Carroll County Family and Children First Council
Service Coordination Mechanism
2025

Overview

Due to its rural nature and limited financial and structured resources, Carroll County's most valuable resources have always been the willingness and ability of professionals to work collaboratively to meet the needs of families and children. Since the 1980's when Cluster was the means to address the needs of multi-need children and their families, the child-and family-serving professionals of Carroll County have worked together to ensure that those needs were met in the most beneficial way for those children and families.

The lack of bountiful financial resources has seemed to encourage the development of creative strategies for meeting the needs of multi-need children and their families in terms of services and the financing of those services. Historically, only on 3 occasions was State Family and Children First Council asked to assist in funding the needs of Carroll County children. That professional creativity and collaboration succeeded in development of alternative funding agreements for the vast majority of children served by the Carroll County Council.

In the constant effort to strengthen how children and family are being served in Carroll County, a subcommittee of Carroll County Family and Children First Council was formed in October 2009. The goal of this committee was to review the existing service coordination mechanism, compare this to other mechanisms, and re-create the Carroll County service coordination process. This effort was made to strengthen family and direct service provider involvement to decrease the potential of out-of-home placements, decrease the potential of court involvement, increase a child's school success, and stabilize home stressors that may create unnecessary burden on families. This document is a result of the collaboration between county agencies to meet the needs of Carroll County families:

- Carroll County Family and Children First Council
- Carroll County Juvenile Court
- Carroll County Job and Family Services
- Carroll County Board of Developmental Disability
- ADAMHS Board of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties
- Big Brother/Big Sister of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties
- Carroll County school districts
- OhioRISE

Since the formation of Family and Children First Councils, Carroll County has continued to reap the benefits of this ongoing collaboration. Many of the schools in the county are striving to provide innovative programs to assist their students in succeeding in school. These improvements in services to children and families continue despite increasing unfunded mandates and budget cuts. Carroll County is truly a collaborative county that values the lives of families and children.

Carroll County Family and Children First Council Mission Statement:
To further build the collaboration among community resources and service providers by promotion, planning, developing, and implementing a system of preventative and responsive services to achieve a healthier and safer community.

Carroll County Family and Children First Council is committed to meeting the mandates of Section 121.37 of the Ohio Revised Code in developing a holistic continuum of services available to children and families. This continuum should be inclusive and offer a balance of prevention, intervention, and treatment.

SYSTEM OF CARE

Purpose
A system of care is a spectrum of community-based services and supports for children and youth with multiple needs and their families. It is organized into a coordinated network, both at the system and service level, to help them to function better at home, in school, in the community and throughout life.

The purpose of the Carroll County Family and Children First Service Coordination Mechanism (SCM) is to apply the knowledge and experience of families and professionals toward the development of family-centered and cost-effective plan of action for families and children who present with multiple needs or whose needs have not been met by traditional agencies. Information is shared and coordinated between agencies while protecting and assuring the confidentiality of the child and family. The SCM is not intended to override current agency systems, but to supplement and enhance supports that currently exist, or identify additional supports that are needed but not currently utilized.

The Carroll County SCM targets children and adolescents ages 0-21 who are multi-need or have multi-system involvement. Early identification and intervention of these youth is encouraged to increase chances of success for the team. These individuals are often at risk of placement disruption and have the potential to move to a more restrictive level of care. A primary focus of service coordination is not only to review and coordinate existing services but to creatively identify options that would allow a family to remain intact, address issues that threaten the child and family stability, and maintain the child in the least restrictive environment. Utilization of home and community supports is encouraged.

Service Coordination also works with those children in a more restrictive level of care to transition the children to a less restrictive environment and, ultimately, maintain the children in a family.

Awareness of the County Service Coordination Mechanism
Agencies, community members, and families will become informed of the SCM by placement of brochures in a variety of local sites and events. Information will also be available on the FCFC website. Additionally, FCFC members are requested to share the SCM within their own agencies/organizations.

Help Me Grow Early Intervention Service Coordination
All children being served by the Early Intervention program and the SCM will receive services consistent with federal laws and regulations of Early Intervention requirements in addition to DCY policy and procedures. The lead provider of service coordination will be the EI Service Coordinator for children participating in both services.

SYSTEM OF CARE PROCESS

The Carroll County Family and Children First Council will implement a family-centered approach to service coordination that is responsive to cultural, racial, and ethnic differences.

The service coordinator will determine a family's needs and willingness to participate in service coordination. Assessments are completed on all cases. Family supports such as mentors, advocates, etc. are invited to participate from the initiation of services.

Referrals:
The initial gateway into the service coordination process is the referral:

- Referrals will be received from existing service providers, juvenile court staff, family supports, professionals in the community, and the family.

- Each person (including parents/guardians) making a referral will be asked to complete the FCFC screening tool based on their perception/understanding of the youth/family situation. The questions contained in the screen tool are very descriptive so that specialized training to use the tool is not required. Although the tool is not normed, it is comprehensive (covering multiple life domains) and will provide a consistent measure on which to determine level of care needs and guide case assignment.
- The individuals will have the option to complete either a paper form or place a phone call to FCFC office. This form will keep confidential information to a minimum as much of it will be gathered during an initial phone contact with the family and during the assessment process.
- Any provider completing a referral will obtain a release of information from the family prior to completing the form and will provide the family with a basic description of the service coordination process. A more thorough description will be provided by the service coordinator during the initial phone call.
- The service coordinator will contact the family via phone within two business days of receiving the referral to discuss the referral, review the service coordination process, and schedule the assessment meeting. For families that do not have a phone a letter will be sent.
- After three unsuccessful attempts at contact, an "attempt to reach you" letter is mailed. If the family does not respond by the end of the time specified in the letter, the case is closed.

Assessments:

All families that agree to the service coordination process will complete a Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment within the first 30 days and at least every 90 days thereafter.

- When possible and appropriate, it is highly recommended that the child be invited/encouraged to participate in the service coordination process beginning with the assessment.
- The assessment will focus on the strengths, needs, and cultural issues specific to the child and family.
- The assessment will occur in the family's home or at an agreed upon location within five business days from the date of phone contact by the service coordinator. This and subsequent meetings will be scheduled at times and locations that are conducive to the family needs.
- During this meeting, the service coordinator will again review the service coordination process, confidentiality, and complete the assessment packet. This packet will include releases of information for all service providers and family supports. The service coordinator will also review the family's option to invite a parent advocate to participate in the process.
- The service coordinator will complete a crisis and safety plan or obtain a copy of an existing crisis/safety plan to help the family maintain stability throughout the process of service coordination. For children that are in emergency placement and don't have prior involvement in the service coordination process, a crisis and safety plan will be developed in preparation for the children's return home or to a less restrictive level of care.

Service Coordination

- Within two weeks of the completion of the initial assessment, the initial family team meeting will occur. Time and location of meetings will be based on family needs and preferences.
- Family team meetings will be organized by the service coordinator via telephone contact or correspondence and should be comprised of those individuals who have a personal or professional relationship (e.g. school, agency staff, etc.) with the family and who the family approves as participants. The family is encouraged to invite either formal or informal supports to participate in the process. If an agency has a legally mandated requirement to provide a specific service that agency will be invited to attend. Attendees will be notified by phone, email, or written correspondence no later than the week prior to the meeting date.

- The family team will review the safety/crisis plan created or obtained from an existing provider and review its effectiveness to meet the family's needs.
- A plan of care will be created around specific concerns and will focus on implementation in the least restrictive setting and appropriate level of service intensity. The plan will identify and organize providers, services, and responsibilities. Timelines will be established, and progress will be reviewed at subsequent family team meetings.
- At the end of the family team meeting the family team will decide on a meeting location for the next meeting.
- During the second meeting, the service coordination plan will be reviewed and progress toward the goals/responsibilities identified during the prior meeting will be discussed. Any additional issues will be identified and incorporated into the service coordination plan as appropriate. Subsequent meetings will be scheduled based on the family team's needs and progress.
- The case will continue with at least monthly face-to-face contact to monitor stability and review progress toward the plan. The type of contact will be based on family choice.
- At any point during the process the family has the option to initiate a meeting to develop or review the service coordination plan. This can be done by contacting the service coordinator.
- At any point during the intake process or the on-going family case, if the youth meets OhioRISE eligibility, the family has the option to change care coordinators and lead agencies.

Criteria for Transitioning out of Service Coordination: (1 or more)

- The child is 22 years of age.
- The family is no longer requesting service coordination.
- The parent/guardian is not willing to follow the Plan of Care
- Goals have been met, and the team agrees that the family has stabilized.
- The child/youth is involved with only one system.
- The team decides that, after 6 months, service coordination is making no progress.
- Child/Youth and/or parent/guardian is no longer a Carroll County resident.
- Child/Youth transfers to OhioRISE

Plan of Care

The Carroll County Plan of Care will include:

- Which agencies are responsible for giving the child and family the service that is needed. The agencies can be state, county and local, public and private agencies and informal supports.
- Who will coordinate services. Families will approve the person who will coordinate services. This person will make sure that the individual service coordination plan gets started and the family continues to get the planned services. In many cases, this may be the service coordinator.
- Assurance that every child gets the service that he or she needs. The individualized service coordination plan must also make sure that all services are driven by the needs of the family and input from the youth.
- Families and children will be given the opportunity to share options, ideas and suggestions about how to make services respect their culture, race, and ethnic group.
- Services will be delivered in the least restrictive environment.
- A timeline must be established for when an individual service coordination plan starts and finishes. The team must follow this schedule.
- The plan must include arrangements on how to deal with a safety concern or a short-term crisis and will be based on family need and preference.

MONITORING AND TRACKING

All referrals and case management documentation will be entered in the Ohio Automated Service Coordination Information System (OASCIS).

Tracking outcomes and monitoring progress of individual youth will take place at several levels:

a. A written, individualized Plan of Care will be developed by the family team and will include measurable goals and action steps that the team will review/monitor at each team meeting.

b. The CANS assessment tool will serve as another monitoring tool. The Service Coordinator will work with the family to complete the initial CANS score, which will serve as the baseline, within the first 30 days of the case being opened. Thereafter, the CANS will be repeated every 90 days with team input. If a youth is in out-of-home placement, the facility will be asked to participate in the CANS assessment.

The FCFC staff is responsible for tracking and reporting of aggregate data such as:

- Individual family and child outcomes
- Demographics
- Cost benefit considerations
- Systems involved
- Level of care
- Service needs

Specific family and child outcomes and progress of plans will be shared monthly with SRC (Tier1) members. The service coordinator will present information related to children in placement during the monthly SRC (Tier 1) meetings. Aggregate data will be shared annually with the FCFC Board for review and making improvements to the SCM and identifying service gaps. Additionally, the SRC will provide this and other data to Ohio Family and Children First Council upon request for evaluation.

FISCAL STRATEGIES

Families involved with service coordination may be able to access funding for services/supports identified in their service coordination plan. Such funding is based on the availability of family and community resources. The service coordinator and participants of the family team will identify priority needs and available funding resources to be integrated into the family plan. Each agency/provider will identify those services that can be supported through their agency or funding sources. In cases where funding does not exist to support necessary services, the SRC (Tier 2) will consider pooled funds to meet a family's needs. Sources of funding include pooled funding, Family Centered Services and Supports funds (FCSS), Medicaid and other third-party payors, PASSS funds, MSY/PCSA, other community and state funds. Sharing, blending or braiding resources is a priority to be flexible and fiscally responsible. Youth who are receiving care coordination services from an Ohio Rise care management entity are not eligible to access FCSS, MSY/PCSA and FCFC local pooled funds.

Carroll County Family and Children First may approve the use of FCSS/MSY-PCSA funds for nonrecurring short-term expenses. Expenses that address a crisis or event that may affect a youth's ability to remain in the home can include costs such as: housing and utility payments, food assistance, or other basic needs. This funding may only be accessed once per youth per fiscal year but can be used to address multiple needs in the one-time use. There will be a $750.00 cap on these funds, per youth/per fiscal year. Families will be expected to explore and access other applicable funding sources prior to use of FCSS/MSY-PCSA for these nonrecurring, short-term expenses.

Technical assistance and funding through Ohio Department of Medicaid (MSY) is available to help prevent custody relinquishment of children (ages 0-21) solely for the purpose of obtaining needed treatment. The state's MSY Team can assist local entities with obtaining services that support children and youth who have been relinquished and are transitioning back to community and/or non- custody settings.

SERVICE REVIEW COMMITTEE

In addition to the family-specific focus of service coordination, Carroll County Family and Children First will implement a two-part Service Review Committee (SRC) that meets monthly to review the service coordination process. These groups, made up of stakeholders in the child-serving system, will be responsible for:

- Reviewing service coordination plans
- Identifying and planning around gaps in service
- Funding decisions including pooled funding and potential reallocation of funds to community based, preventative, family-centered services.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the service coordination process
- The creation of a plan to most effectively utilize behavioral and non-behavioral health money for children and families in Carroll County
- Review of children placed outside of the home during the service coordination process to determine alternatives that may have allowed the child the child to remain in the home and community.
- The resolution of case disputes through the Dispute Resolution Process
- The creation and monitoring of, in conjunction with the Council Director and service coordinator, of the Carroll County Service Coordination Mechanism. The SCM will be reviewed annually.
- Funding decisions and recommendations related to resources and services to support children and families and maintain at a lower level of care. This option is relevant when the service coordinator and the service coordination team is not able to use existing resources to support the family.

The SRC (Tier 1) will include providers and clinicians who report to their respective representative on the SRC (Tier 2). The service coordinator will attend all SRC (Tier 1) meetings and will be included in discussion and decision making as appropriate.

The SRC (Tier 2) membership will be comprised of representatives of agencies that contribute to Pooled Funds plus 3 additional voluntary Council members appointed annually by the Council Chair. New members will be appointed as vacancies occur. The FCFC Coordinator shall serve as an ex-officio member and shall have no voting privileges.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Protecting the confidentiality of all personal family information disclosed during service coordination meetings or contained in the family service coordination plan is a priority. The files created through the service coordination process are considered the property of the Carroll County Family and Children First Council and will be maintained at the office site.

A privacy and confidentiality statement will be distributed at the initial family team meeting and all members are required to read and sign it. Additional members will be asked to sign the same statement when they are brought into the family team meetings. Families will be asked to complete a release of information, so team members can share information and services can be coordinated. No information will be shared without a valid release of information.

Records that are created through the service coordination process will be managed in accordance with Ohio Revised Code and HIPAA. When questions arise related to access, public inspection, disclosure, and confidentiality, the Carroll County Family and Children First Council will rely on Ohio Revised Code and HIPAA to determine the most appropriate course of action.

CHILDREN IN PLACEMENT/ALLEGED/ADJUDICATED UNRULY/DELINQUENT

Maintaining children in their families and in the community when possible is a priority for the Carroll County Family and Children First Council. To meet this end, the focus of the service coordination process is as much prevention as it is intervention. It is the hope of the Council that children will be referred at a younger age to allow local services and collaborative efforts to stabilize a situation. Council is aware, however, that there will continue to be cases where there is a potential of out-of-home placement or a risk of court involvement.

While it is ideal to identify and coordinate care at a younger age, the Carroll County FCFC is aware that there will continue to be children that do not obtain the services they need and are unable to maintain in their home environment despite attempting to identify all alternatives to out-of-home placements. When this is the case, resources will continue to be pooled to manage the child's care in a placement and step the child down to a less restrictive environment as quickly as appropriate. When there is a risk of placement for a child or potential court involvement, a family service coordination meeting will be a priority to identify solutions, alternatives, and resources to allow the child to remain in the community when possible, such as a mentoring program, in-home parent education etc. This process will always focus on the least restrictive environment for the child. When a child involved in the service coordination process is placed outside of the home on an emergency basis, a service coordination meeting will occur within 10 days.

Carroll County FCFC may seek multi-system youth funding for youth at risk for custody relinquishment or have already been relinquished and need services and/or supports to transition to community and/or non-custody settings. Applications for funding will be submitted on behalf of youth who have no in-home provider options, no kinship placement options and who would otherwise be placed in the custody of JFS for treatment purposes.

Carroll County Family and Children First is cognizant that Council's recommendations do not usurp the recommendations of other governmental agencies, i.e. Juvenile Court, Job and Family Services, but will provide service coordination in the attempt to divert a youth from court. This opportunity exists for all cases where a youth is alleged delinquent and/or unruly and Juvenile Court sees service coordination as a diversion option or where providers or school personnel identify behaviors that could be an early indicator of potential delinquent and/or unruly behavior.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Carroll County FCFC has developed a formal process to ensure the rights of families being served under the SCM. The steps to this process can be found in Addendum A. All families participating in Service Coordination are informed of the Dispute Resolution Process.

Addendum A
Dispute Resolution Policy

It is recognized by the Carroll County Family and Children First Council that reasonable persons disagree from time to time. This dispute resolution policy is a plan to address disputes that have not been resolved despite attempts to do so. This policy pertains to members of Council, as well as families who receive services through the service coordination process and will be monitored and managed through the Service Review Committee. Complaints must be received within one year of the alleged violation.

Council members agree that disputes which involve the utilization of pooled funds from any agency shall be resolved without regard to the eligibility guidelines of the individual agencies, limited only by the availability of the funds in the pool. The Council members agree that disputes which involve the utilization of direct agency funds shall be resolved in accordance with individual agency eligibility guidelines and available funds. Additionally, parents or custodians shall use local agency grievance procedures to address disputes not involving service coordination.

If a child enrolled in Carroll County FCFC service coordination process is also enrolled in Ohio's Early Intervention program, the Carroll County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CCBDD) Early Intervention Dispute Resolution Process will take precedence. The Carroll County FCFC Coordinator and Carroll County EI Supervisor may assist in connection to this process.

To that end, the Council agrees and sets forth in this policy that:

- No services shall be withdrawn (terminated) from families involved in this dispute resolution process during the dispute resolution process unless the family chooses to discontinue the service.
- Every effort shall be made to provide interim services to serve crucial needs, where possible, in a collaborative fashion, pending final resolution of the process.
- The collaborating agencies and groups represented in this policy subscribe to the principle that, wherever possible, levels of appeal shall be waived so that a speedy resolution of the process may be achieved; levels of appeal are designed not to represent automatic steps, but to serve as backup to the ongoing process of collaboration to which the Council members are committed as their primary means of service provision, and to provide a fail-safe mechanism to maximize the chances that disputing parties will come to voluntary agreements reflective of unequivocal commitment to service plans
- Families shall be involved at each level of the dispute resolution process; assistance in understanding procedural methodology shall be provided if needed, unnecessary professional jargon and unnecessary technical language shall be avoided in oral and written communication with families and families shall be afforded the opportunity to be represented by a person of their choosing during the process, if they so desire.

Level I. When a request for dispute resolution is received, the FCFC Coordinator shall convene a meeting of the involved persons within 7 working days. The purpose of the meeting shall be to clarify and resolve the issue or issues at dispute as they (it) have a bearing on the appropriate courses of action, agency responsibility, type, amount, and appropriateness of services and/or funds for services not otherwise available. The issues shall be identified and resolved within 7 working days of the time that the meeting is convened. This deadline may be extended if necessary and mutually agreed upon by the involved parties. No change in services may occur during this dispute resolution process *at any stage.*

Level II. If the issue remains unresolved, the FCFC Coordinator may contact the Agency Directors of all involved agencies within 7 working days from the failure to resolve the dispute. The FCFC Coordinator shall be responsible for meeting with all Agency Directors involved and resolving the dispute within 7 working days of their charge to resolve. The 7-day time limit for resolution may be extended as necessary if all parties mutually agree.

Level III. Should the involved Agency Directors be unable to resolve the issue at Level II, they may refer the dispute to the Executive Finance Committee of the Council for review and recommendation at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Executive Finance Committee. The Executive Finance Committee shall exert every effort to facilitate a final negotiated resolution.

Level IV. If the Executive Finance Committee is unable to resolve the issue at Level 3, then the parties in dispute may seek outside mediation through the efforts of an impartial outside arbiter. If the parties agree beforehand that the arbitration shall be binding, then it shall be binding. However, if the parties do not agree beforehand that the decision shall be binding, then it shall be non-binding. The outside arbiter shall be a person with demonstrated experience in formal multi-service child-serving environments, shall understand the rights, roles, and responsibilities of Family and Children First Councils, and the appropriate statutes and administrative rules appropriate to Family and Children First Councils, and their member agencies. The outside arbiter shall not be an employee of an agency in the same type as any of the involved agencies in dispute. The outside arbiter shall have no professional or personal ties to the family involved in the dispute. The outside arbiter shall be mutually agreed upon by all the disputing parties. If an outside arbiter is not agreed upon by consensus, the FCFC Coordinator shall be responsible for providing another outside arbiter as a replacement. Any of the above-described criteria for the arbiter may be waived by mutual consent of the disputing parties. The cost of the arbiter shall be borne equally by the disputing parties. After hearing all the facts as presented by the disputing parties, the outside arbiter shall issue a written letter of determination within 7 working days of the hearing, unless an extension is mutually agreed upon by the parties involved.

Level V. If all efforts referenced above have not reached resolution of the dispute, the entities may, within 7 working days, file a motion with the Juvenile Court, asking for a hearing on the matter. The Juvenile Court Judge shall hold a hearing on the motion to resolve the dispute. SRC/Council will provide all historical information related to the dispute to the Juvenile Court Judge.

Nothing in the aforementioned would prohibit any party from seeking legal relief, independently, if they are convinced that a decision should be overturned as an issue of the law. Such legal action would lie exclusively at the initiative of the party in disagreement. The decision of the Juvenile Court Judge at Level V would remain in effect until overturned in a higher court of competent jurisdiction. Nothing in the aforementioned shall prohibit the disputing parties from mutual agreement to waive a level of dispute resolution process to accelerate the resolution process. Nothing in the aforementioned shall be construed as to release entities from the obligation of providing timely appropriate emergency services to address health, safety, and welfare of individuals in accordance with already established emergency procedures. The input of families and children, when appropriate, shall be solicited and incorporated into the decision-making process at all levels of the dispute resolution process.

Individual resolution level timelines may be waived by agreement of all disputing parties. Notwithstanding individual level timelines and any waivers thereof, the total timeline for the dispute resolution process shall not exceed 60 days except if waived by agreement of all parties involved.

The dispute resolution process shall be modified in emergency situations. Emergency is defined as a situation that requires an immediate response due to the safety and well-being of the child. In this instance the FCFC Coordinator shall consult with FCFC Chairperson to determine the least restrictive option available pending resolution of the dispute. The same process is applicable to dispute resolution in emergency situations, however the timeline will be expedited as much as possible.