Our Mission:
The Lakewood Family Collaborative (Collab) is a network of organizations, businesses, agencies, and dedicated individuals working together to enable children, youth, and families to thrive and be successful members of the community.

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The Lakewood Family Collaborative (the Collab) continues to grow and expand! It has enriched our neighborhoods and is improving the quality of life for families.

Established in 2007, in partnership with Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS), the Collab has evolved into a well-known and highly regarded entity in the community. The Collab now has an active and growing membership of over 50 dedicated agencies, professionals and interested individuals. We identify family resources as well as needs and gaps in service and work together to meet those needs as a community.

Family to Family direct services staff connects parents, caregivers, resource families and aged out young adults to sources of help, support and social engagement. Three full time wrap specialists, a full time supervisor and a part time resource specialist were assisted in this work by three graduate level social work interns.

Following is an overview of the achievements attained in each of the contracted deliverables as well as vignettes that capture the essence of our families’ challenges and successes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleen McNamara</td>
<td>Family to Family Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Korpa</td>
<td>Wrap Specialist</td>
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<td>Bruce Chamberlin</td>
<td>Wrap Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marjorie Korcheck</td>
<td>Wrap Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa Lowrie</td>
<td>Resource Specialist</td>
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</table>
HEROIN AND HOPE: This event brought together several local community organizations to create awareness about this epidemic and its impact on our community. An entire resource room was filled with 30 community agencies who offer treatment, recovery, advocacy and prevention. The presentation featured speakers - a recovering addict and a family member - who shared their personal stories about the devastating impact on individuals and families. Speakers from Project DAWN and other county agencies presented. 60 individuals were trained in the use of Naloxone. This event was covered by local media to bring added awareness to the issue. Approximately 250 people attended this event.

SUPPLIES FOR SUCCESS: This committee once again coordinated the efforts of multiple agencies and the schools to provide students with the tools needed for academic success. It also raised $3,744.00, a significant increase from the $1,884.00 raised in the prior year. Business donors from New York Life augmented the backpack collection while H2O volunteers helped recycle. The committee was awarded the Lakewood/Rocky River Rotary grant to support the purchase of headphones, a higher ticket item not normally donated.

THE LAKEWOOD CHRISTMAS STORE: This faith based initiative once again partnered with the Collab to set up a storefront shop for Lakewood families to purchase holiday gifts for their children. Items were donated by many individuals and businesses. This year the store served 123 families, many of them referred by Collab members. The Collab also referred families residing in zip code areas 44111 and 44135 to its Cleveland counterpart.

FAMILY HOLIDAY PARTY: Family to Family staff hosted a fun filled holiday dinner for families at Harrison Elementary School. Festivities included an open gym for basketball and games and a DJ for dancing. Approximately 157 Family members attended.
Direct Service/Support to Families

The Collab remains passionate about and committed to the values of the Family to Family Initiative. We see the positive impact of our presence in the community. Strong partnership with CCDCFS and the community is a top priority, as we observe daily the power of teamwork and collaboration on behalf of the families we serve. Our goal is to resolve issues related to child safety and well-being through a focus on developing healthy, stable families and creating an environment that supports positive social connections for all families within our neighborhoods.

The volume of referrals from CCDCFS has continued to jump significantly each year. This is most reflective of the increased and critical need for family support and basic resources in our service area.

Lakewood has highly skilled and committed staff. They have developed a reputation for being tenacious, accessible and responsive to both CCDFCS caseworkers and community based referents over many years of collaboration. Feedback from County colleagues often indicates a high degree of satisfaction with our agency’s communication processes and dependable follow up on referrals.

Approximately 75% of families served were CCDCFS referred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Families served</th>
<th>DCFS Families served</th>
<th>Non DCFS families served</th>
<th>DCFS referrals</th>
<th>Community referrals</th>
<th>One time only families served</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>544</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>183</td>
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Referrals

Approximately 75% of families served were CCDCFS referred

Referrals

Annual Referrals

Contract Year

Supporting families, enriching lives
Following is a listing of the numbers of meetings attended by Lakewood staff during this grant year:

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<th></th>
<th>Invited</th>
<th>Attended</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Custody/Placement</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Staffings</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>483</td>
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Lakewood’s participation in Family Meetings is a highly valued activity because it gives community partners like us a chance to meet the family face to face during what could be their most traumatic family crisis. Support and advocacy at the table increases the opportunity to build a helping relationship as the family navigates the system and begins to complete their case plan. It also allows us to see the concerns from both the family and County perspective.

123 of these meetings were Family Team Meetings held in the family home with the caseworker. These are critical meetings as they enable us to understand the case plan and support and advocate for the family as they complete their case plan goals.
OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS
City of Lakewood, Division of Youth

- **NIGHT MOTHER:** The Collab’s Mental Health Awareness Committee facilitated a community dialogue on suicide following this theatre performance at the Beck Center for the Performing Arts. The speakers interacted with the audience in educating about suicide from the perspective of the individual, family and friends. A powerful discussion illuminated the issue and highlighted prevention measures for families and community.

- **Private donations:** Have increased significantly this year. Our Resource Specialist reached out to area businesses and individuals for basic necessities. One business donated 50 coats for families and one provided holiday gifts for 3 families.

- **Two City Council members:** Identified a donor willing to donate an apartment full of furniture for families in need. They paid for the U-Haul truck while Resource Specialist located community volunteers to coordinate and deliver the furniture to 3 households.

- **Holiday giving:** Collab partners once again provided holiday gifts for 2 aged out youth.

- **Job Seekers Club:** Provided job skill development opportunities for unemployed and underemployed. In addition to monthly meetings at the library, the committee co-sponsored several job fairs throughout the community during this grant year.

- **Lakewood’s 7th Annual Celebration of Families Night event:** Biggest turnout ever with 51 family members marching on the field. Parma Collab joined us for this fun community event as well.

Collaboration with CCDCFS

- Participated in The Teen Clap Out
- Kinship Legal Workshop
- Holiday Teen Party
- **Kinship Awareness and Advocacy Team**
- CCDCFS Adoption Mixer hosted at Lakewood
- Teen Thanksgiving Dinner
- Family Interaction Strategic Planning
Resource Assistance

The highest volume of requests for help were related to issues of housing instability, utility shut offs, basic needs such as food and clothing, school issues, parenting support, connection to substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence services. We have also seen an increase in the need for beds, bedding and furniture due to bed bug issues.

The Resource Specialist has continued to grow and expand our community connections and this has resulted in increased donations of goods and services from businesses and concerned individuals.

Here is one resource assistance story:

School referred an Afghan family for help in acclimating to their new home. Collab connected family to resources for food, clothing, furniture and household items. Wrap specialist also advocated with the Department of Homeland Security and a local congressional assistant to help with their status when green cards were lost in the mail.

Ongoing Supportive Service

The vast majority of our families work with us on an ongoing basis until their needs are met. Assistance most often takes the form of resource connection, problem solving, skill building, crisis prevention/intervention and advocacy. Family to Family staff are skilled at negotiating systems barriers that impede goal achievement or the completion of a parent’s DCFS case plan. Whenever possible we create a supportive community based team that will continue to support the family when we step away.

In 2014, we saw an increase both in the number of single fathers raising children and the number of parents struggling with addiction issues.

One of the major benefits of Family to Family’s presence over time is preventative. Families we work with feel comfortable returning for help when there is a new crisis or setback. We believe that in the long run, this reduces the need for county systems involvement.

Here is one ongoing supportive service story:

Lakewood police witnessed a toddler hanging out of an apartment window. The police officer contacted the Collab as the family had recently arrived from Nepal and did not speak English. Collab staff worked with the landlord to repair the window. They also used an interpreter to identify other family needs and connect family back to their resettlement agency. Mother and children then participated in our holiday party and came to us for help in resolving a subsequent parenting crisis.

Family Spotlight

Support Single Fathers

Mr. J is a single father to 3 children ages 6, 8, and 15. An intern with The Lakewood Family Collab began working with Mr. J when he requested assistance with winter coats for his children. After completing a needs assessment, our intern found he was struggling with paying an electric bill due for shut off two days after her home visit. Our agency referred Mr. J to an Energy Assistance Program that paid a portion of his bill. Mr. J was able to come up with 1/4 of the bill and our agency covered the rest. Together, we were able to free Mr. J from this debt that would’ve left his family without heat and cooking gas. Mr. J’s contribution enabled him to be part of the problem-solving process and empowered him as a parent.
Lakewood’s veteran wrap specialists are highly skilled and committed to the fidelity of the model in which they were trained. They are particularly adept at assisting in the search for natural supports (family members, friends) as well as engaging school staff, faith communities and mental health providers to sit on family teams.

Here is one wraparound success story:

The W family was in turmoil, with both parents in jail and the children in foster care. Since Dad’s release, the Lakewood Collab has ‘wrapped around’ this family, with the goals of gainful employment for Dad, housing for the family and continued sobriety throughout it all. With the DCFS worker, maternal grandparents, an aunt and a family friend, the wrap team is successfully meeting their goals. Dad has been sober and is working a strong and active program. He has a good job and has moved into a home where the kids will soon be living. Reunification is just around the corner, and this Wraparound Team supports and challenges Dad in all the right places.

Celebrate a Wrap success!!

Mom and children have been reunified for almost a year and going strong!

What Worked?

A committed mom, a strong collaboration between the caseworker, Nathaniel Martin and wrap specialist, Bob Korpa, 23 community visitations and a dedicated wrap team consisting of formal and natural supports.
Aged Out Youth

In 2014, Family to Family staff committed to creating community awareness and support for teens that have aged out of foster care. In years past, we have asked the Collab to provide holiday gifts for these young people and this year we continued the tradition.

**New!** A spotlight at our monthly Collab meeting focused on creating awareness of the struggles and challenges that aged out youth face. This engaging and powerful presentation by a young aged out woman and the Independent Living Coordinator was warmly received.

Staff supported the young people referred to us by assisting with budgeting, job interview preparation, transportation, basic necessities, problem solving and crisis prevention. We also attended staffings and court hearings on their behalf.

Visitation

| 118 Visits | 11 Families visited |
| 14 Children |
| 2 Sites available and working with faith based partners on additional sites |

Visitation has the benefit of nurturing strong, long term community based relationships for parents who are working toward reunification!

Lakewood has two visitation sites and both are in close proximity to a park, library and bowling alley. Families have expressed appreciation for those site opportunities.

Aged Out Youth Spotlight

A wrap specialist developed an ongoing, supportive relationship with M., a young YAO who is developmentally disabled and had transitioned to a new group home. M’s bike, his sole means of transportation to his job, was damaged in a traffic accident. As spring approached, the wrap specialist took him to purchase a new bike. Through the support of his case-worker, the Collab, his new family connection and his employer, M. now feels comfortable and happy in his new neighborhood.
Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment

Lakewood's spirited commitment in the effort to recruit foster and adoptive families has also continued and grown.

New! One of our foster parents was invited to be the spotlight speaker at the monthly Collab meeting. She shared her moving story of the long term fostering of a sibling group of three young children. She also conveyed the importance of foster parents engaging with the biological family whenever possible, for the benefit of the children. CCDCFS Recruitment staff were also invited to share data and trends from the County perspective.

Following is a listing of our recruitment activities in 2014 which resulted in 13 serious inquiries about fostering and/or adopting. Many of these interested families continued to dialogue with us about the possibilities.

Moving Hearts Gallery (MHG) – The MHG was displayed once again at Lakewood Public Library during the months of November – mid January. New! Westlake’s Porter Library displayed the MHG as well as allowing us to schedule information sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Families attended a foster ware party hosted by Collab and recruitment staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Recruitment information tables were staffed at high profile community events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Community information sessions held at community sites</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 MHG exhibits during this contract period</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th Annual Celebration of Families Night event</td>
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Lakewood also supported CCDCFS recruitment efforts through participation in:

Foster Parent Month Kick Off    Foster Parent Picnic    Hosting and participating at Adoption Mixer

Lakewood Collab has historically condensed our efforts and events to be held between May and November. This has worked well as activities in the summer and fall have sequentially built up to highlight the Moving Hearts Gallery. We plan on continuing with this strategy.
Cluster Support Group

GRASP (Grandparents and Relatives as Second Parents), Lakewood’s Cluster Support group, is open to all caregivers regardless of where they reside. It meets monthly and is facilitated by Family to Family staff.

The purpose of the group is to enhance parenting skills, problem solve and increase networking and resource opportunities for members. Over time, most of the involved caregivers have utilized Family to Family's individualized ongoing supportive services as well.

Regular meetings, with the group’s presence over time, have allowed for deep friendships to grow between caregivers as well as their children.

10 Monthly meetings held
4 Community information tables staffed at high profile community events.
6 Kinship families participated in special events throughout the year

Kinship Support story:

Grandma is raising two sets of twins and a teen. This dedicated kinship care provider has strengthened her capacity to keep the kids in her care by utilizing support and gaining stability from the DCFS caseworker, her wraparound specialist and a dedicated wrap team, which includes her friends as natural supports. Her vision to provide a stable, comfortable home for her grandkids and prioritize their schooling is being reached.
Lessons Learned
Looking Toward the Future

Retrospectively, Lakewood recognizes that the significant success we have achieved in most of the deliverable areas has occurred due to the strong collaborative relationships we have forged with both CCDCFS and our many community partners. We plan to continue this community building in 2015-2017 through the Collab’s Expansion Committee, which will focus outreach and membership efforts in our far west Cleveland and suburban service areas.

In the area of Foster Care Recruitment, we were unable to meet the challenging Cluster goal of supporting four newly identified prospective foster families through to the completion of pre-service. We plan to maximize our efforts with County’s Recruitment Management Team and our Cluster partners to identify new, effective strategies.

Other efforts will include a renewed focus on building and expanding our Cluster Support group for kinship caregivers, which is in line with the County’s dedication to stronger support of kinship families. We will hold community focus groups to complete a community needs assessment with our Cluster partners and work closely with County’s Kinship Awareness and Advocacy Team (KAAT).

Contact Us
Give us a call for more information about our services

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Wraparound at work...

Family to Family 2014/2015 Annual Report