



To: Ohio Family and Children First Deputy Directors

From: Elisha R. Cangelosi, Executive Director
Ohio Family and Children First

Date: March 24, 2022

Subject: Environmental Scan, Phase One Survey

Background

Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF) is a partnership of state and local government, communities and families that enhances the well-being of Ohio's children and families by building community capacity, coordinating systems and services, and engaging families. OFCF's vision is for every child and family to thrive and succeed within healthy communities.

OFCF reports to Cabinet Council which is comprised of the following Ohio Departments: Aging, Developmental Disabilities, Education, Health, Job and Family Services, Medicaid, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, Rehabilitation and Correction, Youth Services, and the Office of Budget and Management. Locally, the county commissioners establish the 88 county Family and Children First Councils (Councils).

The mission of Councils is to increase access, capacity, and effectiveness of services for the most vulnerable youth and their families whose needs extend beyond any one youth-serving program. Any family with a child or youth (age birth through 21 years) in need of a coordinated interdisciplinary plan to address their unique needs is eligible for service coordination through FCFC.

Over the past few years, with the many changes to Ohio's service landscape, there has been an increased need to gather information related to Ohio's FCFCs including council structure, resources, strengths, and opportunities for growth. As statewide data focused on these areas is critical to understanding council infrastructure, one of OFCF's SFY22/23 core focus areas has been to gather statewide data through the implementation of an Environmental Scan. The Environmental Scan will be utilized to develop strategic goals to elevate the work councils are currently conducting, while addressing barriers to meeting the needs of communities.

This Environmental Scan will be addressed in two phases:

Phase One was addressed via a Statewide Survey conducted in late 2021 by the OFCF office to gather infrastructure information on Ohio's FCFCs including, but not limited to: local and statewide data on council infrastructure, OhioRISE readiness, and communication and partnership

activities. The data collected will also be considered a baseline so a longitudinal comparison can be conducted over time with future surveys.

Phase Two will be conducted by a vendor who will conduct a comprehensive environmental scan with a sample set of councils. Data through surveys, research and stakeholder interviews will be used to identify the key issues, trends and opportunities that impact and influence local communities. The results will support OFCF's goal of ensuring Ohio has a comprehensive continuum of services and programs for children and families.

This Executive Summary addresses the results of Phase One of the Environmental Scan.

Considerations

Phase One was developed by OFCF staff with input from the OFCF Deputy Directors. The survey was developed in the Microsoft Forms Application and included 41 Questions that were dynamically displayed based on the respondent's previous answer. Family and Children First Council Coordinators, Council Chairs and Administrative Agents (AA) were asked to complete the survey. 176 responses were received which represented 86 of the 88 County Councils, or a 97% council representation rate. Recognizing that Coordinators, Chairs and AAs had varying responsibilities in day-to-day activities of a council, questions were presented based on an individual's role within a council.

OFCF acknowledges that in surveys, questions can occasionally be interpreted in a different manner than as intended, so OFCF staff have made a concerted effort to work with respondents to understand how they interpreted questions. This difference in interpretation is addressed, when applicable, in the next section.

Results

Council Infrastructure:

Anecdotally, OFCF has received feedback that due to increased turnover in the Council Coordinator position, FCFCs were struggling to meet the requirements outlined in ORC 121.37. An increase in staff turnover would not have been surprising as many professions, especially social services, have been impacted by the 'The Great Resignation.'

As outlined in Chart 1, Council Coordinators are closely split between those with five or more years of seniority (42%) and those with less than five years of experience (58%). Concerning is the 21% of Coordinators (16) who have less than a year of experience. To address this lack of experience, OFCF is looking at avenues to increase access to training and technical assistance, including partnering with Case Western, Center for Innovative Practices Child and Adolescent Center of Behavioral Health Excellence (CABHOE), to develop recorded trainings so real-time training is easily accessible to new coordinators.

The CABHOE is also developing a Council Coordinator handbook for new coordinators or seasoned ones who need a refresher, and marketing materials targeted at families, system partners and funders.

This data also shows the discrepancy in councils where the Council Coordinator/Director has a caseload or supervises the service coordinators directly, versus councils where the Council Coordinator is an executive level position and oversees supervisors who work directly with Service Coordinators. 76% of the FCFC Coordinators/Directors report spending 20 or less hours a week working directly with families and children (See Chart 2). This discrepancy in role and county structure was also apparent when Coordinators were asked how many hours per work they are employed as Service Coordinators. 55% of coordinators report being employed as a Service Coordinator at least 36 hours a week, while 31% report that they work as a service coordinator 20 or less hours a week (See Chart 3). When asked to explain this discrepancy, many coordinators reported they are employed 40 hours a week but due to the multiple roles and responsibilities they are assigned, they cannot devote 40 hours a week to Service Coordination activities. Having clear expectations as to each partner's roles and responsibilities has been attributed to higher performing teams. As represented in Chart 4, 75% of councils report having a formal agreement between their Administrative Agent and FCFC outlining each entity's roles and responsibilities. OFCF will provide technical assistance to the 25% that report either not having a formal agreement or needing additional support to ensure an agreement is developed.

Preparing for OhioRISE:

With the upcoming launch of OhioRISE, OFCF and state partners wanted to gauge whether FCFCs were prepared to lead Care Management Entity activities within their communities, and if not, identify barriers to their leading in the future.

Youth served through the local and state MSY funding application process, are high need multi-system involved youth who are anticipated to be eligible for OhioRISE, so OFCF was interested in identifying the level of effort and time councils are spending on the application process. As Charts 5 and 6 outline, the majority of Council Coordinators are responsible for managing three or less MSY applications at any point in time and spend less than five hours a week working on the MSY funding and technical assistance application process. However, in contrast, 11% of Council Coordinators report spending more than 10 hours a week managing 11 or more applications at any point in time.

Youth's eligibility for OhioRISE will be determined based on the results of the Ohio Children's Initiative Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (Comprehensive CANS) assessment, so it was important to identify how many councils were either solely using the Comprehensive CANS or using this tool in partnership with other assessment tools. 46 of the 86 counties are utilizing the Comprehensive CANS as either a stand-alone tool or in conjunction with other tools (See Chart 7).

Relationships and Communication:

One of OFCF's core focus areas for SFY22/23 is Relationships and Communication. OFCF has made a commitment to identify state partners where there is an opportunity to develop new relationships or enhance existing ones. At the same time, OFCF has challenged local FCFCs to identify local partners that are not represented on their council and make efforts to engage with those systems, as well as continue to strengthen existing relationships.

Knowing that regular communication is an important factor in council success, data demonstrating that 72% of counties ensure that Coordinators, Chairs and AAs meet at least monthly is promising (See Chart 8). These regular interactions provide an opportunity to regularly evaluate what is working and address opportunities for growth. FCFCs were also asked to identify local systems which are not represented on Council. The most common systems missing from council are school districts, health care providers including local hospitals, and city officials (See Chart 9).

Next Steps:

Conducting this Phase 1 Survey has provided OFCF with baseline infrastructure information on Ohio's FCFCs but has also highlighted the need to delve further into results that appear to need more in depth conversation and discovery. OFCF knew that as a county-administered system, FCFCs did things differently, but found even more diversity in operations than expected. Phase 2 will give OFCF the opportunity to ask more detailed questions to ensure that data reliability is developed as a strategic goal to elevate practice, while ensuring Ohio has a comprehensive continuum of services and programs for children and families.

In the meantime, OFCF has started working with Councils and stakeholder groups to improve practice. Some of these activities include addressing coordinator turnover and their multiple responsibilities by increasing access to training and technical assistance. As referenced above OFCF has partnered with Case Western, Center for Innovative Practices Child and Adolescent Center of Behavioral Health Excellence (CABHOE), to develop recorded trainings, a Coordinator handbook and marketing materials targeted at families, system partners and funders. OFCF is also developing a statewide automated system to support staff documentation and consistency, so councils can spend more time with youth and families and less time developing county-specific forms and tracking tools.

OCFC will also continue conversations with state partners to address changes to practice as OhioRISE is implemented to identify additional supports that can be provided to FCFCs. These will include but are not limited to developing workflows, hosting online forums to provide opportunity for feedback and providing technical assistance.

Appendix

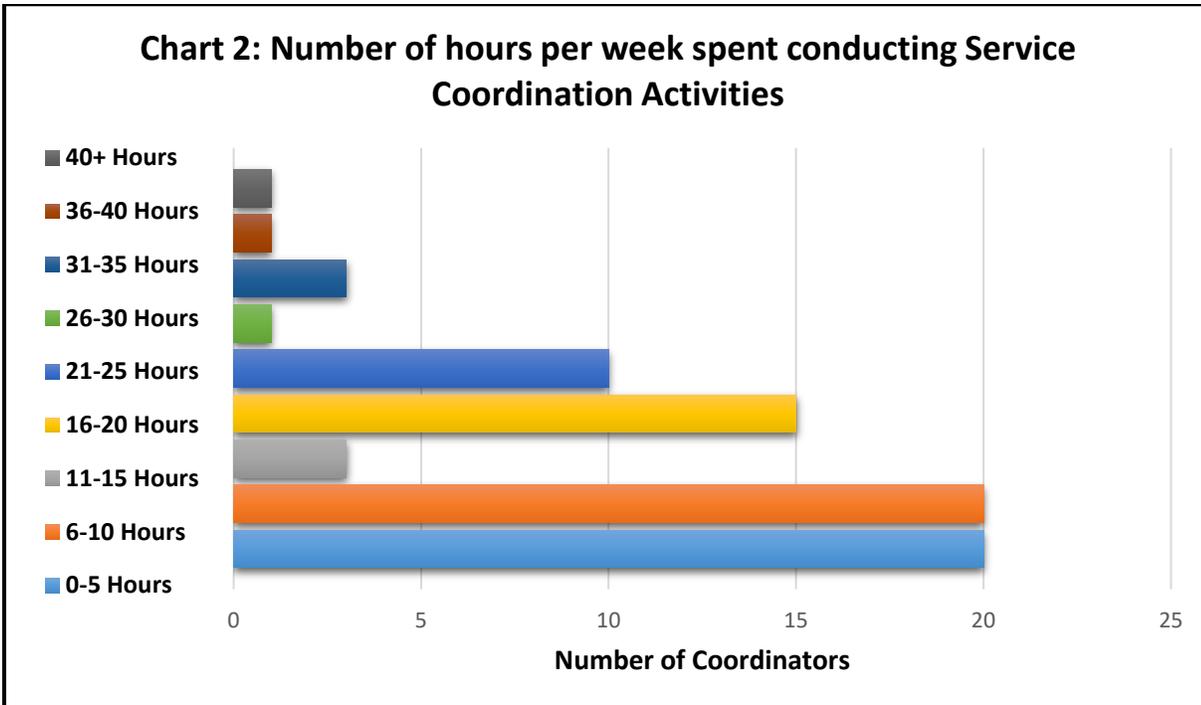
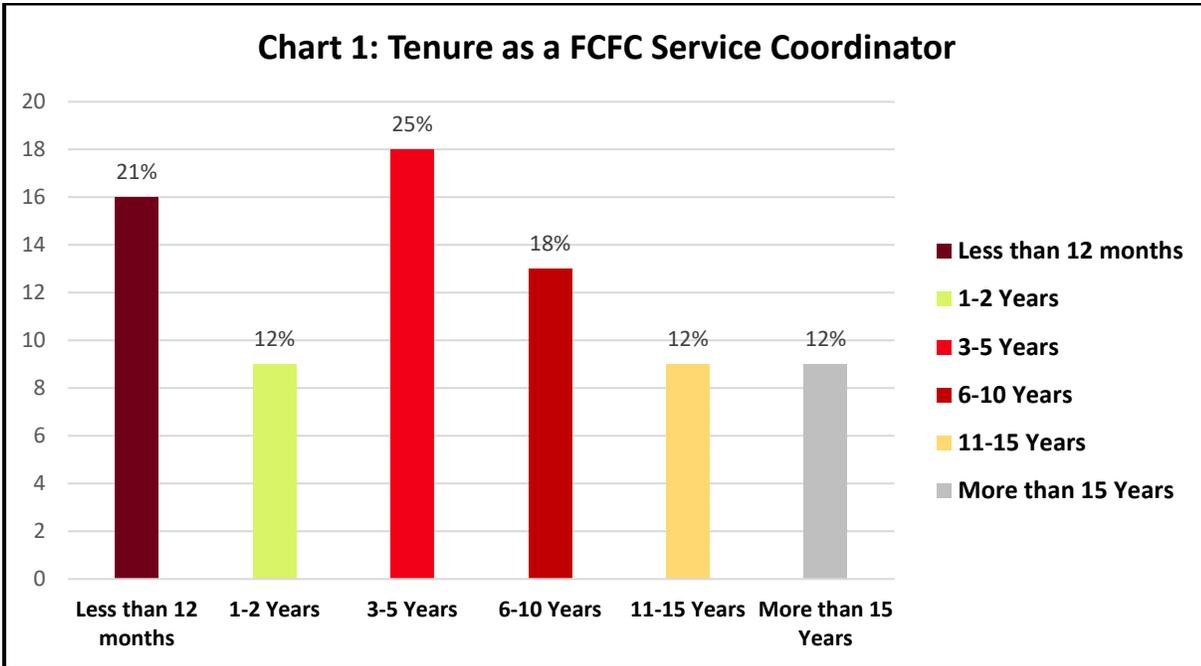


Chart 3: Hours Employed as Service Coordinator

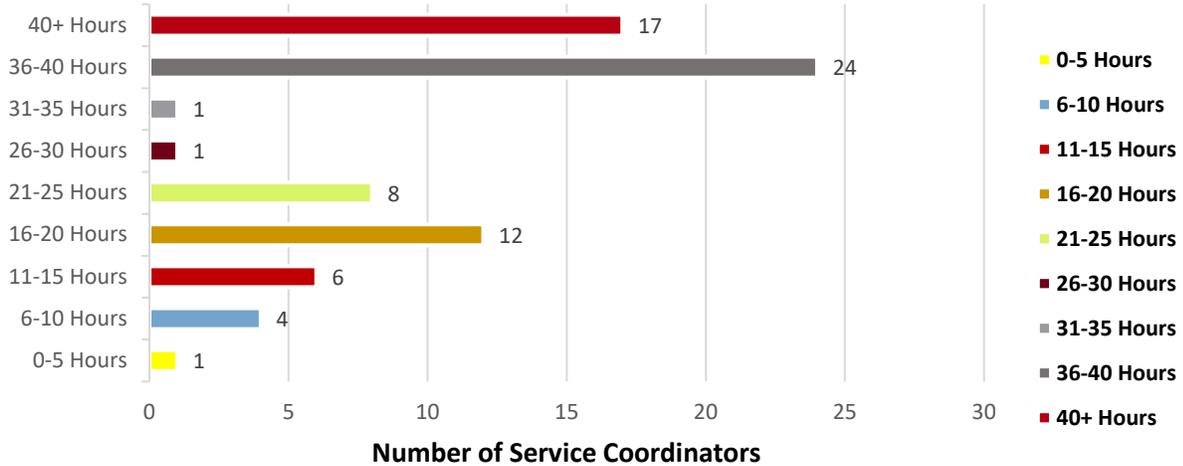


Chart 4: Formal Agreement between FCFC and AA Outlining Roles and Responsibilities

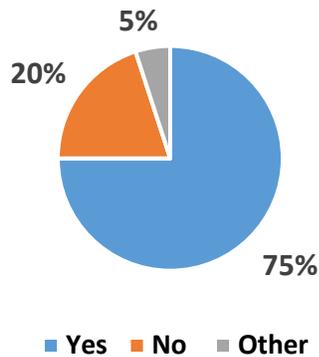


Chart 5: Number of MSY Applications Monitored at a Point in Time

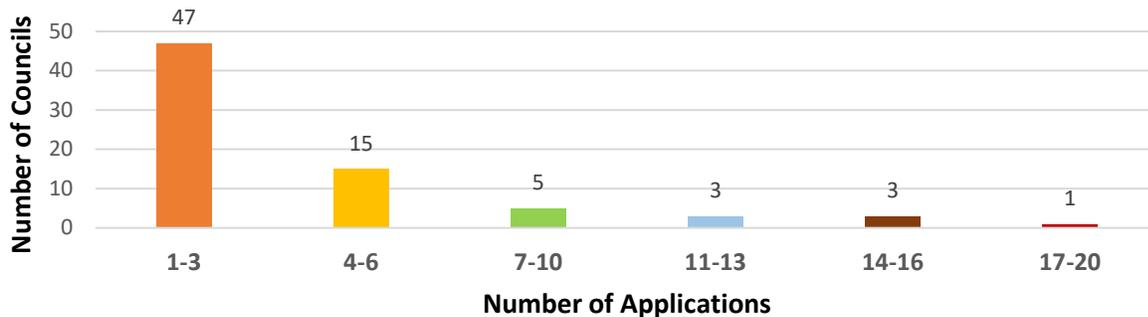


Chart 6: Number of Hours Per Week Spent on MSY Funding and TA Application Process

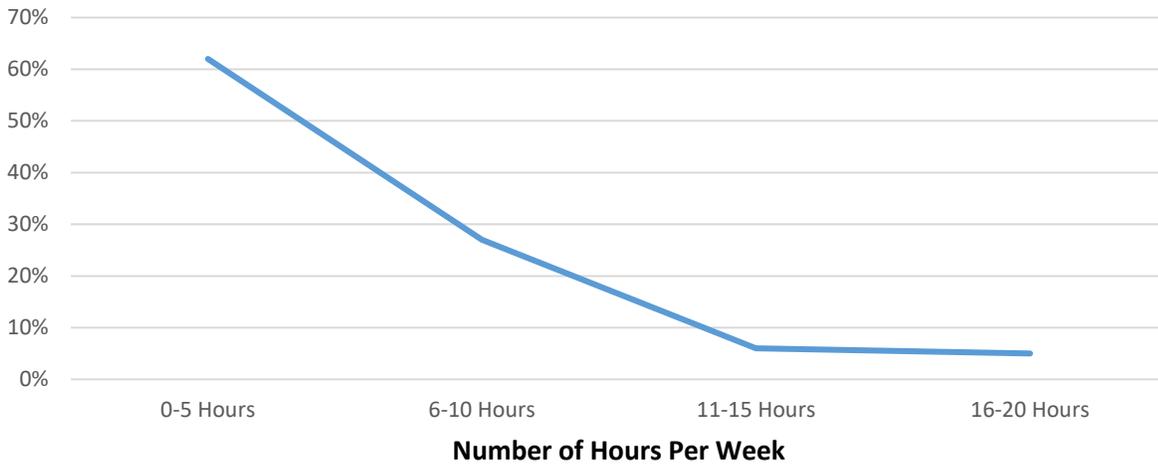


Chart 7: Assessment Tools used by the FCFCs

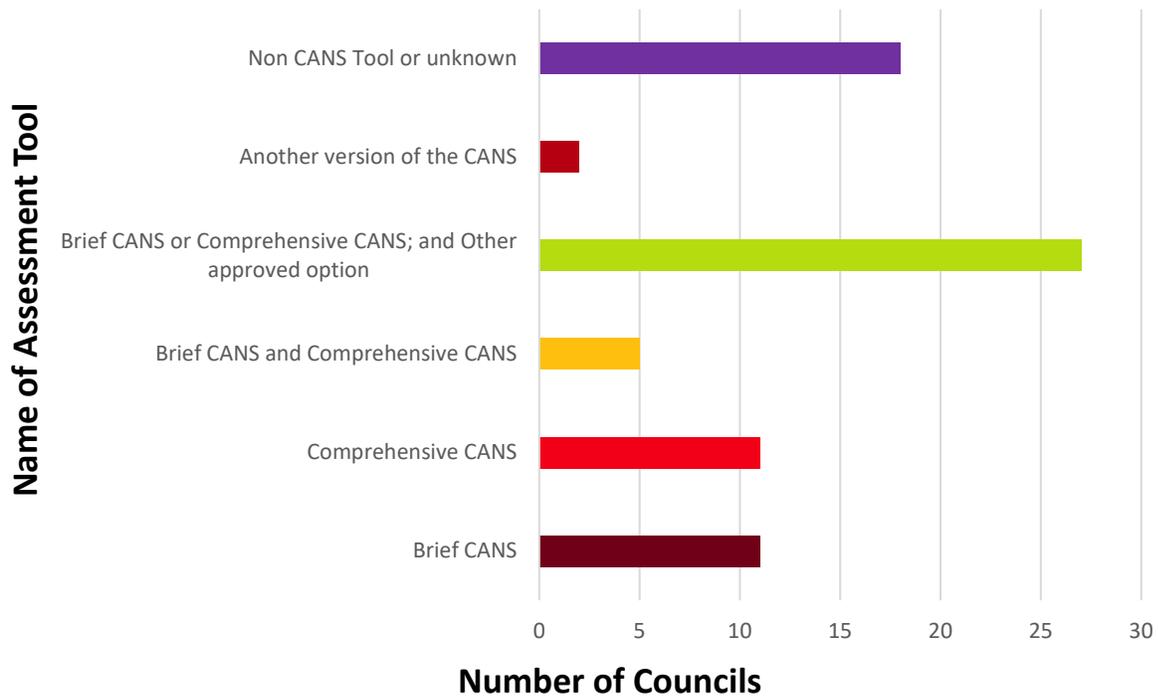


Chart 8: How Often Coordinator, Chair and AA Meet

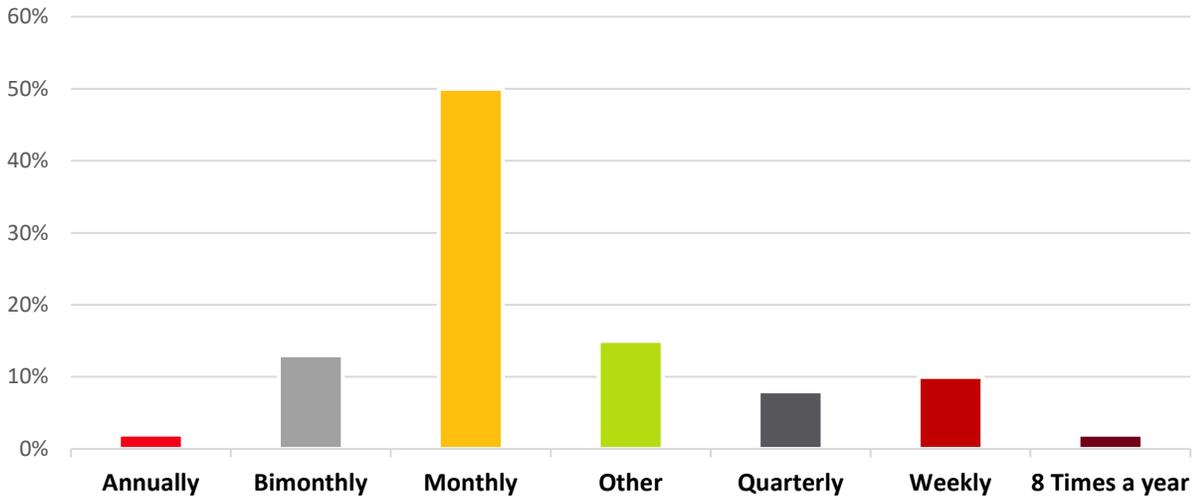


Chart 9: Local Systems NOT represented on Council

