



Consumer Rights & Information Booklet

Warren County Children Services

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Lebanon, OH 45036

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The Mission of Warren County Children Services (WCCS) is to serve families in need and protect children who are abused, neglected, or dependent through collaboration with our partners and the support of the community.

About this booklet

It is our policy to give you this brochure and discuss it at your first in-person interview with one of our caseworkers. If you have questions, please call your caseworker or supervisor listed on the front cover. If your case is opened and sent to one of our ongoing units, the new caseworker will assure that you have a copy with the new supervisor and caseworker's names.

About your right to effectively communicate

All persons who are unable to communicate using English, whether orally or in writing, will have equal access to services provided by Warren County Children Services. Effective communication will be provided through Children Services staff whenever possible. When that is not possible, a certified interpreter will be provided at no cost.

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What is Warren County Children Services?

Our agency is mandated by law to investigate child abuse, neglect, and dependency referrals. We will only get involved to assure the safety of children or to help the family during a crisis. Our initial goal is always to keep children safely in the home and provide those services that may prevent the case from opening. After the assessment/investigation is concluded, your case may be closed with no additional contact required or a case may be opened for services.

If a case is opened, we respond in three ways.

- 1) If a child can be safely maintained at home, we will work with the family on a mutually agreed upon plan to solve the problems that led them to us.
- 2) Sometimes it is necessary to remove children temporarily from your home.
- 3) When it has proven impossible to safely reunify a child with the family the agency will seek permanent custody and place them for adoption.

Throughout the life of a case, families are encouraged to provide input and be a part of the team decision-making process. Families are best served when they can help identify the issues that are challenging them and are included in developing the service/case plan to help them.

Every child deserves a stable, permanent home. This permanence may take many forms—reunification with birth family, kinship care, adoption, foster family contact and /or community connections can all offer a lifetime of support for youth.

CALLING WARREN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES
During business hours (Monday – Friday 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM)
AND
After business hours (Weeknights 4:30 PM to 8:00 AM, Weekends and Holidays);

Referrals can be made by calling:

WCCS Hotline: 513-695-1546

For emergencies- call 911

Warren County Children Services wants you to call if:

- You think protective services could be useful to yourself or your family.
- You received protective services once but need them again.
- You think any child or family needs protective services.
- The child's primary residence is Warren County determined by the parent/guardian who is the "Residential parent" noted by the residence where the child attends school.
 - ❖ A caller has the right to remain anonymous.

What can I expect from WCCS?

Our caseworkers work with families to solve problems. The law requires Children Services to investigate allegations concerning children who may be abused, neglected or dependent and in need of protection.

These calls are usually about:

- lack of supervision, food, shelter, utilities, medical care of a child
- physical abuse of a child
- sexual abuse of a child
- a child who fails to thrive, grow, and develop
- educational neglect
- a child showing severe behavior problems
- a child who has run away from home
- drug or alcohol abuse in the family
- safety or protection of a child
- child death

The Children Services caseworker will tell you what areas of concern were reported and find out if there is a problem in any of these areas. This will be done through talking with you, your children, school, professional, and others involved, if necessary.

Under Ohio law, the name of the person who made the referral is **confidential** and cannot be disclosed.

*If the facts from the investigation show that there is no protective need, we will tell you, and the investigation will close.

*If the facts show that there is a protective need or your family could benefit from services, Children Services will work with you. This work may be done through agreement, or orders from the juvenile court.

A case plan will be created with your assistance and necessary services will be listed in a case plan. This plan explains what the parent, child and/or agency will do to make necessary changes. As your needs or the needs of your children change, the plan may be modified. You will be asked to sign this plan and any modifications made to it. You will receive a copy of the case plan.

Meetings about your case are held at a minimum twice a year by Children Services (and by the Juvenile Court when involved) to update the plan and review what progress has been made. If your family disagrees with services or a decision, steps should be taken to address those concerns (see page 7).

A MANDATED REPORTER who makes a report of child abuse or neglect

Individuals working in certain professions are **MANDATED** under Ohio law to make a report to Children Services if they suspect child abuse, neglect, or dependency.

Upon request, a mandated reporter shall be informed of all the following:

- Whether WCCS has initiated an investigation.
- Whether WCCS is continuing to investigate.
- Whether WCCS is otherwise involved with the child who is the subject of the report.
- The general status of the health and safety of the child who is the subject of the report.
- Whether the report has resulted in the filing of a complaint in juvenile court or of criminal charges in another court.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law that seeks to keep American Indian children with American Indian families. Congress passed ICWA in 1978 in response to the high number of Indian children being removed from their homes by both public and private agencies. The intent of Congress under ICWA was to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families"(25 U.S.C. § 1902). WCCS must make several considerations when handling an ICWA case including:

- providing “active efforts” to the family;
- identifying a placement that fits under the ICWA preference provisions;
- notifying the child’s tribe and the child’s parents of the child custody proceeding; and
- working actively to involve the child’s tribe and the child’s parents in the proceedings.

Your caseworker should be able to explain your rights under ICWA and any other case actions in a manner that is easy for you to understand.

If you feel that ICWA is not being applied correctly in your child’s case, you should speak to the caseworker’s supervisor. The Grievance Review Officer can also assist in assuring ICWA is appropriately applied.

WHAT SERVICES CAN BE HELPFUL TO MY FAMILY?

Children Services offers services including:

- investigation of child abuse and neglect
- protective services and case management
- services to adolescents
- counseling services
- home-based services
- home management services
- medical services for children
- emancipation and independent living services for youth 14 years and older
- adoption services for children of all ages
- family preservation/prevention services

Children Services makes referrals to community agencies for other supportive services:

- mental health services
- parenting education
- psychiatric and psychological assessment/consultation
- drug and alcohol assessment and treatment
- assistance with day care
- services to help the healthy development of children
- services for troubled teens
- housing and material assistance

What happens if my children must leave home?

All children deserve a permanent home. In an effort to assure this, children may be placed temporarily in the most home-like setting available. That setting may include:

- a relative's home - kinship home.
- a foster home
- a group home
- a residential facility as close to home as possible
- an Adoptive home
- a Qualified Residential Treatment Program

Your family is expected to work as a partner with Children Services to help strengthen and reunify. This is done to provide children with permanency.

Families are expected to:

- ❖ help write the case plan that includes services to meet your family's needs;
- ❖ provide a safe, clean, and loving home for your child or children;
- ❖ meet with your caseworker and other staff to review progress;
- ❖ attend and participate in programs or services listed in the case plan; and
- ❖ attend court hearings and follow court orders set by the court.
- ❖ Inform the agency if you have any special needs, language preferences or are of Native American descent

- ❖ In all instances when children come into care, Children Services notifies **Warren County Department of Jobs and Family Services and Warren County Child Support Enforcement Agency.**
- ❖ Each child age 14 years and older will receive the **“Foster Youth Rights Handbook”** to ensure the child is aware of his/her rights with respect to education, health, visitation, and court participation while in substitute care.
- ❖ WCCS complies with the ***Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard*** passed under Public Law 113-183 (Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act). This law established a standard for children in agency custody effective September, 2015. Normalcy is the ability to “easily participate in age-appropriate social, scholastic, and enrichment activities.” The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard **expands the opportunities for youth in foster care to participate in socially acceptable, age appropriate, extracurricular activities to support their healthy development.**

What are my rights?

Children Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, sex, marital status, familial status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, military status, political affiliation, organizational membership, or legal activity.

Ohio and federal law provide specific safeguards for your rights while you are receiving services from Warren County Children Services. Additional questions regarding your rights can be discussed with **WCCS staff, administration, or the WCCS Civil Rights Coordinator.** The Civil Rights Coordinator is responsible for:

1. Receiving and, if necessary, assisting with the writing of discrimination complaints which are filed by county agency participants, clients and beneficiaries of job and family services programs. Such complaints are then referred to the ODJFS Bureau of Civil Rights for investigation and resolution.
2. Distributing civil rights pamphlets/brochures, posters and other information pertaining to civil rights laws to appropriate agency staff, beneficiaries and interested members of the public.

The **Civil Rights Coordinator** may be reached at:
Warren County Children Services
416 S East St.
Lebanon, OH 45036
Phone: 513-695-1546

**CLIENTS OF WARREN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES SHALL HAVE THE
FOLLOWING RIGHTS:**

1. The right to **Interpreter services**, at no cost to the client, whenever requested to assist the client in all interactions with Children Services staff, including all meetings, case planning and interactions with Agency staff;
2. The right to **Be treated in a culturally sensitive way** with consideration and respect for personal dignity, autonomy, and privacy;
3. The right to **Services in the least restrictive, most humane setting feasible**. This is de-fined by Ohio law and rule or in the case/service plan;
4. The right to **Review your case record as long as the law does not prohibit access**. Requests for information may be denied if the information requested poses a serious risk of harm to anyone. All requests for access to case records must be made in writing. Persons requesting information must present photo identification prior to receiving access to their record. If disclosure of requested information is prohibited by law or would pose a serious risk of harm to anyone in the record, it will be redacted.
5. The right to **Insert any statement into your case record and to review any statements provided by Agency staff** in response to the client's statement;
6. The right to **Participate in the creation of the case plan** and be provided a copy of the case plan and case plan amendments, and of proposed or current services, treatment or therapies; mental and physical health, and social or economic needs, and that specifies how available, appropriate, and adequate services are to be provided either directly or by referral;

7. The right to **Consent to or refuse any service, treatment, or therapy upon full explanation of the expected consequences** of such consent or refusal unless ordered to participate in services by a direct court order or a case/service plan journalized by a court of competent jurisdiction. A parent or legal guardian may consent to or refuse any service, treatment, or therapy on behalf of a minor client unless ordered to participate in services by a direct court order or a case/service plan journalized by a court of competent jurisdiction;
8. The right to **Have a current, written, individual case/service plan** that addresses child safety, permanency, and well-being
9. The right to **Active and informed participation** in the establishment, periodic review, and reassessment of the case/service plan;
10. The right to **Freedom from unnecessary or excessive medication;**
11. The right to **Freedom from unnecessary restraint or seclusion;**
12. The right to **Be informed of and to refuse** an unusual or hazardous treatment procedure;
13. The right to **Participate in any appropriate and available WCCS service**, regardless of refusal of one or more other services, treatments, or therapies or regardless of relapse from earlier treatment in that or another service, unless there is a valid and specific necessity which precludes and/or requires the client's participation in other services. This necessity shall be explained to the client and written in the client's case/service plan;
14. The right to **Consult with independent treatment specialists** or legal counsel at one's own expense;
15. The right to **Confidentiality within the limitations and requirements of Ohio and Federal laws or rules, court orders, or a journalized case/service plan.** Any person having the legal capacity to consent to the release of information regarding an Agency client may do so consistent with Ohio and Federal laws or rules;

16. The right to **Be informed in advance of the reason or reasons for discontinuance of service** and to be involved in planning;
17. The right to **Receive an explanation of the reasons for denial of service**;
18. The right to **Freedom from discrimination** in the provision of services;
19. The right to **Know the cost of services**;
20. The right to **Be fully informed of all rights**;
21. The right to **Exercise any and all rights without reprisal in any form**, including access to services, which must not be compromised;
22. The right to **File a grievance**;
23. The right to **Oral and written instructions for filing a grievance**;
24. The right to **Assistance in obtaining a credit report**, *if you are 14 years or older and in the custody of the agency.*

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Warren County Children's Services has established the following policy in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code rule 5101:2-5-35. No agency, foster caregiver, residential facility or any employee of an agency or residential facility shall in any way violate any of the following rights of children:

1. The right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or to abstain from the practice of religion.
2. The right to reasonable enjoyment of privacy.
3. The right to have his or her opinions heard and be included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting his life.
4. The right to receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support, and supervision.
5. The right to be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment.

6. The right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation.
7. The right to receive adequate and appropriate medical care.
8. The right to receive adequate and appropriate food, clothing, and housing.
9. The right to his or her own money and personal property in accordance with the child's service or case plan.
10. The right to live in clean, safe surroundings.
11. The right to participate in an appropriate educational program.
12. The right to communicate with family, friends and "significant others" from whom he or she is living apart, in accordance with the child's service or case plan.
13. The right to be taught to fulfill appropriate responsibilities to himself or herself and to others.

In regard to children in our care

Children Services' staff, foster parents, and adoptive placement caregivers are trained on how to respond to out-of-control behaviors. Staff and caretakers shall not use any restrictive behavior management interventions including physical, mechanical, or chemical restraints, isolation or locked seclusion. Staff and caretakers at group homes, CRCs, or QRTPs follow specific policies & procedures regarding any use of restrictive behavior management interventions.

How are my rights further protected?

WCCS strongly encourages anyone with concerns and/or complaints about the agency and its services to discuss them with the caseworker involved and his/her supervisor. If this method does not resolve the issues, WCCS offers a formal **Grievance Review Hearing Policy** to ensure that a procedure is in place **to receive, review, and resolve the following:**

- 1) **Complaint Reviews** - Parents, Custodians, Legal Guardians, Foster Caregivers, Kinship Caretakers, and Applicants or Providers of Approved Adult-Supervised Living Arrangements, and children who have a concern/complaint regarding the provision of services are eligible for the review hearing process.

2) **Report Disposition Appeals** - Alleged perpetrators who disagree with the agency's report disposition/resolution of child abuse or neglect are eligible for the review hearing process

WCCS GRIEVANCE REVIEW HEARING POLICY - If, after discussion with caseworker and supervisor, your issue is not resolved, you will be provided a copy of WCCS Grievance Review Hearing Policy so that you may formally request a review hearing. The policy including the Grievance Review Form will be provided within 3 working days.

REQUESTING A FORMAL REVIEW HEARING – You must complete a written statement (Grievance Review Form) to detail the facts you believe provide a basis for your objection to the Agency action. You must sign and submit the written statement (Grievance Review Form) to the WCCS Grievance Review Officer within thirty (30) days of receiving the copy of the Grievance Review Hearing Policy.

GRIEVANCE REQUEST REVIEW - The Grievance Review Form will be reviewed by the WCCC Grievance Review Officer or designee to determine eligibility.

a. **INELIGIBLE** - Should the request be deemed ineligible; the Grievance Review Officer will provide you written notification of the denial and reasoning for such denial.

b. **ELIGIBLE** - Should the request be deemed eligible; the Grievance Review Officer will contact you and all necessary parties to schedule the Review Hearing.

TIMEFRAMES - The determination of eligibility will be made within 30 days of the receipt of the Grievance Review Form. The review hearing must be held within thirty (30) days of the eligibility determination. No report disposition appeal can proceed until all cases in a criminal or juvenile court related to the investigative finding have been finalized. Once all adjudications related to the finding have been finalized, you must notify the Grievance Review Officer no later than thirty-calendar days following the resolution of related judicial matters.

THE GRIEVANCE REVIEW HEARING - The Grievance Review Officer conducting the complaint reviews and hearings regarding report disposition appeals

cannot be involved in the case, including the assessment investigation of the incident or the approval of the report disposition. The parties and their representatives, and witnesses while testifying, must be the only authorized persons present during the review hearing. All testimony must be given under oath or affirmation and the hearing will be recorded.

FINDINGS - The Grievance Review Officer will render a written recommendation, based on the evidence presented at the hearing, to the Director within thirty (30) calendar days after the review hearing has been completed. The Director may accept or reject the recommendations of the Grievance Review Officer or designee. The Director will issue a final decision which is binding within 30 calendar days. The decision of WCCS regarding the complaint review or report disposition appeal is final and is not subject to a State hearing.

NOTE: *Hearings are not judicial proceedings and as such, the rules of evidence do not apply. The Children Services record of the investigation remains confidential by law and will not be released or shared with the appellant before, during or after the hearing.*

The **GRIEVANCE REVIEW OFFICER** may be reached at:
Warren County Children Services
416 S East St.
Lebanon, OH 45036
Phone: 513-695-1546

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office – Pursuant to Amended Ohio House Bill 4 and the Children’s Services Transformation Advisory Council, effective 5/31/022, Ohio implemented a new “virtual” statewide program. The Youth and Family Ombudsmen office works to ensure that children services system provides a safe and welcoming environment for youth as well as an enriching experience for the families impacted by the system. While one office, the two

ombudsman serve youth and families specifically to ensure access to report case-specific and/or system-wide concerns.

General inquiries or specific concerns may be submitted directly to the Youth and Family Ombudsmen Office by:

a) visiting the website at: YouthandFamilyOmbudsmen.ohio.gov or

b) calling 1-877-649-6884 (1-877-OH-YOUTH) - Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

*Youth seeking to report concerns to the Youth Ombudsman may also submit a complaint form online at YouthOmbudsman.ohio.gov.

*Individuals or families seeking to report concerns to the Family Ombudsman may also submit a complaint form online at FamilyOmbudsman.ohio.gov.

2. In addition to the Children Services complaint and grievance process, the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services is responsible for assuring that all county children service agencies comply with rules applicable to public children services agencies as set forth in the Ohio Administrative Code. You can contact them by calling **The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**, toll free at 866-886-3537 Option 4.

3. If you believe that you have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex or religion or have been otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program, service or benefit authorized or provided by Warren County Children Services you may contact any one of the following services:

- The **Warren County Civil Rights Coordinator** at 416 South East Street, Lebanon, Ohio 45036.
- The **Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Bureau of Civil Rights**, 30 E. Broad Street., 30th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3414. Telephone: (614) 644-2703; Toll Free: 1-866-227-6353.
- The **United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights**, Region V, 233 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 240, Chicago, Illinois 60601

4. **FOSTER CARE, ADOPTION or PLACEMENT** - If you have concerns or complaints regarding foster care, adoption or placement processes, WCCS has

specific grievance and/or complaint policies and procedures that are designed to ensure your rights are protected. Contact the caseworker, supervisor, foster care or adoption caseworker or supervisor or the Grievance Review Officer to communicate your concerns and receive information on these processes.

5. **SERVICES** - If you feel you were entitled to services that were not delivered you may also file a complaint with any of several organizations including, but not limited to:

❖ **State of Ohio Counselor, Social Worker State Board of Ohio and Marriage & Family Therapists Board Psychology,**

77 South High Street, 24th Floor, Suite 1830

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Phone: 614 .466.0912 or 614-466-8808

❖ **Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services- OhioMHAS**

30 East Broad Street, 36th Floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215-3430

Phone: **1877-275-6364 or 1800-720-9616**

❖ The WCCS **Grievance Review Officer** can assist in directing your concern.

If WCCS is working with you and your family when disaster strikes...

If the disaster **affects you** and your family and requires the immediate evacuation of your family from your home or location, please notify WCCS immediately at 513-695-1546. Please be prepared to share as much information as possible to help us identify who you are and where you will be living.

If the disaster **affects the entire community**, please stay tuned to local media for communications from WCCS.

If the disaster **affects your contact with WCCS**, please stay tuned for communications from your WCCS caseworker, supervisor, or staff member. You may access the WCCS website for additional information.

<https://www.co.warren.oh.us/childrenservices/Default.aspx>

If the disaster **affects visitation** with your children or if your visitation is court ordered, please let us know and we will work with you to keep your visits from being interrupted during this difficult time.

In the event of **inclement weather**, the decision to cancel visitation and transportation will coincide with the Snow Emergency Level System. Visitation shall be cancelled when there is a Level 2 or 3 Snow Emergency applicable to:

- Warren County
- The county the child resides
- The county where the visit is to occur
- Any county a transporter is required to travel through

In this instance, please contact Warren County Children Services at 513-695-1546 during this weather emergency. Reasonable efforts will be made to make up any cancelled visits when the weather allows.

Notes:

Important Dates to Remember:

Contacts:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone/E-mail: _____

WCCS NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, WCCS is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact WCCS. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9922(voice), (800) 877-8339 (TTY) or (866) 377-8642 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and SIGNATURES

I acknowledge being provided a copy of the WCCS Consumer Rights & Information Booklet on the date indicated below.

Name: _____ Date: _____
Signature: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____
Signature: _____



Protecting Children Strengthening Families
Securing Futures