

# Stable Families



## OUTCOME TEAM ROSTER

### Commissioner Vicki Pegg

Montgomery County Board  
of County Commissioners  
Co-Champion, 12/05 – 6/06

### Christine Olinsky

OSU Extension, Montgomery County  
Co-Champion, 12/05 – 12/06

### Donna Audette

YWCA of Dayton  
Co-Champion, 9/06 – Present

### Fred Baxter

Ohio Department of Youth Services

### Ken Betz

Coroner's Office/Regional Crime  
Laboratory

### Mary Ann Drewry

Montgomery County Department of  
Job & Family Services

### Jan Lepore-Jentleson

East End Community Services Corp.

### Connie Lucas-Melson

Community Volunteer

### Jim McCarthy

Miami Valley Fair Housing Center

### Patricia Meadows

National Conference for  
Community & Justice

### Bonnie Parish

Family Service Association

### Joe Spitler

Criminal Justice Council

## STAFF:

Catherine Rauch, OFCF

Geraldine Pegues, OFCF

Gayle Ingram, OFCF

Donna Nettles, OFCF

## VISION

The community respects and supports families, recognizing that family composition in a diverse society is varied. Family members have healthy relationships with each other. Families nurture their members and provide a sense of well-being and safety. Family members work together and feel that they also belong to something larger than themselves.

## STABLE FAMILIES OUTCOME TEAM REPORT

**Core Belief:** A community's stability is dependent upon that of its key building blocks—its families.

### Initial Focus Areas:

✿ **FAMILY VIOLENCE:** Violence of any kind perpetrated by one family member against another is harmful to the entire family. The Stable Families Outcome Team has made prevention of spouse/partner abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse a primary focus of its work. Team members believe families should utilize peaceful conflict resolution and adults must take responsibility for resolving problems before they reach crisis proportion.

✿ **STRENGTHENING FAMILIES:** Families often face challenges. The most resilient families are those with a multitude of strengths to draw from, including support from individuals and organizations outside the family. The Stable Families Outcome Team believes families can build their own strengths but formal and informal community support is essential.

Employers, civic leaders and faith leaders can create an environment for families to succeed by making it acceptable for families to ask for help when they need it. Doing so can prevent crises that threaten individual and family well-being as well as employee performance and student achievement.



## COMMUNITY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY ASSESSMENT

At the request of the Stable Families Outcome Team, the Family & Children First Council funded a community domestic violence safety assessment. This assessment of law enforcement responses to domestic violence emergencies was conducted March through October 2006. The assessment focused on two questions: *How does the 911/police response to domestic violence cases enhance or detract from victim safety and batterer accountability? What can be done better?*

Three law enforcement agencies volunteered to participate: Dayton Police Department, Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, and Trotwood Police Department. Representatives from these agencies participated in the process but they were not responsible for assessing their own organizations. The assessment team included community agency representatives and victim advocates who were paired with law enforcement representatives. The team made firsthand observations, conducted focus groups, and reviewed 911 tapes and domestic violence incident reports.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

Thirty-nine recommendations were made as a result of the assessment. While resources (staffing and finances) may not allow for all recommendations to be implemented, there are some that are not costly or difficult to put into place:

### Issue: Steps that Can Encourage Victims to Get Safe

#### FINDINGS:

- ✿ Many officers are unaware of the services provided by victim advocates.
- ✿ Victims are more likely to be receptive to safety planning and other assistance immediately after an abusive event.
- ✿ Victims should have immediate access to safety planning when a suspect is at large.
- ✿ Some victims do not have access to a telephone.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✿ Officers should receive training that covers local resources for victims and how to make referrals.
- ✿ Officers should encourage victims to call the Domestic Violence (DV) Hotline or the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office victim advocate.
- ✿ Officers should provide emergency cell phones that victims may use to call 911 or the DV Hotline.

### Issue: Victims with Communication Barriers are at Greater Risk

#### FINDINGS:

- ✿ Most officers are not equipped to communicate with:
  - Non-English speaking victims
  - Victims with limited English proficiency (LEP)
  - Victims with other communication barriers

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✿ Officers should be provided with access to an easily accessible interpreter service and should receive training in using the interpreter service.
- ✿ The Montgomery County Criminal Justice Council's Committee on Domestic Violence should develop a protocol on best practices to be used when the victim and/or the abuser are non-English speaking, have limited English proficiency or are deaf.

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

The Stable Families Outcome Team has defined family as adults and children living together who see themselves as family members even if they are not biologically related. The team recognizes the numerous problems facing families of all structures and backgrounds. While poverty is a challenge too many families struggle with,

it alone does not make a family unstable. Family stability is less about economic standing and more about relationships among members.

Many problems can be avoided if adults take steps to prepare for their roles as life partners and parents. To help create stable families, team members believe communities should provide formal and informal support to adults preparing for these roles.

In an effort to organize specific strengths and characteristics of stable families, outcome team members utilized the categories found in the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets for Youth Framework.\* The following are the eight categories along with examples of associated strengths.

### Positive Identity

- Adults and children exhibit confidence.

### Positive Values

- Families instill in their members: caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and restraint. Adults model positive and healthy behaviors.

### Support

- Uniqueness and difference is encouraged and appreciated rather than judged negatively.

### Empowerment

- Conflict is negotiated rather than avoided or escalated into aggression; peaceful conflict resolution is utilized.

### Social Competencies

- Adults manage and communicate about family finances.

### Boundaries & Expectations

- Adults are responsible for handling their own feelings; children are not expected to take care of adults.

### Constructive Use of Time

- Parents learn how to interact with children and spend time with them.

### Commitment to Learning

- Adults read to children.
- Parents recognize their limitations and are able to get help when needed.

### Other Priorities:

Stable Families Outcome Team members know the dire need for increased availability of mental health and chemical dependency services. Jails and prisons are full of people with mental illness and/or chemical dependency. Crimes, including family violence, are often committed because of untreated mental health issues or addiction to alcohol or other drugs. Mental illness and the illness of addiction are powerful forces negatively impacting family stability in Montgomery County. These must be addressed for the future well-being of all involved.

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\* [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

