



March 29, 2019

The Honorable Mike DeWine
Governor
77 South High St., 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

On behalf of Ohio's children's crisis care centers, thank you for your leadership and support of policies to prevent child abuse and neglect. We are excited about the potential for additional family support programs that are being discussed at the State and National level and we look forward to the opportunity to voice our families' many needs.

The Family First Prevention Services Act was passed in February 2018 to establish a new approach to providing support for families and to keep children out of foster care. This Act is in the process of being implemented and involves a major reworking of the Title IV-E funding stream that has historically been the primary source of funding for foster care. Ohio has formed workgroups to develop a plan that will meet the requirements of FFPSA and provide services for areas targeted by the legislation including mental health, parenting, substance abuse and kinship care.

The legislation includes directives to insure the efficient and effective use of these funds. It includes provisions for the establishment of a clearinghouse that will review and approve evidence-based programs that can be included in Ohio's plan. Mr. Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services, has established a timeline for implementation of FFPSA and will soon be publishing the Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures. This handbook will address the details for qualifying as an evidence-based program for the purpose of receiving funding under this act.

Ohio's Crisis Care Centers have been effectively supporting children and families in Ohio for over 35 years. We have kept children safe, promoted family resiliency and helped keep families together while working with other agencies and programs to provide a safety net for children at risk of abuse and neglect. We have demonstrated positive outcomes for those who have received our services and we would like to be included in the clearinghouse to be able to be part of Ohio's FFPSA plan.

Providence House submitted comment for inclusion of the crisis nursery model in the clearinghouse on July 22, 2018 (see attached) and was not included in the initial list of programs being reviewed. We are concerned that the services available for consideration are limited to programs only on the clearinghouse list, especially in light of the fact that the process for selection is extensive and time consuming and is behind schedule. This process creates barriers for small, effective programs like ours that have become an integral part of our community's child protection services but are not widely known. We need help to be able to tell our stories.

As leaders of Ohio's currently licensed crisis care centers, we collectively request that a letter of support from your office is sent on our behalf to Mr. Jerry Milner and Mr. Alex M. Azar, Secretary of Health and Human Services. We would like to be considered for inclusion on the FFPSA clearinghouse list and would welcome the opportunity to present information about our programs to Abt Associates, the firm hired to review and approve programs for the clearinghouse.

There are currently three licensed facilities in Ohio that provide critical family support and preservation services: Providence House in Cleveland, Brigid's Path in Dayton and Blessing House in Lorain. Additionally, Columbus, Toledo, and Akron are investigating the launch of crisis care centers in their communities. We believe your endorsement and support is crucial to our cause considering the smaller number of agencies involved.

Ohio's crisis nurseries have demonstrated remarkable results in promoting family stability and preventing foster care placements throughout Ohio. In these centers, children receive basic needs and around the clock services in a home like environment while families in crisis receive case management, parent education, and trauma services. External evaluations have found that families that engage in crisis nursery services are less likely to have their children placed in foster care and experience increased stability (housing, employment, income, etc.).

At a recent conference attended by agency administrators, policy makers, caregivers and caseworkers, we were encouraged to step outside the box of standard programming and procedures, the way things have always been done. We were challenged to look for new ways to address the issues that threaten to overrun our current system. We believe our programs have done just that and we believe the clearinghouse would be an excellent platform to share our successes with others.

At Providence House, 99% of children were reunited with their parent or caregiver and a Case Western Reserve University external evaluation found that 82% of children served remained out of foster care long term. It is estimated that over \$8M is being saved annually in foster care costs for Cuyahoga County due to Providence House family preservation services.

At Brigid's Path, 29 out of 30 babies who were discharged in 2018 remained in the custody of their parents or family members (kinship), thereby avoiding foster care placement. Of those 30 children, 19 would have gone straight into foster care were it not for Brigid's Path. Avoiding placement resulted in an estimated cost savings of over \$400,000 to the foster care system in the few 12 months of operation with very low census. According to the PCSAO 2018 report, there were 16154 kids in care and the per year cost was \$369,644,380. Additional cost savings of over \$1,000,000 for medical treatment would have been saved by Brigid's Path caring for babies' medical needs instead of the hospital based on the 2017 Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) hospital discharge data summary table from Ohio Department of Health. Importantly, we wrapped services around 102 caregivers of the babies we served to provide education on caring for baby, strengths-based supportive services, and connections to other necessary services

throughout 6 counties surrounding Kettering, Ohio. The cost avoidance and impact to the public and long-term effect has not been calculated, but Brigid's Path focuses on improving the social determinants of health for our babies and their families.

At Blessing House, 95% of children were reunited with their parent or caregiver this past year. In Lorain County, taxpayers save \$9,097 for each child that does not go into an out of home placement. We develop relationships with our families and become the ongoing help they need to maintain stability in their homes. We provide critical support for kinship families and those dealing with mental and physical health issues.

Thank you for your consideration of our request for your endorsement. We look forward to working with you on this effort to position crisis care centers as a vital family preservation service in the national FFPSA clearinghouse.

Sincerely,



Natalie A. Leek-Nelson
President and CEO
Providence House



Sr. Mary Berigan, SND
Executive Director
Blessing House



Jill Kingston
Executive Director
Brigid's Path