



Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

media release

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FCCS Group Home Report

Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) has released its Group Home Report which is in response to the October 2013 tragedy where Jane Juergens was allegedly murdered by a youth in the custody of FCCS and residing in a local group home. This process has involved reviewing actual cases, researching best practices on how adolescent youth are served across the state and nation and the initiation of conversations throughout the community to address this concern across systems.

“Since this youth was in our care, Children Services was especially disheartened by this incident and in an effort to better evaluate the needs of the children in our custody and community, we began a review process. We want to assess how this agency and the community responds to the needs of adolescent youth who demonstrate elevated risks due to their behavioral and emotional needs,” said Chip Spinning, FCCS executive director.

The process was extensive and included:

- A review of this youth’s case and review of approximately 125 youth placed in group homes
- A review of group home facilities and staff
- Researching how this population is served across the state and nation.
- Initiation of conversations across our community with representatives from various systems who serve this population
- Exploring ways to address community concerns, improve community engagement, and better provider contract monitoring
- Proposing next steps needed in serving this population

The review yielded insights and opportunities for practice change in several areas—most notably that there is a need for a broader array of more comprehensive community-based and/or placement based services to meet the complex needs of this population. Research efforts are highlighted in the report as well as Children Services’ plans to partner with the Annie E. Casey Foundation for technical assistance and support in this area.

The report also addresses the need for a central place to report concerns regarding provider agencies. These issues will now be handled through Children Services Client’s Rights Office and contact information will be posted on the agency’s website:

www.fccs.co.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services or by calling 614-275-2621.

Regarding the group home providers, there were no significant findings or concerns identified that indicated the providers were performing outside their licensing requirements. But FCCS is reorganizing its role with providers so that all concerns can be addressed through one department which will also provide more on-site monitoring and looking at issues that may arise. Children Services met with Group Home Providers to discuss strategies for community engagement and to solicit neighborhood/community feedback.

The report shares how FCCS will be collecting further data regarding AWOL incidents and ways the information can be better utilized in policy decision-making.

It also highlights the agency's collaborative efforts with other agencies and systems such as Franklin County Juvenile Court to explore better ways to share information and serve at-risk youth.

“We will continue to look at what we can learn from this experience to best meet the needs of all children who come into our custody while ensuring the safety needs of the community,” said Spinning. “But finding solutions will take time, collaboration and support from throughout the community.”