

# COUNTY LEADER



County Commissioners Association of Ohio Magazine

Summer 2023



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Cover: Various CCAO members, staff along with CEAO members and staff at the Northeast District Meeting at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Stark County, Ohio

1: CCAO President and Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller, Henry County Commissioner Lori Siclair, Paulding County Commissioner Lisa McClure and Defiance County Commissioner David Kern

2: CCAO members, staff along with CEAO members and staff at the Central District Meeting by Indian Lake in Logan County

3: CCAO members, staff along with CEAO members and staff toured an Encino Energy site at the Southeast District Meeting in Carroll County

## A MESSAGE FROM 2023 CCAO PRESIDENT GLENN MILLER, HENRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER

As summer starts winding down and we look back at the first half of the year, there is much to reflect on and celebrate. The state operating budget was finalized at the end of June, and we are pleased to see progress on our priorities including increased funding for indigent defense, the Local Government Fund (LGF) and additional funding for jails.

The extended sales tax holiday will allow for the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) in consultation with CCAO to determine the length of time for the holiday in 2024 and the following years to come. The sales tax holiday includes a requirement that the foregone sales tax revenue to counties, transit authorities, the Local Government Fund, the Library Fund, and the state general fund be reimbursed, an improvement upon the previous model where these entities were not being made whole.



Miller

The remainder of the year will offer worthwhile opportunities from the association for our members to continue their lifelong education and to bring practical knowledge back to their counties. This month we will hold the 2023 CCAO Summer Symposium at Cherry Valley Hotel in Newark, where our members from all corners of Ohio have the chance to learn and incorporate new ideas and information pertaining to our theme, which is Economic Development Strategies: Ohio Counties Reaching Forward. Members who attend the symposium can expect engaging conversations on all the factors it takes to build the economy including workforce development, landbanks, housing and more. Those in attendance also can anticipate hearing directly from Ohio Cabinet Directors and Lawmakers through interactive sessions.

Also, from December 6–8, members are encouraged to attend the CCAO/CEAO 2023 Winter Conference, which will take place in an exciting new location, the Hilton Columbus Downtown. The conference will cover a broad spectrum of topics, showing our members how they can utilize all of the resources at their disposal to make their county the best place to work and live.

I am proud to say that this year has been full of impressive achievements. Congratulations are in order for several of our members who have been appointed to represent NACo's policy steering committees, which you will read more about in this edition of *County Leader*. CCAO's participation in NACo is vital to help cultivate relationships and strengthen counties at the national level. This year also marks the first ever Ohio Counties Scholarship Program, which was an absolute success with almost 100 applications submitted. Congratulations to the five deserving winners from each CCAO/CEAO District; we are beyond impressed with your accomplishments thus far and know you will continue to shine in your communities.

As the summer comes to a close, I am eagerly anticipating the remainder of 2023 and hope to see as many of our members as possible at our upcoming educational events. It is so valuable to stay engaged with your association; it's the collaboration between us all that allows us to build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

## LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHERYL SUBLER

### **The Necessity to Journey from the Courthouse to the Statehouse**

Advocacy among our members is critical for county success. As agents of the state, counties provide key services on the state's behalf. These services include justice and public safety, election administration, human services, infrastructure construction and more. The Ohio Revised Code gives counties specific responsibilities but limited authority. Thus, the state and counties must work together to achieve positive outcomes for Ohioans from both a statutory authority perspective as well as having sufficient financial resources. What is necessary for success is a strong state-county partnership, and that partnership is built through member advocacy.



Subler

The Association's leadership and membership along with the CCAO policy team spent the first half of this year focused on the biennial state budget bill (House Bill 33) as well as various other legislative proposals, including one that substantially would change Ohio's property tax system (House Bill 1). In this edition of County Leader, CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty will highlight their important advocacy work.

### **Building Relationships with Lawmakers**

First and foremost, as members looking to build engagement, you will want to develop strong working relationships with your state legislators; as elected officials, many of you likely already have these relationships established. If not, it's a great time to start. Many state lawmakers seek out productive relationships with their local officials. As a county-wide elected official, you have more influence than you may initially think.

A key to relationship building with lawmakers is

consistent two-way communication. There are many ways you can stay engaged with your lawmakers. Take the time to invite them for regular updates on state government developments, not just when your county has a request of the state. Share with them CCAO materials and your own information on how certain policies would impact your county. Give them a quick call or text when a priority bill is up for consideration at the statehouse. These efforts do not have to be burdensome and time consuming. A simple check-in can go a long way to building strong relationships. Also remember that a relationship is a two-way street. There is much you can learn from lawmaker insights, so being a good listener is just as important as effectively advocating your position.

Admittedly, there can be differences in partisanship and personalities that sometimes make strong relationships difficult, and that is okay. Political or personal differences do not have to be a total barrier to all forms of engagement however. Taking the time to make the connection, even if not reciprocated, leaves your county in a stronger position going forward.

### **The Executive Branch**

Of course, there is more to advocacy than just engagement with state lawmakers. Building relationships with Ohio's statewide executive officials (Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer) and their offices also is critically important. These offices have considerable authority to make decisions impacting county government. Investing time and effort into these relationships is a sound investment for your county.

While some officials may not be as accessible as your local state lawmakers, all of them have a team of regional liaisons whose job is to connect with local officials in their geographic area. CCAO encourages members to stay engaged with these liaisons so county requests are heard.

## Saying Thank You

Equally important to advocating for county priorities is thanking lawmakers for their efforts. As you well know, public officials hear complaints but little praise for their work. Taking the time to say thanks to lawmakers and statewide officials is critical to building a lasting relationship.

There is no one best way to do this. Some counties have issued press releases; others utilize social media to show appreciation. CCAO can assist members with creative ways to say thanks, yet it is ultimately up to CCAO members to take the first step in thanking their legislators.

## Media

Earned media can be an effective advocacy strategy, although opportunities may be more limited in this area than in the past. For many years, print newspapers were a primary means to public advocacy. Today, with local newspapers in decline and significant staff reductions, getting the county message into a newspaper may be more difficult than in the past. That does not mean it is impossible.

A number of counties have a local reporter that follows county business and may attend board of commissioner/county council meetings. It is important to establish relationships with these individuals and explain key challenges counties face.

It is also helpful for counties to generate their own content for local media. In the past, CCAO has assisted counties with op-ed development and other media outreach materials to bring the county perspective to local media. With many local newspapers limited in staff capacity, letters to the editor or op-eds can be an effective means to convey important perspectives.

## Social Media

Quite the opposite of traditional earned media, social media is a simple and cost-effective means for county advocacy. Many CCAO members maintain social media accounts and use them to advocate county priorities. Instead of hoping traditional media picks up county stories, social media allows CCAO

members to promote their own content to a broad audience.

CCAO operates on several social media platforms of its own. The CCAO policy team encourages members to follow CCAO for the latest statehouse news and to use these platforms to help guide your own social media advocacy efforts.

[CCAO Twitter Page](#)

[CCAO Facebook Page](#)

[CCAO LinkedIn Page](#)

## Local Community Engagement

As county elected officials, there are many opportunities to speak to community organizations to update their members on county issues and priorities. Local rotary clubs, chambers of commerce, farm bureaus and other local organizations are all potential groups CCAO members may routinely engage with. These speaking engagements can be great opportunities to build grassroots support for county legislative priorities at the statehouse. In the past, CCAO has helped develop sample stump speeches for CCAO members to provide to these organizations to build support for county priorities. The CCAO policy team is happy to help provide members talking points in advance of such meetings.

## Conclusion

Like any association, CCAO gains its strength from the efforts and active engagement of its members. In addition to the many formal and informal duties CCAO members undertake, a strong member advocacy effort from all members is needed for a strong association and stronger counties. The CCAO policy team is happy to assist members with any of their advocacy efforts and looks forward to advocating alongside you.

## CCAO POLICY TEAM

# FINAL STATE OPERATING BUDGET MAKES PROGRESS ON KEY COUNTY ISSUES

by Kyle Petty, Esq., CCAO Managing Director of Policy

The long march of the state budget begins as the executive branch spends months developing its budget proposal. Once introduced by the governor, the legislative budget process kicks off, leading to months of legislative hearings with lengthy amendment processes and final votes. This includes periods of steady activity, lulls in activity, and periods of intense urgency. The state budget process is often described as a marathon, which is accurate. More accurate would be to describe it as a marathon with sporadic instances of a 100-yard dash. All throughout this race, the CCAO membership and policy team advocate for key county priorities. It's sometimes a herculean task, and the health of counties is often on the line.



Petty

CCAO went into the budget cycle with three main priorities: full state reimbursement for indigent defense, continuing the state-county partnership for county jail construction and renovation, and restoring the Local Government Fund. As a result of the advocacy efforts between our CCAO policy team and CCAO members, we made progress on all three priorities:

### Indigent Defense

- The appropriation items that provide reimbursement increased by \$67 million compared to the previous biennium. The Ohio Public Defender's office estimates that reimbursement will be 85% for FY 2024, which would be the second highest reimbursement rate in the program's history. Additionally, a temporary reimbursement cap of \$75 per hour will stabilize reimbursement to counties throughout the biennium.

### County Jail Construction and Renovation

- The budget included \$75 million in FY 2024 for county jail construction and renovation projects, the first time an operating budget has ever

included capital funds for this purpose. These funds are in addition to those that were allocated in previous capital budgets. The bill also includes a formula for allocating these funds to jail projects.

### Local Government Fund

- The percentage of state general fund tax revenue distributed through the LGF increased from 1.66% to 1.70%, the first statutory increase in a decade. Additionally, CCAO worked with other local government partners to secure a needed reform of the LGF distribution formula, allowing county undivided LGFs to receive a minimum of \$850,000, rather than the lesser of \$750,000 or their 2013 allocation.

In addition to jail funding, CCAO made significant progress in other key public safety policy arenas. Governor DeWine's budget proposal included \$46 million of one-time funding for the statewide upgrade to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1), as well as some one-time funding for local NG 9-1-1 upgrades. CCAO successfully advocated for this funding to be maintained throughout the budget process and played a key role in the enactment of an expanded 40 cent monthly user fee. The 40-cent fee will apply to wireless devices, and VoIP channels, and is expected to generate approximately \$100 million dollars of revenue each year. The expanded fee goes into effect on January 1, 2024. On October 1, 2025, the fee will reduce from 40 cents to 25 cents. Most importantly, local governments will receive at least \$74 million of this revenue each year to support 9-1-1 operation and future technological upgrades. Furthermore, the MARCS program received an additional \$10.5 million dollars over the biennium. This additional funding is expected to reduce the monthly MARCS user fee from \$10 per device, to \$5 per device.

Economic development was one of the main overriding themes for this biennium's budget, with many of the provisions included in the budget to boost Ohio's economy benefiting counties. Three grant programs to make Ohio communities more competitive were renewed, with \$175 million in each year being dedicated to brownfield site remediation, \$150 million in FY 2024 dedicated to building

demolition and site revitalization, and \$124 million in FY 2024 dedicated to improving water and sewer quality. These three programs were great successes in the prior biennium, and CCAO is glad to see them continued.

Additionally, CCAO was successful in advocating for several meaningful statutory changes that will benefit county procurement. First, the competitive bidding threshold was raised for the first time in nearly a decade from \$50,000, to \$75,000 with a 3% inflationary increase each year. Additionally, an antiquated provision that required counties to automatically reject bids that were over the estimated cost of the project by 10% or more was increased to 20%. Last, but certainly not least, counties will be allowed to use credit cards to purchase goods and services for any authorized purchase. The Board of Commissioners will be required to set a policy around county credit card purchases, and we believe that will allow for greater flexibility when purchasing on behalf of the county.

Another key priority for counties over the prior budget cycles has been expanding broadband service to those who are unserved and underserved. As remote working possibilities continue to expand, online education is a growing field, and e-commerce continues to account for a significant portion of economic activity, ensuring that all Ohioans have access the fast and reliable internet connectivity is vital. Looking forward, the need for broadband service will only become more critical. CCAO was pleased to see \$135 million included in HB 33 to help connect more Ohioans with this critical service.

The DeWine-Husted Administration and General Assembly continued their commitment to county children services by increasing the state child protection allocation amount to \$145 million in FY 2024 and \$155 million in FY 2025. The budget also includes a one-time appropriation of state-level ARPA funds for Healthy Aging Grants to help Ohio's seniors stay in their homes as long as possible while retaining an independent and healthy lifestyle. The \$40 million grant program will flow through each county for utilization. The bill also increases the allocation each county receives for adult protective services to \$80,000 annually.

CCAO is very grateful to the many supporters within the DeWine-Husted Administration and General Assembly who made many of these victories possible. Governor DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted started counties off strong with an executive budget which provided considerable increases in indigent

defense reimbursement, an increase in the LGF, and dedicated funding for jail construction. The Ohio House, led by Speaker Jason Stephens, added or improved many key county priorities during the legislative process. The Ohio Senate, led by Senate President Matt Huffman, continued that strong county support in the Senate version of the budget. Counties found supporters at every step throughout the budget process.

Now is the time to thank DeWine and state lawmakers for their support. Strong, positive relationships with your legislators and state officials are the most vital county component of the state-county partnership. If you have not done so already, please reach and thank them for their support. Also, consider passing a resolution thanking these officials for their support and share it with your local media. Publicly sharing thanks for helping advance county priorities is critical to building and maintaining the strong state-county partnership.

Finally, the CCAO policy team is grateful for all the work that county commissioners, executives, and council members put in to make this budget a success for counties across the state. The countless phone calls, conversations, letters, committee testimony and more made a real difference with lawmakers. These successes would simply not be possible without your efforts.

We finished the budget together, and as a result, we continue to build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

**We believe in a better future**

Proud partner of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

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## FEATURE

# CCAO WORKS TOWARDS ENHANCING PUBLICATION OFFERINGS TO ADVANCE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

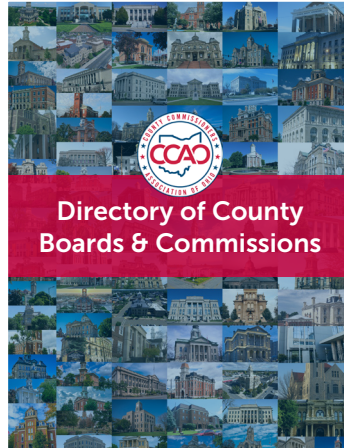
by Nick Ciolli, CCAO Research Analyst

With the state operating budget behind us, CCAO is working towards a new project to help our members efficiently operate their counties and help the general public gain a better understanding of how counties work: a wide-reaching update of CCAO publications, including several County Commissioners Handbook chapter updates and two modernized publications: the Directory of County Boards and Commissions and the County Ohio Revised Code Calendar.

The current edition of the County Commissioners Handbook was published in 1994 with the model of having individual chapters that could be updated independently of the Handbook as a whole. Since its initial publication, and particularly since the Association began hosting the Handbook on the internet, CCAO policy staff, partner associations, and others have revised Handbook chapters numerous times to account for the ever-changing legal landscape that Ohio counties must navigate.

This year, CCAO has published four updated chapters ([Chapter 63: Civil Service and Employment](#); [Chapter 65: Collective Bargaining](#); [Chapter 66: Employee Benefits](#); and [Chapter 134: Agricultural Societies](#)) and added a new chapter, [Chapter 96: Renewable Energy Facility Siting Authority](#) in recognition of the new, important role counties play in those decisions. In addition to these updates and additions is last year's update of [Chapter 29: Drainage and Ditches](#) after the major reform bill that CCAO members worked hard to get passed in the prior General Assembly and the update of [Chapter 20: Permissive Motor Vehicle License Tax](#).

Additionally, during CCAO staff's review of Handbook chapters, we discovered that ten chapters from the original 1994 publication were never digitalized and published on the internet. These chapters include such important issues as boards of developmental disabilities, ADAMHS boards, veterans services, and floodplain control, among others. CCAO staff is working internally and with partner associations to



Directory of County Boards & Commissions cover design

bring these missing chapters, along with several other existing chapters, up to date and available to our members.

The initial 1994 publication of the current Handbook edition featured two appendices to centralize information that were spread across numerous chapters: the Directory of County Boards and Commissions and the County Ohio Revised Code Calendar. The Directory provides a listing of boards, commissions, and committees that county commissioners either serve on or appoint members to. The boards are grouped by function area, as categorized by which CCAO Standing Committee the activities of the board fall under, and each listing contains important information such as the membership requirements for appointees, whether they receive compensation and/or expenses, and more.

The Calendar provides a listing of county-related events and deadlines that take place on or must be completed by certain dates, broken into three categories: Monthly Recurrences (such as the county auditor submitting statements of finances on the first business day of each month), Floating Deadlines (such as requirements related to when an entity's fiscal year ends), and January-December (a conventional listing of events and deadlines).

Neither the Directory nor the Calendar had been updated since 1994. CCAO staff, with helpful review by county administrators and clerks, completed updates on both these important documents. After finishing touches on layouts are completed, they will be published on CCAO's website in September.

CCAO is excited to share these updates with our members and the public. As our mission statement makes clear, two of CCAO's core aims are to advance effective county government through education and through greater understanding of county government. Enhancing our publication offerings help achieve these goals by providing our members with resources to quickly get answers to questions they may have regarding their duties in serving their communities.

## FEATURE

### OHIO COUNTIES SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS RECEIVE \$2,000

by Jessica Newbacher, CCAO Communications Coordinator

The CCAO Research and Educational Foundation sponsored the first ever Ohio Counties Scholarship Program this summer. Throughout the state, \$2,000 scholarships were awarded to five outstanding applicants from across the state; one from each of the five CCAO/CEAO Districts. The Scholarship Review Committee, which consisted of Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb, Delaware County Commissioner Barb Lewis and Guernsey County Commissioner Dave Wilson were tasked with reviewing over 90 applications from over 50 different counties.

“As one who has taught Political Science at Ohio State for several years, I was very impressed with the quality of the resumes submitted by the applicants. Their academic achievements stood out, but just as importantly did their leadership and involvement in multiple community activities,” said Delaware County Commissioner Barb Lewis about the scholarship review process. “Their ability to balance these activities— and do so well academically— bodes well for their future educational success.”

The five winners in each district are as follows:

- Northeast: Michael Telakowicz, Ashland County
- Northwest: Anisha Chopra, Erie County
- Central: Brooklyn List, Pickaway County
- Southeast: Kendall Polen, Tuscarawas County
- Southwest: Riley Raynard, Scioto County

We are beyond excited for the opportunity to assist these bright, motivated individuals in their academic and professional endeavors as they settle into their respective colleges across the region this coming fall. The CCAO Research & Educational Foundation is looking forward to continuing the program next year and beyond. Our goals will stay the same: to help outstanding young students thrive during their higher education experience as well as provide an opportunity for youth to learn more about the role of

county government in their communities through the essay writing portion of the application.

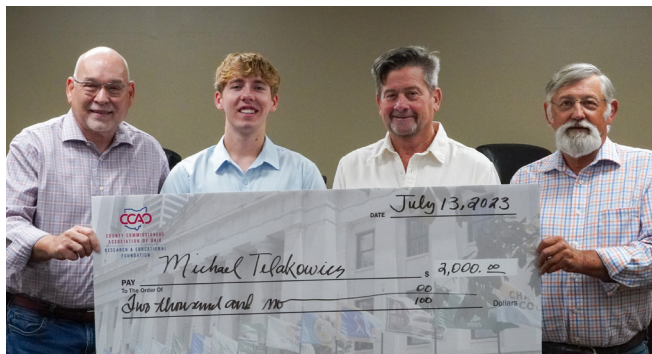
Founded in 1991, as a not-for-profit charitable foundation for the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), the CCAO Research and Educational Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that obtains grants and donations to provide the high-quality information, tools, and training that our members need, and the public deserves. CCAO has made a commitment to grow the Research and Educational Foundation to provide the best possible services to our members and minimize dues increases. If you would like to donate to the Research & Educational Foundation, contact CCAO Service Corporation Manager Steve Caraway at 614-220-7998 or [scaraway@ccao.org](mailto:scaraway@ccao.org).



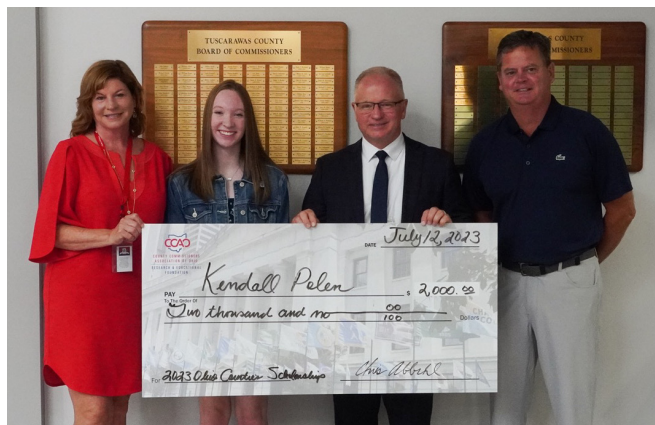
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## OHIO COUNTIES SCHOLARSHIP 2023 WINNERS



Ashland County Commissioners Jim Justice, Michael Welch and Denny Bittle with Northeast District Scholarship winner Michael Telakowicz



Tuscarawas County Commissioners Kristin Zemis and Gregg Ress, CCAO 1st Vice President and Tuscarawas County Commissioner Chris Abbuhl with Southeast District Scholarship Winner Kendall Polen



Pickaway County Commissioners Jay Wippel, Gary Scherer and Harold Henson with Central District Scholarship winner Brooklyn List



Erie County Commissioners Stephen Shoffner, Patrick Shenigo and Matt Old with Northwest District Scholarship winner Anisha Chopra



Scioto County Commissioners Bryan Davis, Cathy Coleman and Scottie Powell with Southwest District Scholarship winner Riley Raynard

## FEATURE

### GALLIA COUNTY OPENS NEW JAIL

by Jessica Newbacher, CCAO Communications Coordinator

This June, Gallia County community members gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house to recognize the completion of the impressive new Gallia County Jail in Gallipolis. The newly-built facility took about seven years and \$20 million to accomplish. The much-needed addition to Gallia County is replacing the previous outdated and overcrowded building that dates back to 1962. The old facility had a bed capacity of only 22, whereas the new jail offers 120 beds along with updated security systems and video visitation stations.

New property was acquired behind the Gallia County Courthouse for this facility. Now that the space is available, neighboring counties no longer have to house Gallia County inmates, and there is now an opportunity to house inmates from other counties. "Those are 30 beds which we anticipate Gallia County not needing," Gallia County Commissioner David K. Smith said on the day of the ribbon cutting. "We are able to charge those folks \$80 a day, to be exact, the first year to house their prisoners here." Previously, inmates from Gallia County had to be transported to Miami, Monroe, Fayette, Van Wert and Butler counties due to the lack of beds, which was costing the county up to \$1 million per year. The close proximity of the facility to the courthouse will also make processing more efficient.

The new facility could not have been completed successfully without the diligent work and collaboration from many moving parts. Staff from both DLZ, who was tasked with designing the project, and Granger, who built the project, addressed the public at the ribbon cutting. They both expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work on the project as well as contentment with how the facility turned out. At the event, Commissioner Smith elaborated that the process began in 2016 with himself, then commissioners Brent Saunders and Harold Montgomery and Grant Administrator



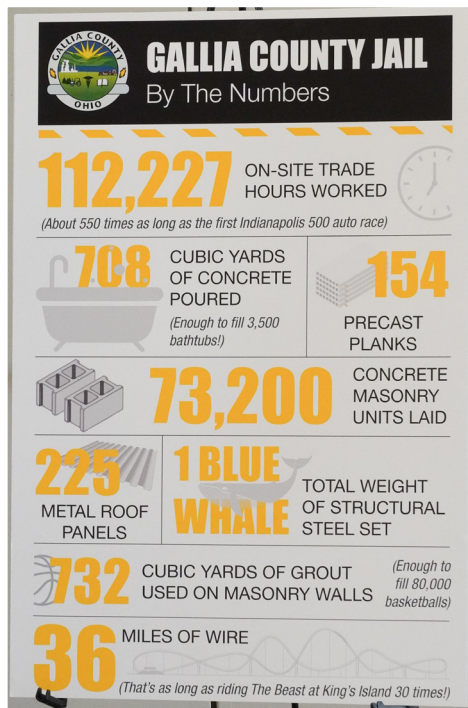
Gallia County Commissioners Leslie Henry, David K. Smith and Jay Stapleton pose for a photo as Sheriff Matt Champlin cuts the ribbon at the new Gallia County Jail

Karen Sprague looking for financing options. In 2019, the overcrowding situation was declared an

emergency by the commissioners and a quarter-percent sales tax was put in place as well as bond financing for 40 years to fund the jail's construction. Furthermore, this project represents the revitalization of the state county partnership with respect to jail funding. Gallia County received capital dollars from the State to supplement the local dollars used to complete this project.

The Gallia County Sheriff Matt Champlin and his staff are tasked with managing and operating the jail. The Sheriff's office will be able to partner with more rehabilitation providers as the new facility has adequate space to do so, putting an emphasis on recovery and reintegration into society for inmates who struggle with

addiction and mental health issues. The new facility will serve as more than just a detention center, with more opportunities to break the incarceration cycle and better the community.



Gallia County Jail By The Numbers informational poster

## FEATURE

# BEYOND THE BIKE PATH: OUTDOOR RECREATION COUNCIL OF APPALACHIA

by Jessica Newbacher, CCAO Communications Coordinator

The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) is a council of governments founded in 2019 by Athens County, City of Athens, City of Nelsonville, York Township, & Village of Chauncey. ORCA was founded to inspire Ohio's Appalachian communities through the development of outdoor recreation opportunities across local governments, creating sustainable and equitable economic development.

Arguably, the most notable project managed and developed by ORCA in conjunction with the Wayne National Forest is the Baileys Trail System. The Athens-Wayne Outdoor Asset Development Corporation (AWOADC) was formed along with ORCA in 2019 as a 501(c)3, and is operated by ORCA staff to establish revenue generating social enterprises to maintain the Baileys Trail System and other recreational assets. ORCA is also funded by dues paid by member jurisdictions based on population density. Furthermore, over \$100,000 has been invested into the Baileys Trail System by various Sponsors and Grantors.

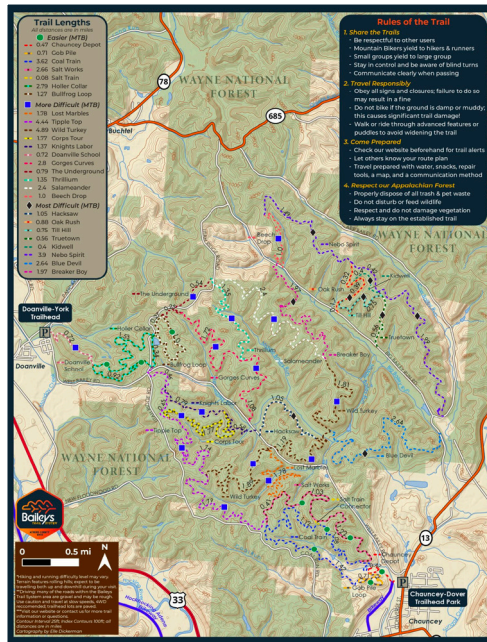
Last year, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) granted \$17 million for the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program (AMLER) to boost economic and community development in Ohio's Appalachia. Athens County was one of six to be selected for projects eliminating hazards left behind by old mining activity. Included in this was \$3 million for the Bailey's Trail System Visitor Hub, a 5,000-square-foot multipurpose visitor facility and commercial building which will be key in increasing visitation and enriching the experience. According to their website, "the mission of ORCA is to develop outdoor recreation opportunities across

governmental boundaries, that create sustainable and equitable economic development, inspiring communities throughout Appalachian Ohio.” ORCA’s development of the Baileys Trail System offers a unique opportunity to diversify and strengthen

Appalachia's economy while enriching the lives of residents and communities.

As of this summer, 16 additional miles of trail were added to the system, totaling 54 miles of biking trails that are now open to the public for use. "The Baileys Trail System is the largest continuous planned mountain biking trail system east of the Mississippi River," said Lenny Eliason, Athens County Commissioner and President of the ORCA Board of Directors. "The original plan was to develop 88 miles of mountain biking trail on the Wayne National Forest land." The difficulty of the trails ranges from beginner to expert,

so there are paths suitable for all levels of bikers interested in exploring the Wayne National Forest. Bike rentals are also available for those who are new to biking or do not have their own mountain bike.



## Map of the Baileys Trail System

Sixteen other counties in Southeast Appalachian Ohio have recently been extended invitations to join ORCA in an effort to further expand its positive effects. Four of the sixteen have already agreed to become ORCA partners (Washington, Monroe, Noble, and Jackson). “One county doing it alone is difficult,” said Eliason. “When you get multiple counties to band together in a cooperative venture, we can achieve much more.”

To learn more about ORCA, visit their website [here](#). To learn more about the Baileys Trail System specifically, visit their website [here](#).

## FEATURE

### NACO: TELLING COUNTIES' STORIES NATIONWIDE

by Rachel Massoud Reedy, CCAO Outreach & Member Engagement Manager

While CCAO provides advocacy and opportunities for Ohio counties to connect and learn, our national association counterpart, the National Association of Counties, provides these services on a national scale. As we return from the 2023 NACo Annual Conference in Travis County, Texas, I'm reflecting on the many ways CCAO members have engaged with NACo to collaborate with their peers across the country and share stories from Ohio.

Tuscarawas County Commissioner Chris Abbuhl participated in the 2023 County Leadership Institute offered by NACo. The Institute brings together county elected officials to learn strategies for innovation and creative responses to the complex issues they face in county government.

Ashtabula County Commissioner Kathryn Whittington was selected as a member of the Opioid Solutions Leadership Network. This 30-member cohort focuses on exploring evidence-based solutions for the use of the opioid settlement funds. The group traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina in the spring to see examples of innovative approaches in action.

Scioto County Commissioner Bryan Davis was appointed to the NACo Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing. The commission is charged with developing recommendations at the federal, state and local levels to address systemic issues



Warren County Commissioner Shannon Jones, who chairs the Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee with NACo Legislative Director of Human Services & Education Rachel Mackey



2023 County Leadership Institute Participants including CCAO 1st Vice President and Tuscarawas County Commissioner Chris Abbuhl



Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady chaired the NACo Large Urban County Caucus during the NACo Annual Conference contributing to mental health challenges in this country.

Several CCAO members participate in NACo's policy steering committees designed to foster education and collaboration about the most pressing policy issues facing counties today. From 2022-2023, Clermont County Commissioner David Painter chairs the Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee and from 2022-2024, Warren County Commissioner Shannon Jones chairs the Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee.

Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady chaired the Large Urban County Caucus and was recently appointed by the NACo President to serve on the NACo Board of Directors. Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman and Painter are CCAO's elected representatives on the NACo Board of Directors. Athens County Commissioner Lenny Eliason serves on the Board as a Past President. Eliason was NACo President for the 2011-2012 term.

NACo elevates stories from counties putting forth creative solutions to problems. One mechanism for sharing these projects and initiatives is through the NACo Achievement Awards. Each year, counties can apply for recognition in a variety of categories. In 2023, six Ohio counties, Cuyahoga, Fairfield, Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery and Summit, were

recognized for 15 different awards. In addition, CCAO received recognition for the Ohio Counties Ohio Statehouse Map Room Interactive Display.

These are just a few examples of the involvement of Ohio county officials within NACo. If you're interested in learning more about NACo membership and opportunities to get involved, please contact Robin Garrett, CCAO Boards' Liaison and Events Manager at [rgarrett@ccao.org](mailto:rgarrett@ccao.org).



CCAO Board Member and Portage County Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett, CCAO 2nd Vice President and Clermont County Commissioner David Painter, newly elected NACo President Mary Jo McGuire, CCAO President and Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller, Ashtabula County Commissioner Kathryn Whittington and CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler



CCAO Board Member and Scioto County Commissioner Bryan Davis and CCAO Secretary and Hamilton County Commissioner Denise Drieaus in Washington, D.C. for President Joe Biden's remarks on mental health expansion



Ohio County Officials and Staff at the 2023 NACo Annual Conference

## GUEST COLUMN

**FOSTER CARE CRISIS FORCING HUNDREDS OF KIDS TO SLEEP IN OFFICES AS OFFICIALS SEEK SOLUTIONS**

by Catherine Candisky for the Public Children Services Association of Ohio

Twice in the last year, Zoey, a 16-year-old in foster care, had to spend the night in the Franklin County Children Services office.

She had nowhere else to go.

“It was bad,” recalled the soft-spoken Zoey, a stuffed bunny clutched under her arm. “It wasn’t scary. It was just uncomfortable.”

Zoey, who asked to be identified by only her first name, ate canned ravioli and camped out on a sofa in a windowless visitation room she shared with another girl.

“We didn’t watch TV. We just sat here staring at each other,” Zoey said. “How do you sleep on this hard couch and a pillow that was flat?”

“We stayed in here and we did nothing.”

Across Ohio, a shortage of foster families, group homes, residential treatment facilities and other placements has overwhelmed child welfare agencies. Frequently, it means youth in their custody are housed in offices, hospital emergency rooms and other ill-suited places for days, weeks and sometimes longer.

In the year ending June 2022, 503 children in foster care spent at least one night in county government offices across Ohio, according to a state report. Dozens more youth stayed in hospitals even though they weren’t sick and there was no medical reason for them being there.

Child welfare officials say it’s the last option for already traumatized kids with severe behavioral health issues and developmental disabilities. There simply are not enough places offering the treatment they need.

“Residential facilities have been serving children with less significant needs and the children that we are left placing are those that have very deep-end type of issues and significant traumas that have been repeatedly occurring throughout their lives,”



Amy Wood, Placement Director at Franklin County Children Services

said Donna Seed, director of social services at Lucas County Children Services.

“They [have] issues that can range from delinquency to gang issues to significant developmental delays to ranges on the autism spectrum, or even medical issues.”

Kellijo Jeffries, director of Portage County Job and Family Services, recently was unable to find placement for a 12-year-old girl with developmental disabilities who sometimes was aggressive as well as two youth who had attempted suicide.

Foster families, group homes and treatment facilities commonly share when they deny placement that the youth’s needs are too great, or they don’t have appropriate services or enough staff to meet the child’s need, Jeffries said. “Until we have capacity and the right facilities and options for these kids, we’re going to continue to spin.”

In the case of the youth with developmental disabilities, her placement provider took the child to the hospital when she wouldn’t go to sleep, started banging her head and refused her medication. The placement provider then notified the agency that it could not take her back because of insufficient staff and her aggressive behavior.

The two youth who had recently attempted suicide were discharged from a Northeast Ohio hospital, but because the agency could not secure immediate placement, despite collaborative efforts with county and state agencies, both children remained in the hospital for days after discharge.

The system not only is failing these youth, it's compounding their problems, said Angela Sausser, executive director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio.

"This kid is being told essentially that you're not wanted. No one wants you. You can't be with your family. They may not want you because of your behaviors, or can't take care of you because of your behaviors, and now nobody else wants you and you're stuck in this cold government agency eating takeout and showering at the YMCA. Children experience trauma from being removed from their own homes. By not having a placement option readily available, we are just adding to the child's trauma."

Nearly 15,000 youth are in state custody and about a fourth of them have complex issues including mental illness, developmental disabilities, and kids from the juvenile justice system, some involved in felony-level crimes.

Approximately 1 in 4 of youth in state custody are there for these other reasons, with no history of abuse and neglect. Sausser said it's time to ask why children services has become the "system of last resort" when other systems cannot meet the needs of these youth.

Foster children's health care is covered by Medicaid while they are in custody. Medicaid is required to meet their physical, developmental, and mental health needs, but while screening and diagnosis for behavioral health conditions is common among foster youth, appropriate and available treatment for those with aggressive behaviors resulting from mental illness, developmental disabilities or trauma is in short supply.

Caseworkers say the number of youth needing intensive, long-term treatment has grown, making it harder to find a foster family or group home to take them. The longer kids wait for placement, the longer they wait for treatment, and for many youth their conditions worsen.

"It is truly additional trauma. It can worsen acute symptoms," Dr. Katherine Junger, associate medical director of mental and behavioral health for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, said of kids stuck at the hospital.

"It leaves them feeling helpless and hopeless and, quite frankly, rejected and removed from society."

The nation's largest pediatric psychiatric unit with 100 inpatient beds, Cincinnati Children's had 22 youth in its emergency room waiting for placement in April. Another 22 children remained in inpatient beds because appropriate home- or community-based treatment was unavailable.

The inpatient unit is designed for short-term crisis stabilization where youth stay five to seven days before they are discharged and moved to long-term care.

When forced to stay longer, Junger said, "they can actually get sicker while they're in the hospital because they're at this level of care that is inappropriate for their needs but it's where they can be safe until we can find a better place for them to be."

"Someone is going to end up very hurt and [my child] is going to be scarred for life by something she can't come back from."

Last spring, a teen spent a month in Cleveland's University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital. The youth was ready to be discharged, but the mother, working with child welfare officials, was not able to find a treatment facility and refused to pick up the youth until she could secure a safe option.

Eventually, due to the hospital filing abandonment charges, the Wayne County Juvenile Court placed the teen in the custody of county children services, and hospital officials brought the youth to the agency office. With no identified placement, the teen stayed two nights at the agency before custody was returned to the mother. The mother then had to take the child home due to lack of a therapeutic placement. Two days later, police were called and the youth was arrested for domestic violence and stealing the mother's car. The teen, still waiting for treatment, was taken to juvenile detention.

"I feel so helpless. All [my child] wants to do is to come home and be part of the family, but we can't safely do that," said the teen's mother. She and her child are not being identified to protect their privacy.

"It has been unbelievably difficult to find the appropriate mental health care for my child who is very complex. I know that doesn't make it easy, but it shouldn't be that difficult either.

"Someone is going to end up very hurt and [my child] is going to be scarred for life by something she can't come back from."

Dr. Ethan Leonard, chief medical officer for University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, couldn't discuss the teen's case because of patient privacy laws.

In general, "at any given time we have at least two or three kids that are in county children services custody," Leonard said.

"Many have been placed in foster care or a longer-term residential facility and have continued to exhibit behaviors and often will be dropped off in the emergency department by a foster family or outside residential place with then a refusal to take them home or take them back."

A shortage of placements and treatment options is not new. But child welfare officials say it has gotten worse since the COVID pandemic. More youth need intensive and individualized therapy, and a lack of mental health professionals and other staff has caused facilities to reduce services and beds. Some have closed entirely.

"When I first came on board over nine years ago, we barely had to make a dozen phone calls to secure appropriate residential placement. Now, the average is 80 to 100 calls to secure appropriate placement – and it's not always appropriate," said Deanna Nichols-Stika, executive director of the Wayne County Children Services Board.

The teen hospitalized for a month before ending up in juvenile detention was denied by 160 (treatment) facilities, she said.

In May, a 15-year-old youth became aggressive with caseworkers in western Ohio's Greene County after spending two nights on an office couch. Police were

called; the teen was charged and taken to juvenile detention.

"Our workers are not trained to provide the physical care for children in this kind of crisis, and they are not permitted or trained to restrain a youth who is a danger to themselves or others. We are responsible for finding appropriate care for them, but when that care doesn't exist, they end up at the agency with staff and that's a problem," said Beth Rubin, director of Greene County Job and Family Services.

Lana Penney, the county's children services administrator, said caseworkers were turned down by more than 60 treatment facilities, many out of state.

"Even when we do identify a resource for this child, or any child, it's months that we're on a waiting list for that child to get the treatment that they need," Penney said.

Ohio's urban centers like Cleveland and Columbus have been hardest hit. One week in June, Cuyahoga County Children and Family Services had 11 foster kids sleeping in its offices. Nine were from the juvenile court system and two had developmental disabilities.

In Franklin County, the number of times a child has stayed in agency offices has doubled for two years in a row. In 2022, there were 90 overnights, an increase from 42 stays in 2021, and up from 21 in 2020.

Child welfare officials said the uptick coincided with a spike in kids coming into their custody from juvenile court. Like elsewhere, more children with complex issues and a decline in foster families, group homes and facilities to meet their needs are also to blame.

Not surprisingly, problems can arise when kids stay overnight in offices and police get called when youth get frustrated, angry or even violent.

"There are days my stomach hurts, that I'm literally sick to my stomach, knowing that they are going to stay here one more night," said Amy Wood, associate director of placements for Franklin County Children Services. "It's heartbreaking for these kids. No one wants them to [have to] stay here."

The agency has taken several steps to address the issue. It hired a company to provide emergency

stabilization services and is working with a local treatment facility to create emergency shelter foster homes to avoid office stays. In addition, the agency is collaborating with providers to ensure that foster youth and their caretakers have needed services and around-the-clock crisis support.

Portage County Juvenile Judge Patricia J. Smith said that timely treatment is desperately needed.

She said she deals with foster placement issues every day and routinely keeps children in detention when they really need treatment because none can be found.

"I had to hold a young lady in my detention center because we have nowhere to put her. She had delinquent charges, but they are based on mental health issues. She should not be in a detention center. It is absolutely the worst possible alternative for her," Smith said.

"We could keep more kids in the home if we actually had services immediately available."

"It's sad to me that we're accepting this as the new normal, that it's fine for kids to have to sit in a government agency until we find some placement whether appropriate or not for this kid."

Ohio is among nine states where child-welfare services are administered by counties and overseen by the state. Advocates say a statewide solution is needed and have asked lawmakers to create a task force to come up with recommendations and aggressively implement them.

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio's Sausser said that, most immediately, crisis beds are needed to house youth until placements are available. The larger problem is a nationwide shortage of in-home and community-based treatment interventions for youth with developmental delays and mental health challenges.

Gov. Mike DeWine has championed many initiatives for children, including those in foster care. Most recently, the administration announced a campaign to expand the number of adoptive parents, foster families and kinship caretakers.

Bill Teets, communications director for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, said the

administration is committed to working with the children services association and others to address the foster care placement issue. "It is important that youth have access to the most appropriate services and supports, which includes placements that meet their needs," he said.

Creation of the state's new Department of Children and Youth, Teets said, will provide stakeholders additional opportunity to provide input on children's issues, including foster care placement. The new department is established in Ohio's biennial budget, which took effect in July.

The children services association first sounded the alarm in 2016, and in a report released last year, found "the challenge of securing timely and appropriate placements continues to grow, particularly for youth coming into care with significant behavioral health needs, developmental/intellectual disabilities, or as a diversion from juvenile corrections."

"We released our report in February 2022 and to date nothing has really been done," Sausser said. "It's sad to me that we're accepting this as the new normal, that it's fine for kids to have to sit in a government agency until we find some placement whether appropriate or not for this kid. We are grateful that the Governor's Office plans to explore solutions with us because experience in other states proves that statewide, cross-departmental leadership is needed to get results."

The crisis is not just impacting Ohio. In 2021, in the wake of the COVID outbreak, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a national state of emergency in children's mental health, and the U.S. Surgeon General released an advisory on protecting youth mental health.

Health care providers are advocating preventative care and early intervention by having mental health therapists in pediatric primary care practices. The idea is to identify and treat problems earlier so kids avoid bigger issues later.

Illustrating the need, Cincinnati Children's provided some sobering statistics:

- 14% of Ohio youth had a severe major depressive episode in 2022

- More than half did not receive any mental health treatment
- Three-fourths of Ohio's 88 counties have a shortage of mental health professionals

A reactive health-care system isn't working for these kids, said Cincinnati's Junger. Early intervention is needed. Approaching a child's brain health like their physical health could pay dividends down the road by preventing conditions from worsening and reducing the number of youth entering the child welfare system.

The hospital opened a clinic providing primary care for youth in state custody which has pediatricians, mental health professionals and social workers side-by-side caring for kids.

"If we can put those behavioral health providers right in the pediatrician's office where [patients and their families] have these decades-long relationships with their primary care providers, we can do what as a society we need to be doing and making sure we are caring for each and every child."

Sausser added that enforcing the state Medicaid program's responsibility for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) and ensuring that mental health challenges are treated the same as physical health challenges is also needed.

Nearly every state is dealing with foster placement issues, including Virginia and Colorado, which like Ohio have county-administered systems.

If Ohio creates a task force, it would be following in the steps of Virginia, which last year dramatically reduced the number of foster youth sleeping in child welfare offices.

"There is both a short-term and a long-term solution to it," said Janet Kelly, who as special advisor to Gov. Glenn Youngkin led Virginia's Safe and Sound Task Force.

Long term, Kelly said, states must bolster infrastructure by supporting and expanding kinship and family-based foster care placements. This allows kids to get treatment while staying in a family-like environment where they tend to do best. Short-term, Virginia shifted staff to intensify and individualize the

search for placements, negotiating case by case with providers.

"The governor made it a priority. We put together a multi-disciplinary team with our Medicaid agency, our behavioral health agency, our social services agency, and we basically staffed every single kid who was in an office or who was in danger of being in an office," Kelly said.

If a provider declined a placement, "we would call them back and say 'Okay, how do we get to yes?'" Whatever was needed – more money, specialists, additional services – they found a way to provide it.

"We could say, 'Does he need one-on-one care? Great, we'll pay for that. Does he need a special training or special attention? For example, sexual violence? Okay, we've got an expert for that.' We would just take a highly individualized approach for these kids."

But the results were not lasting, Kelly acknowledged. "We went all in for about 90 days," she said. "We took all of our best people out of our agencies and put them on this project, and we were able to reduce the number of kids living in offices by 89% in 90 days. That's not a sustainable solution. Those people have jobs, and once they went back to their jobs our numbers started to go up."

Still, officials learned it could be done and are finding ways to adapt. They also reduced the average length of time a child stays in an agency office, emergency room or hotel to three days, down from seven.

In Colorado, officials are trying to expand available beds at existing treatment facilities and building a new state-run center for high-need kids. They earmarked \$23 million to boost provider payments, combat staff shortages and expand specialized care, and contracted with two private facilities for 27 beds, quickly filling them all.

In April, about 82 Colorado kids had to stay in child-welfare offices, hospitals, hotels, detention centers or out-of-state facilities because treatment was not available.

"We have so much left to do," said Minna Castillo Cohen, director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families at the Colorado Department of Human Services.

"We are really trying to do this in a lot of different ways: building out workforce, trying to work to increase capacity, looking at the incentives that can be offered to providers who are willing to accept these young people in and building additional capacity across the board by looking at data."

The spike in demand for more intensive services followed closure of several residential treatment facilities, pushing more kids into foster homes and kinship care. Like Virginia, Colorado officials started by creating a task force to come up with a plan.

"This is not solved by one, two or three strategies, certainly not in the immediate short-term. This is long-term work, and you have to approach it from different angles," said Heather Duroske, with the Colorado Human Services Directors Association.

In Columbus, Zoey doesn't have a solution. She just doesn't want to spend another night in the child welfare office.

"The couch was hard, the shower was broken. We just sat here," she said. "Yeah, I really don't want to come back here."

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## VOICE OF COUNTY LEADERSHIP

### DAVE HALL, HOLMES COUNTY COMMISSIONER



Hall

**How long have you been a county commissioner?**  
From 1999-2008 and 2022 to present.

**Can you tell me about yourself? What is your professional background? What other elected positions have you held? Why did you first run?**  
I was a Presidential appointee as USDA Federal Ohio Director of Rural Development and was elected to the position of State Representative for the Ohio House serving from 2009 through 2016. I first ran for County Commissioner because I wanted to help develop a master plan for Holmes County and to develop a master plan for infrastructure.

**Why did you want to be a commissioner?**  
I felt the Commissioner position would allow me to make a difference in the community while being accessible to the constituents.

**What are you most proud of for having achieved in your time as commissioner?**  
Infrastructure development with an emphasis on tourism and home-grown businesses. Holmes County is known for having years of strong economic development because of this.

**What has been the biggest challenge you've dealt with as a county commissioner?**  
Changes in the way state and federal funding is allocated, which can vary from budget cycle to budget cycle. Unfunded mandates are also a challenge.

**What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?**  
All the extra requirements of serving on various boards throughout the county and region.

**One of the primary responsibilities of a commissioner is to develop a balanced budget and provide adequate resources to deliver county services. What has been one of the biggest challenges in that area?**

IT is a challenge and changes almost monthly. Addressing the threat of cyber hacking and keeping our offices safe from that and finding the funding for that is a challenge.

**How have you or what has your county been doing to participate in the state-county partnership?**

Many of Holmes County elected officials including myself serve on state commissions and/or boards and are in close contact with each other and our state leaders.

**We have more than 40 new CCAO members this year. What advice do you have for them as they take office?**

Reach out to other fellow Commissioners within and outside your county if you aren't sure what to do in a situation. The experiences of others can be of great value to you which you can then pass along to others.

**Could you discuss your involvement with CCAO as well as the benefits of being an active member?**

The CCAO staff helps educate us and address challenging issues we face. I've used this resource as a Commissioner and also as a State Representative.

**What are your main priorities? Why?**

To use my experiences at the local, state and federal level and the relationships I've formed in those past positions to help build a bridge between agencies for the betterment of Ohio.

**What do you find are the most successful methods for reaching out to the residents of your county to communicate what your office is doing and why it's doing it?**

Social media has been an important tool for me in the past year to give the residents of my county real-time information about situations that are happening, i.e. weather, meetings, etc.

## GUEST COLUMN

### HELPING OHIOANS BE WELL, GET WELL, AND STAY WELL

by Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

This July, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed [HB 33](#), the state's operating budget for the next two fiscal years, into law. The final budget includes historic investments and key policy work to help the state and local communities build a more visible and accessible community-based behavioral healthcare system that achieves real results for Ohioans living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

"Governor DeWine understands that health and wellness truly are foundational to successful families, growing communities, and a thriving economy," said Lori Criss, Director of the [Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#) (OhioMHAS). "With this budget, this is Ohio's time, as the Governor has said, to make sure we are working together to build a healthy, hopeful Ohio with meaningful outcomes for the Ohioans we serve." In recent years, the mental health and addiction

Resources and information about 988

Resources and information about crisis services

This webpage can help readers take a look at where crisis services exist in Ohio, and it also features a brief video series to better understand the work underway to build Ohio's crisis services system.

challenges faced by Ohioans have become more visible, and in some cases, more pronounced.

Nearly 600,000 Ohio adults are estimated to have a chronic psychiatric condition, and 2.3 million adults in Ohio are estimated to have any mental illness. Additionally, more than 900,000 Ohioans are estimated to have a substance use disorder. Meanwhile, across the U.S. and in Ohio, the mental health of children and youth has worsened over



If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health or addiction-related crisis that is non-life-threatening (thoughts of suicide, emotional distress, or substance use/addiction), call, chat, or text 988 for free, 24/7, confidential support. If you or someone you know is in immediate, life-threatening danger, call 911.

the past 15 years.

Between 2011 and 2015, youth psychiatric visits to emergency departments for depression, anxiety, and behavioral challenges increased by 28%. Between 2007 and 2018, suicide rates among youth ages 10-24 in the US increased by 57%.

The fact remains mental illness and substance use disorders are preventable, treatable, and people can and do recover. National studies show that 3 of 4 people who experience addiction eventually recover, and up to 33% of people living with serious mental illness and 67% of adults with mild to moderate mental illness experience partial to full recovery over time.

"Just like when someone suffers from a physical illness, Ohioans impacted by mental illness and addiction deserve what each of us deserves – a chance to get well, to live, work, learn, play, and pray among family and friends in their community," Criss explained. Among the key behavioral health investments in the SFY24-25 budget are:

#### 988 and Crisis Services

- The budget provides funding to sustain the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) over the biennium. Ohio currently has 19 call centers that provide coverage to all 88 counties, ensuring a localized approach to answering Ohioans' calls. Since its launch in July 2022, an average of 12,000+ Ohioans per month have used the lifeline to receive free, 24/7, confidential support and connections to local resources. 988 is providing

help to Ohioans in a timely way while also reducing stress on local law enforcement and emergency departments.

- 988 serves as a “front door” into Ohio’s [community crisis response system](#), another priority area that Ohio has put tremendous energy and focus into growing. The budget includes flexible funding for local ADAMH boards to continue to grow Ohio’s community crisis services and infrastructure through locally identified needs. In 2022, boards reported that mobile crisis services are now available in 43 counties across the state, serving over 29,000 Ohioans, with the planned expansion of 22 additional counties this fiscal year.

## Criminal Justice Supports

Local law enforcement and courts are critical partners in our work, and this budget builds on collaborative work in communities to help Ohioans with behavioral health conditions who are criminal-justice involved. This includes:

- Enhancing forensic center capacity for court-ordered evaluations and monitoring, and authorizing jail-based competency restoration for adults with serious mental illness.
- Continued support for Ohio’s drug courts and mental health courts.
- Improving the ability of [county jails to offer addiction services and psychotropic medications](#) to help these Ohioans receive the care they need with the goal of reducing recidivism and increasing public safety.

## Growing Wellness and Recovery Supports for Ohioans of All Ages

- OhioMHAS is committed to supporting quality housing options for Ohioans living with and recovering from mental health and substance use disorders because a safe, stable home is critical to their recovery. This budget includes important new investments to increase the [Residential State Supplement for the most vulnerable Ohioans](#), put important new quality

standards in place for recovery housing, and continue support for community transition programs to help people with mental illness and substance use disorders successfully reenter their community upon release from Ohio’s adult prison system.

- Ohio’s future depends on the health and wellness of its young people. This budget **increases treatment capacity for children with serious behavioral health conditions** so that they can recover closer to home. Not only does this lead to improved outcomes, but it also reduces costly out-of-home placements and out-of-state treatment transfers.
- This budget **more than doubles recovery services**, enabling OhioMHAS to strengthen support for peer recovery services and continue its [Adult Access to Wellness project](#). Through funding provided to county ADAMH Boards, over 1,000 Ohioans have received access to critical transportation, housing, and employment supports since the beginning of this pilot, and we are seeing promising results tied to decreases in costly inpatient hospitalization or jail stays. From July to December 2022, 79% of the adults helped through this program have not been admitted to psychiatric hospitals, and 90% have not been incarcerated. These results are life-changing for these adults.
- This budget **strengthens the safety net for Ohioans with severe and persistent mental illness** and **relieves pressure on local jails and courts** by providing over 3,000 adult Ohioans with more rapid access to inpatient care through increasing state hospital capacity by 30 beds and adding staffing support as well as leveraging the availability of beds at private psychiatric hospitals for vulnerable Ohioans without coverage.

## Planning for Behavioral Health Needs of Your County and Communities

The department’s work is accomplished alongside a host of local partners, including county [ADAMH Boards](#) and community providers of prevention, treatment, and recovery supports. We remain

focused on growing the partners at the table, and we are energized by the collaboration happening in communities across Ohio.

## ADAMH Community Plans

Community Planning | Department of  
Mental Health and Addiction Services  
([ohio.gov](http://ohio.gov))

## Behavioral Health Data Report

Annual Data Brief | Department of  
Mental Health and Addiction Services  
([ohio.gov](http://ohio.gov))

Ohio's state-led, locally implemented system of care is supported through a modernized **Community Assessment and Planning** process with the ADAMH Boards. This planning is data-driven and relies on local assessment of gaps and goals. Goals are set and monitored at the local and state levels to ensure effective use of resources to improve mental wellness and recovery of Ohioans. This new approach focuses on measurable outcomes and drives collaboration, accountability, innovation, and quality for taxpayers. Learn more about your county's plan [HERE](#).

OhioMHAS is also working diligently to make **data more visible, actionable, and measurable**. The Department is actively working with Boards and providers to modernize data collection, sharing, reporting, and analytics capabilities to improve data-driven decision-making and enhance service delivery and coordination. You can see some of that work showcased in Ohio's Behavioral Health Data Dashboards available [HERE](#).

To learn more about Ohio's behavioral health priorities in the state budget click [HERE](#). We welcome you to be part of the conversation and the work underway in your communities. Please let us know how we can help connect you to all that we and our local partners have to offer.

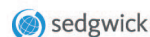
OhioMHAS' vision is to end suffering from mental

illness, substance use disorders, and problem gambling. The cabinet level state agency provides leadership and support to ADAMH Boards for local planning and collaboration to meet locally determined needs. The department also operates [six regional state psychiatric hospitals](#) equipped with over 1,000 beds serving more than 4,000 people each year, in addition to operating [Ohio Pharmacy Services](#) and providing [recovery services](#) to more than 17,000 men and women incarcerated with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

**"Our goal is to keep people from having a behavioral health condition in the first place, and we want to give all Ohioans the prevention tools they need to build resiliency and promote good mental health."**

**For those Ohioans who need care and recovery supports, we want them to see a clear pathway – at whatever point they enter our health care system and in whatever community they live,"** said Director Criss.

**"The health and success of our families, our communities, and our economy depend on this work."**



The year ahead may bring twists and turns for employers. But no matter what obstacles come, the right partner can help you remain steady on the path forward. Sedgwick supports Ohio clients and their employees by simplifying workers' compensation claims. We help mitigate risks, control costs, administer discount programs, share safety best practices, and provide expert program consultation. Taking care of people is at the heart of everything we do.

For additional questions, contact Tony Sharrock at:  
P. 614.376.5450 E. [tony.sharrock@sedgwick.com](mailto:tony.sharrock@sedgwick.com)

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THE FORWARD PATH

## CEBCO NEWS

**CEBCO EXPANDS THROUGH PROGRAMS AND PROSPECTS**

by Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

In July, CEBCO introduced a new benefit to our member counties – Sword, a digital physical therapy program designed to help members prevent as well as treat acute, chronic and post-surgical pain. Sword provides treatment for all musculoskeletal issues, including pain in the back, shoulder, neck, hip, knee, elbow, ankle, and wrist. For CEBCO, in the past year, Musculoskeletal (MSK) Conditions accounted for over \$24.5M in medical claims, which is 13% of our total medical spend. Almost 10,000 members were affected by this condition.



Kindell

To enroll in Sword, members can visit [join.swordhealth.com/cebco/register](http://join.swordhealth.com/cebco/register), where they will be connected with a doctor of Physical Therapy, who will work with the member to design a program and will follow up with them during PT visits. After the initial assessment, members will receive a Sword kit, which will contain a Tablet, loaded with a digital PT program, along with sensors designed to fit the area of the body where treatment is needed.

The sensors help the member follow the prescribed exercises/activity, which the doctor and member can review during their virtual sessions. Sessions are usually 20 – 30 minutes long and most programs last for 8 – 12 weeks, initially. After the initial period, treatment can continue or the doctor can help design an exercise or activity that works best for the member.

Sword is available to CEBCO covered employees, spouses, and dependents 18 and older. There is no cost for PPO or HSA plans, as this is considered a Wellness Benefit. We encourage members to try the new program.

CEBCO will hold our Annual Wellness Coordinator's Meeting on Friday, August 25, at 10:00 am, in Columbus. CEBCO is making a change to our Wellness Program which will be introduced at this meeting. We encourage coordinators to attend in

person but we will provide a virtual option this year, so that we can reach those who may not be able to attend in person. As part of the new program, CEBCO will provide incentives directly to employees and covered spouses, which will be covered by our Member Equity. We are excited to share this new venture, so please register with Hannah McKee, [hmckee@ccao.org](mailto:hmckee@ccao.org), as soon as possible.

Our 20th Renewal Meeting will be held, virtually, on Friday, September 1, at 10:00 am. The invitations have been sent to our counties and partners. As we move toward 2024, CEBCO continues to grow - we now provide health and pharmacy benefits to 46 Ohio counties and hope to add more counties for the coming year.

Recently, the CEBCO Board of Directors authorized the CEBCO staff to explore the possibility of providing CEBCO coverage to other political subdivisions and for 2024, we will look to potentially add cities/townships/county departments with more than 100 medically enrolled employees to our consortium. For information, please contact Mike Kindell, [mkindell@ccao.org](mailto:mkindell@ccao.org), for more information.

August is Cancer Awareness Month. Please click [here](#) to learn of simple steps to help prevent cancer.

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## CORSA NEWS

### CORSA WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER & ANNOUNCES GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

by Alison Redmond, CORSA Membership Services Manager

The County Risk Sharing Authority (CORSA) announces that Washington County Commissioner Charlie Schilling has been selected to serve on the CORSA board of directors. Charlie was recommended by the selection committee and was unanimously appointed by the Board of Directors to fill the unexpired term of Commissioner Paul Haller.



Schilling

"I'm honored to be selected to be on the CORSA board of directors. CORSA has a longstanding reputation of serving Washington County and the best interests of each county it represents. I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with the Board and work on behalf of our member counties to provide the best property and liability coverage along with risk management services," said Commissioner Charlie Schilling.

"I welcome Commissioner Schilling to the board. Charlie's experience and knowledge will be invaluable to the CORSA Board and membership. I am excited that he agreed to share his expertise with CORSA and appreciate his dedication not only to Washington County but to CORSA as well. Charlie will be a great asset as we look to the future to continue to offer superior services that will help counties protect their resources," said CORSA Managing Director John Brownlee.

#### Grant Money Available for Cybersecurity

In 2023 CORSA allotted \$656,000 (60% increase over 2021) for members to participate in two separate cybersecurity reimbursement grants:

##### Grant I. General Cybersecurity

CORSA will reimburse up to \$2,750 for a project,

program, or acquisition designed to mitigate or eliminate cyber/computer property/causality risk including, but not limited to:

- Vulnerability scans by HG Consulting;
- Firewall upgrade;
- Hardware upgrade;
- Email upgrade;
- GPS vehicle monitoring;
- Positive pay;
- Select IT certifications for in-house IT personnel;
- Or pre-approved member cybersecurity grant application.

##### Grant II. Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) for MFA purchased and deployed in 2023

Members with less than 100 employees reported on their CORSA application may receive a minimum \$500 reimbursement for MFA and members with greater than 100 employees as reported on the CORSA application may be reimbursed for MFA at a rate of up to \$11.00 per employee.

While a significant amount of funds is available for this program, funds are limited so apply without delay. To take advantage of vulnerability assessments please contact Hamilton Gottschall at (614) 259-8798 or [hamilton@hgconsulting.net](mailto:hamilton@hgconsulting.net). To take advantage of the anti-phishing software reimbursement, cybersecurity reimbursement grant, MFA grant, or CORSA risk management services contact Frank Hatfield, CORSA Risk Control Manager at 614-560-1474 or [fhathfield@ccao.org](mailto:fhathfield@ccao.org).

## CCAO SERVICE CORP NEWS

### PROTECTING YOUR COUNTY FROM A CYBER-ATTACK...

by Steve Caraway, CCAO Service Corporation Manager

#### Service Corporation Launches Cyber Assistance for Ohio Counties

After learning from CORSA of multiple counties getting hit hard with cyber-attacks, CCAOSC has decided to launch a County Cyber Defense Program. According to Embroker, Cyber-attacks have been rated the fifth top rated risk in 2020 and become the new norm across public and private sectors. This risky industry continues to grow in 2023 as Internet-of-Things (IoT) cyber-attacks alone are expected to double by 2025. In addition, the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Risk Report states that the rate of detection (or prosecution) is as low as 0.05 percent in the U.S.



Caraway

Recently, Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted released their CyberOhio program. While the CyberOhio program is fantastic news in helping governments identify their cyber vulnerabilities, it does not remediate them. The CCAO Service Corporation is proud to partner with HG Consulting. HG Consulting will detect cybersecurity vulnerabilities and provide you with a solution to ensure you're protected against the bad guys.



Counties can protect their computers and servers by automatically updating computer software and preventing threats in real-time county-wide. Endpoint Security & Patching becomes ever more important in the modern world. Deploying a cloud-managed EDR & Patch management system to keep your endpoints patched & protected is critical as well as MFA (multi-factored authentication).

All of us know that IT projects can be complex and time demanding. Sometimes it makes sense to call in a specialist to help with the heavier-than-normal demand – and the CCAOSC Cyber Defense program is ready to assist counties. In addition, you can have the assurance of continuity in dealing with the CCAOSC Cyber Defense team.

## 2023 CCAO Summer Symposium

**AUGUST 16-18, 2023**

### ***Economic Development Strategies: Ohio Counties Reaching Forward***

*For County Commissioners, County Executives and County Council Members and Their Key Staff*

**Registration Open**

#### AREAS OF INTEREST

  
Economic  
Development  
Practices

  
Workforce  
Development  
Case Studies

  
Successful  
Landbank  
Practices

  
Expanding  
Broadband  
Services

## COUNSELOR'S CORNER

### OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUES OPINION ON OFF-SITE ARRESTEE MEDICAL TREATMENT

by Frank Hatfield, Esq., CORSA Loss Control Manager

Several studies have concluded that individuals arrested are overwhelmingly more likely to have serious health needs than those not arrested<sup>1</sup>. Elevating the challenges faced by arresting agencies and jails is that those arrested are also far more likely to suffer from mental illness. The Department of Justice has found that in the United States there are more than three times more seriously mentally ill persons in jails and prisons than in hospitals, thus warranting its study's conclusion that "America's jails and prisons have become our new mental hospitals."<sup>2</sup> In 2019, approximately 10 million people were arrested in the United States.<sup>3</sup>



Hatfield

The medical needs of arrestees too frequently have to be assessed during dynamic circumstances often involving resistant and violent individuals at the sally port or intake at a county jail. Recently, the Ohio Attorney General issued Opinion 2023-007<sup>4</sup> regarding R.C. 341.192(B) and medical policies and procedures of the county jail. Specifically, the Ohio Attorney General opined:

1. Subject to approval by the court of common pleas, the county sheriff is authorized to promulgate rules and policies to deny an arrestee, whether arrested on-sight or on a warrant by an outside law-enforcement officer, admission to the county jail when the jail physician determines that off-site treatment is required as a matter of medical necessity.
2. The medical costs of an arrestee denied admission to the county jail are borne by the custodial law-enforcement agency.
3. If an arrestee is denied admission to the county jail based on medical necessity, custody remains

with the outside law-enforcement officer and that officer is responsible for transporting and guarding the arrestee at the off-site medical facility.

In light of the Attorney General's recent opinion, coupled with the increasing possibility that arrestees may require off-site medical treatment as a matter of medical necessity, it's an opportune time for Sheriff's Offices to review, and modify if necessary, jail intake and medical procedures. It also might be a good time for those who participate, or have input, in such matters (e.g. Prosecutor's Office; Jail Physician; Medical Consultant; Arresting Agencies; etc.) to confer in a preventative effort to mitigate the risk and hazards associated with arrestees that require off-site medical treatment as a matter of medical necessity.

Finally, CORSA member Sheriff's Offices may avail themselves to the law enforcement loss control resources at [www.corsa.org](http://www.corsa.org) or by contacting Law Enforcement Loss Control Coordinators Ken Hilty (614) 357-6966 or Steve Flory (614) 981-3414 or Frank Hatfield, CORSA Loss Control Manager, (614) 560-1474.

1 <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/repeatarrests.html>

2 <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/more-mentally-ill-persons-are-jails-and-prisons-hospitals-survey>

3 <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/security-safety/crime-and-justice/crime-and-police/arrests/>

4 OAG 2023-007 may be found at: <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/getattachment/52278b61-4462-47ea-aaad-7847e6950f2d/2023-007.aspx#:~:text=If%20an%20arrestee%20is%20denied,%2Dsite%20medical%20facil%2D%20ity.>

## CCAO LEADERSHIP

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## CEBCO LEADERSHIP

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County Leader, CCAO's quarterly e-magazine, provides an in-depth look at the news, programs and policies affecting Ohio's 88 counties. The e-magazine also showcases our members, offers best county practices as well as ways to enhance the state-county partnership practices and shares the offerings of the association. If you have questions or story submissions, contact Editor Jessica Newbacher at jnewbacher@ccao.org or 614-220-7986.