

## *Washington County Family & Children First Council* **DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

The following local dispute resolution process shall be used to resolve disputes among the agencies represented on the Washington County Family & Children First Council (WCFCFC) concerning the provision of services to children **and** to resolve disputes between a child's parents/custodians and the county council regarding service coordination. Service Coordinators shall inform parent/custodians of their right to use the dispute resolution process and submit to them a copy of this document. Parents/custodians shall use existing local agency grievance procedures to address disputes not involving service coordination. This Dispute Resolution Process is in addition to and does not replace other rights or procedures that parents/custodians may have under other sections of the Revised Code.

Before utilizing this dispute resolution process, individuals and agencies must seek clarification and resolution at the Family Team level prior to initiating the formal dispute resolution process.

Each agency represented on WCFCFC that is providing services or funding that are the subject of a dispute initiated by a parent shall continue to provide those services and the funding for those services during the dispute process.

For *emergency* dispute resolution, the family or provider shall bring the emergency situation to the attention of the WCFCFC Director and an emergency meeting of COT will be convened within five (5) business days with a recommendation issued within five (5) business days after the meeting. An emergency situation is defined as disruption to an essential service provision, which jeopardizes the safety and well-being of the child or family.

For non-emergency disputes, if the Family Team cannot resolve the conflict, the party in disagreement with the plan (disputing party) must provide written notice of their disagreement and the basis for it to the WCFCFC Director within seven (7) business days of the Family Team's decision. The Director will notify and convene the Community Options Team (COT) to hear the dispute within ten (10) business days of receipt of the notice. The disputing party shall receive notice of the meeting no later than three (3) business days before the meeting date and a parent may attend the meeting with a family advocate. COT will provide a written decision to the disputing party and the WCFCFC Director within five (5) business days of their meeting.

If a party disagrees with the decision of COT, whether after an emergency or non-emergency hearing, the disputing party may appeal the decision to the WCFCFC Executive Committee by providing the Director written notice of their disagreement within seven (7) business days after receipt of the COT's decision, and the basis for it. The Director shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee who shall hear the dispute and issue a decision within five (5) business days of the notice of appeal.

When a dispute that originates with the child's parents or custodians cannot be resolved through the above dispute resolution process, WCFCFC can make a referral to the State Service Coordination Committee by a majority vote of the membership.

If the dispute is between agencies, an agency that disagrees with the decision of the WCFCFC Executive Committee may appeal to the Juvenile Court by filing a Complaint / Motion with the court no later than seven (7) business days after receipt of the WCFCFC Executive Committee's decision. The court shall hold a hearing as soon as possible, but not later than ninety (90) days. Decisions of the Juvenile Court shall be subject to the standard appeal process of the Justice System. The Juvenile Court Judge shall be the final arbitrator of agency case resolution.

WCFCFC shall insure that there is a process, through the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and/or Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), for complaint resolution that includes mediation and civil hearing procedures for families in the Help Me Grow system. If a complaint is unresolved, the complainant may forward the complaint to ODH, DODD, and/or the WCFCFC for further action. (See Ohio Administrative Code 3701-8-10). Discussion of parent's rights and the Help Me Grow complaint process shall occur with families at the initial IFSP and all subsequent reviews.