities in a rather uncoordinated and minimally funded manner. Therefore, many smaller efforts may be happening but there is a lack of coordination from a system-wide standpoint.

In assessing resources and gaps in the identified priority and indicator, four specific gaps related to the priority were found between available resources and what is needed to better prepare our youth to enter a career path upon graduation. Those gaps are identified below.

GAP ANALYSIS

GAP 1 – Collaboration/Communication between business and schools

This was identified as the number one gap as much discussion was centered on the idea that there is disconnect between school and business.

- We do not have a huge relationship with business/industry where students can job shadow.
- Kids whose family is not well connected miss out on job shadowing.
- We need businesses and schools to work together so we can let the students know what is available and still keep interruptions for the business to a minimum.
- Companies do not know that they can offer job shadowing, job fair, etc... to the schools.

GAP 2 – Awareness of local job opportunities

This is a gap because there is a lot of talk about the local jobs, but we need to find a better way of letting local people know that they are available.

- A business survey is being conducted and results available soon.
- With the survey results the goal is to convey to parents and youth the jobs available and the training that will be needed.

GAP 3 – Involvement of parent/guardians with a special interest in moms

This gap was identified because in one of the survey questions asked – check how often you have discussed your career choice with each of the following people – mom was the number one answer.

GAP 4 – Behavior that makes youth unemployable

This is a gap because we need to address the behaviors/attitudes of youth.

- Students need speakers to talk with them about careers from the real world besides school personnel.

STRATEGIES

At the May 2007 meeting of the Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup, members identified strategies tied to the identified gaps. Members noted the lack of funding to support coordinated career planning within all school districts. It was identified that a "career coordinator" who could work collaboratively with business and all school districts would greatly enhance the efforts. This position could perhaps be supported with pooled funds from business partners and school districts in the county.

From the data gathered, it was also noted that teens needed additional opportunities for first-hand job experiences such as job shadowing, internships, job site visits and personal work experience. The career coordinator position could help to design and create these opportunities for youth in our county by working directly with school districts and businesses to eliminate duplication and centralize efforts. The workgroup also committed to collaboratively support and design a local job fair in collaboration with business. It was felt that the missing piece in promoting career awareness was dedicated coordination, which is not available at this time.

The six strategies identified by the Workgroup include:

- Job Shadowing
- Work Experience
- Internships
- Community Career Coordinator
- Group Job Site Visits
- Community Collaborative Job Fair

Therefore, Washington County Family and Children First Council and the Teenage Career Awareness and Preparation Workgroup are committed to forging ahead with the efforts. The Workgroup will continue to meet to:

- * Further develop the identified strategies
- * Strengthen and broaden new partnerships
- * Review business survey once completed
- * Report regularly to the full Council

(See attachment 17 - Logic Chain)

CONTINUING AND EXPANDING THE EFFORTS...

Turnaround Date ... April 18, 2007... Washington County Family and Children First Council met again for their annual full-day planning retreat. With the assistance of the HB 289 planning funds, Council was once again able to contract with consultant Jacqui Romer-Sensky for retreat facilitation. The retreat was opened up to not only council members, but also community members from the Teenage Career Awareness Workgroup and staff from partner agencies. The morning session was devoted to the career planning initiative, however, the afternoon session took Council in a new, additional direction. A total of 38 Council members, stakeholders and staff attend the retreat.

Since the inception of Washington County Family and Children First in 1995, Council has been concerned and frustrated over the lack of services, financial resources, supports and in-county placement facilities for our multi-need, multi-system youth. This population continues to grow both in number and need. With an increasing number of court-involved cases, and an increasing number of youth with mental health and dual diagnoses, our county has come to a tipping point. We find ourselves ill equipped to handle this level of youth without true collaborative efforts, supports and services and close monitoring. Because Washington County has no "locally owned" therapeutic foster care homes, our children that need this level of service must be placed out-of-county, if placement is their only option. This coupled with our lack of resources to offer supportive services to youth and families with deep-end needs, truly puts our county at a breaking point and our youth in jeopardy.

During the retreat, open and honest discussion evolved around the issues facing the community regarding these multi-need youth, and the agencies, workers and family members involved. There was a clear consensus by those present that changes had to be made in our county. It was no longer sufficient to lament about the lack of funds and resources, but rather it was time for action. Children Services identified their beginning efforts by hiring a marketing firm to help establish local specialized foster homes. Our county fully believes in keeping our youth in county.

Therefore, at the retreat, Council decided and committed to include this multi-need population into our annual plan. It was determined that this effort fit well with the Connecting Teens Initiative. A subset group under this initiative became known as the *"Services to Multi-Need Youth Workgroup"*. This workgroup is co-chaired by the Associate Director of the Washington County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board and the Executive Director of Washington County Children Services Board and is comprised of members of the Council, agency staff, service providers, and parents, with additional members being added. (See attachment 1). Council acknowledges and appreciates the commitment and leadership of the Workgroup Co-Chairs and those serving on the workgroup.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Discussions and identifying needs associated with this population have been on going for numerous years but have usually focused on what we were unable to do. However, due to the increasing ineffectiveness and frustrations of the status quo and increasing numbers of multi-need youth coming into the system, our county has firmly committed that we must act now. Two committees of the Washington County Family and Children First Council, the "Pooled Funds Group" (PFG) and the "Service Plan Review Team" (Review Team), have put forth the commitment to change our course. The PFG is comprised of the Directors from the Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board (MHARB) and Children Services Board (CSB), the Board of Developmental Disabilities Superintendent and the Juvenile Court Judge. The Review Team is comprised of supervisors from: MHARB, CSB, Department of Job and Family Services, Board of Developmental Disabilities, Juvenile Court Probation and Family & Children First Staff. The PFG meets quarterly to review and assess the "pooled funds" and the level of cases funded through FCF as well as identifies service gaps. The Review Team meets weekly to review cases, develop processes, approve funding and assist in coordinating services for multi-need youth referred to Family & Children First. These two committees meet jointly as well.

The afternoon of the retreat served as a Focus Group meeting that helped define and identify the needs of this population. Staff from Children Services, Juvenile Court and Family & Children First began gathering data around the indicator. The attached "Custody Case Profiles" illustrates the level and multiplicity of needs of youth in custody. (See attachment 18). The attached placement chart indicates the number of youth in out-of-county placement from 2002 through 2006. (See attachment 19).

PRIORITIES / INDICATORS / SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

Council determined that this new and expanded focus was indeed a part of Commitment #6 – *Youth Successfully Transition into Adulthood*. The selected priority area chosen was *"Youth successfully transition in and out of out-of-home placement"*.

During two Workgroup meetings held in May 2007, the group identified the short-term outcome as "youth are maintained in in-county placements". The success measures developed include:

- 1.) *Number of youth placed out-of-county (decrease number)*
- 2.) *Number of in-county "specialized" foster homes (increase number).*

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT / GAP ANALYSIS

Current resources note that there are possibly 2 therapeutic homes in Washington County (from an out-of-county foster care network) and no in-county specialized homes. Additional resources include:

1. Wraparound services contracted through HAVAR Inc.
2. Planning and review services offered by the Review Team
3. Service Coordination Mechanism through Family & Children First
4. Newly identified service provider, L&P Services
5. Newly formed Workgroup that is working on this initiative.

Gaps identified include:

- Lack of therapeutic and specialized foster care in county
- Lack of qualified, trained and skilled personnel to provide supportive services
- Lack of behavioral health trained staff
- Lack of funding for coordinated efforts / infrastructure
- Lack of coordinated crisis intervention supportive services
- Lack of unified vision / buy-in for the process
- Lack of direct service funding for the target population
- Lack of effective collaboration among child serving entities

STRATEGIES

At the June 6, 2007 meeting of the Workgroup, members identified the two most crucial strategies needed in order to move the initiative forward. They are:

1. *Development of support services to foster homes and parents/caregivers*
2. *Creation of in-county specialized foster care.*

(See Attachment 20 - Logic Chain)

To begin the efforts, Children Services Board contracted with a marketing firm to develop marketing strategies to increase in-county foster homes. It is noted that the county is seeking to develop what we have categorized as "specialized" foster homes. A "specialized" foster home is defined as a foster home that offers a higher level of skill than a traditional foster home, but perhaps less than a therapeutic foster home. Unilaterally all members agreed that in order to be successful, these "specialized" homes must have appropriate and available support systems, trainings and adequate reimbursement. The support systems and trainings must also be available to the parents/caregivers, especially in relation to reunification plans. The vision is that children who must be placed out of home would stay in county with higher-level support systems in place to support both their foster placement and reunification plans. The goal would be successful transition of the youth back into the home.

During this process, a new provider was identified who could begin implementing the evidence-based practice of Intensive Family Home-Based Services. Further development is needed to identify resources to support this strategy.

CONCLUSION

As the Family & Children First Council Director and author of this document, I sincerely thank those who have participated in the development of this plan, including consultants Jacqui-Romer Sensky and Jenny Wiese; FCF Council members; Workgroup chairs and members; FCF office staff; Service Plan Review Team members; and those who provided data. (See attachment 21). As a community we are excited and prepared to move the ***Connecting Teens Initiative*** forward and further promote and develop partnerships to support the efforts outlined in this plan. We are grateful to HB 289, which has encouraged and forced us to forge this new path, and to the many new partners and stakeholders from our community who will continue this course with us.

“Do not wait; the time will never be ‘just right’. Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along.” Napoleon Hill

Respectfully Submitted by Cindy Davis, FCF Council Director