



## DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES

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## Children Services to Use New Education Unit To Champion Academic Success for Foster Children

**DAYTON** – Foster children are more likely to perform below grade level in school. They are also more likely to drop out, need special education and have behavioral problems.

To combat these important issues, Montgomery County Children Services is starting a new Education Unit. It's one of Ohio's first units specifically designed to meet the educational needs of foster youths.

"To ensure our foster children graduate from high school, we need to be more involved in the process from the beginning," said Roger Loy, Manager for Resources to Children and Families.

"The new Education Unit will greatly improve our collaboration efforts with school districts to ensure continuity in our children's educations," Loy added. "Our children suffer a lot of trauma because they often move from placement to placement. We will focus on a coordinated effort to try to keep them in the same school district. We want to ensure that someone is getting information from parent/teacher conferences, and address issues before they fall through the cracks."

The new Education Unit ties in directly with the Montgomery County Board of County Commissioners 2013-2016 Strategic Plan. A key initiative in that plan focuses on increasing the number of County residents who have a college or post-high school credential.

"Those efforts must start at the earliest possible time for our children, and we can improve our efforts for our foster kids with our new Education Unit and affect other children in the County by supporting Learn 2 Earn Dayton and the Preschool Promise," said Montgomery County Commission President Dan Foley. "We are committed to seeing our children succeed."

The new unit consists of three caseworkers, one family support worker and Educational Supervisor Judy Noxsel. "Last spring, 64 percent of our Montgomery County children in care graduated from high school," Noxsel said. "That is better than the national average (\*50 percent) for foster youths, but lower than the graduation rate for children outside the foster care system (\*70 percent)."

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“Our goal is to impact the child’s educational path as early as possible,” said Deb Downing, Assistant Director for Montgomery County Children Services. “We are going to make an educational plan for each foster child that assesses their individual needs and provides structured guidance for their future success.”

Loy started developing the Education Unit concept last September.

“Foster children are often treated differently,” Loy said. “Sometimes districts will have meetings to discuss concerns and actions for a child, and we aren’t invited to the meeting, even though we are the custodians. Often times, the foster parents aren’t invited. We owe it to these children to have a better partnership with schools and help the schools understand how we can support them to further a child’s development.”

The Education Unit will look at several key points of success:

- Proficiency test scores
- Graduation rates
- Children passing the third-grade reading test
- Number of school moves for children in care

“I hope to get each child into some extra-curricular activity or something in the community, because we know the drop-out rate is lower when kids are involved with some activity outside of school,” Noxsel said. “The great thing is, our community is rich in resources. We’ll try to build a child’s peer relations and match the placement setting with the child. A college prep setting may be best for some children, while a vocational environment might be better for others.”

For more information about the Education Unit, call **Judy Noxsel at 224-KIDS (5437)**.

\* Based on a 2010 US Department of Education study

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