Ohio Communities 4 Kids

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Frederick Douglass

Governor John R. Kasich and the Ohio Department of Youth Services—in partnership with the Departments of Education, Medicaid, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Safety, and Rehabilitation and Correction; the Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; and the office of the Ohio Attorney General—are leading an effort to keep Ohio’s children in their homes, in their schools, and in their communities.

The Ohio Communities 4 Kids (Ohio C4K) campaign will focus on strengthening the supports that keep Ohio’s children out of the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Ohio C4K has three workgroups, each focusing on opportunities and places where decisions are made that can either send kids into Ohio’s juvenile justice system, or set them on a more positive path.

School-based diversion
Schools are perhaps second only to families in providing the social, behavioral, and developmental support children need to grow into responsible adults. In recent years, however, schools have had to turn much of their focus from their primary goal of education, to keeping kids safe.

Meanwhile, for children living in unsafe communities or unstable families, school may be their only place of safety and stability. The school-based diversion workgroup will focus on equipping Ohio’s schools with the policies and practices they need to provide Ohio’s children with quality educations in safe and positive environments.

Detention diversion
Detention, where kids are held in a secure facility at the beginning of their involvement in the juvenile justice system, is often a direct gateway to prolonged system involvement. Some of Ohio’s largest counties are participating in a successful program that aims to identify children who can best be served outside of a local detention facility, without putting public safety at risk. The detention diversion workgroup will focus on these and other best practices that can help counties lower their detention populations, save money, and ultimately improve public safety by keeping kids from moving deeper into the juvenile justice system.

Community-based diversion
Every Ohio kid deserves an opportunity to grow, thrive, and succeed. The healthy development of Ohio’s children and families depends on strong community involvement and supports. This is especially necessary for kids who are at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system and other public systems. No matter its size or location, every Ohio community should offer the services its residents need. The community-based diversion group will work to ensure that Ohio’s children, their families, and their communities can access the high-quality, evidence-based, and promising programs and supports needed to ensure their well-being, enhance their resilience, and promote their success.

Ohio C4K will kick off on January 17 with an invitation-only forum in Columbus. Public forums will follow on January 27 at the Akron Public Library and February 13 at Grace United Methodist in Dayton.