

**Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services  
Children Services Division  
2025 Annual Report**



**Want to make a difference in a  
child's life?**

**Become a Foster Parent  
Call 419-334-8708**





**Our Mission:** Sandusky County Children Services is committed to protecting abused, neglected or dependent children while also recognizing the importance of preserving the sanctity of the family. This is achieved by assisting families to become self-sufficient and able to provide a safe and stable environment for their children through the utilization of community resources.

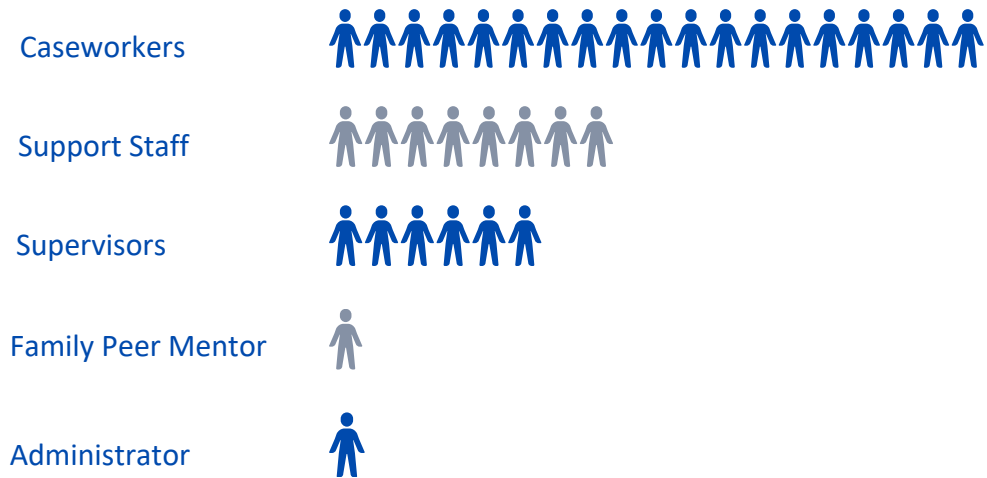
**Our Mandate:** Sandusky County Children Services is mandated by the Ohio Revised Code to do all of the following:

- Investigate allegations of child abuse, neglect and dependency
- Make reasonable efforts to prevent the removal of children from their homes
- Provide placement services to children who cannot remain in their own homes
- Provide permanency for all children in our care
- Ensure that the child's best interests are always our main consideration

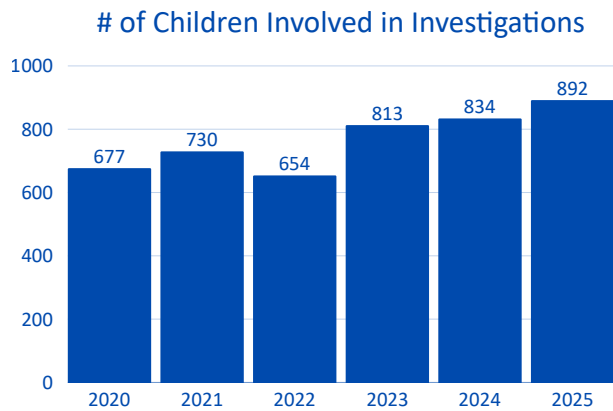
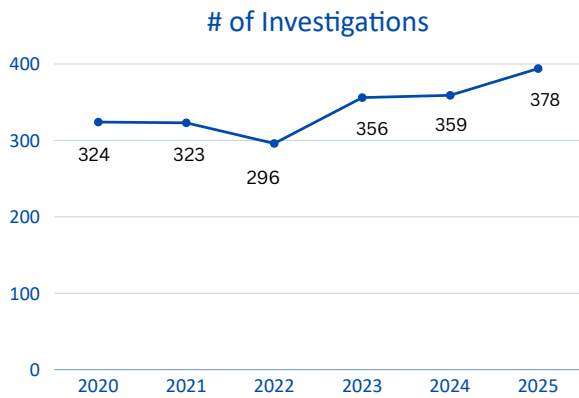
Together we protect children....

In order to achieve our mission and fulfill our mandates, the Sandusky County Children Services Unit works very closely with members of the community, other social service agencies, schools, churches, law enforcement and the court system. Cooperation and coordination with all these entities are essential in order to ensure we protect the children of Sandusky County. Furthermore, everyone can play a role in helping us achieve this goal. Whether you report concerns regarding a child or aid a family in need, as a community we can all contribute to a safer future for our children.

## CHILDREN SERVICES DIVISION

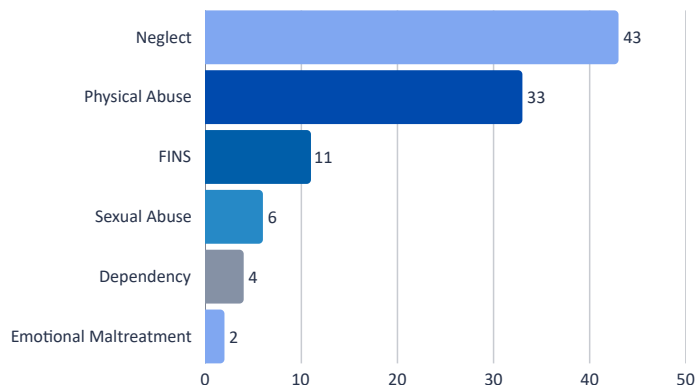


## INTAKES AND INVESTIGATIONS



Intake is typically the initial point of contact at the agency. Intake services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The number of child abuse and neglect (CA/N) reports accepted for investigation in 2025 was 378, which is a 5% increase from 2024. The number of children involved in investigations of abuse and neglect has been increasing for the past 3 years. In 2025, 892 children were involved in an investigation in Sandusky County. This is a 6% increase from 2024.

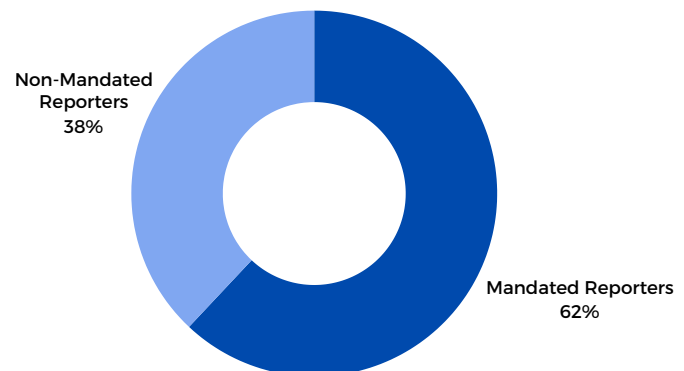
## REPORTS BY TYPE



Neglect was the most commonly alleged abuse type for screened-in intakes accounting for 43% of the total intakes received in 2025. Physical abuse was the next most common type at 33% of intakes. Family in Need of Services, which is a parent's self referral or a courtesy request from another PCSA or law enforcement was 11% of intakes. Sexual abuse consisted of 6% of the intakes screened in. Dependency and Emotional abuse accounted for 6% of the intakes in 2025.

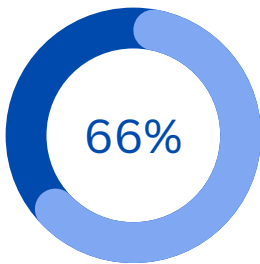
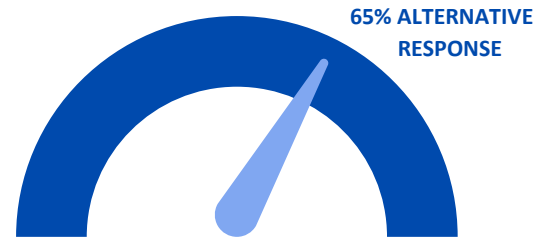
## REPORTS BY SOURCE

Mandated reporters (Law enforcement, social services, school, medical, other PCSA staff, ect) are the largest referral source to make reports of child abuse and/or neglect in Sandusky County in 2025, totaling 62% of all reports made. This was the same for 2024. Mandated reporters accounted for 69% of the reports that were investigated in 2025.



## REPORT PATHWAYS

Children service agencies have two options for responding to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect: Both pathways allow children services staff to address the unique safety concerns, risks and situations of each family in a way that is collaborative and respectful. In both cases, the primary goal is child safety. The Alternative Response is used when reports of abuse or neglect do not allege serious or imminent harm. It involves safety-focused partnerships with families and does not result in a determination/finding about the allegation. Sixty-five percent of reports were assigned to the alternative response pathway. This is an 8% increase from 2024.



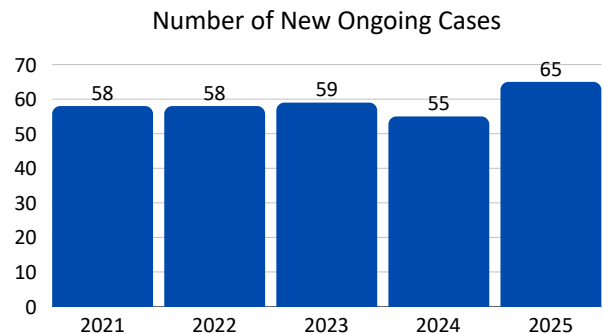
The Traditional Response is always required for reports of sexual abuse, abuse resulting in serious injury, and whenever children are determined to be in serious or immediate risk of harm. It may involve court intervention and will also result in a determination/finding about the allegation. In 2025 66% of child abuse/neglect traditional response investigations received a disposition of substantiated or indicated, meaning the allegations were found to be true.

## INVESTIGATION DETERMINATION

An investigation can last up to 60 days. At that time the agency will utilize a comprehensive assessment to make a final case decision. The following are final case decision options:

- Case can be closed with no further intervention.
- Case can be closed with referrals to services for the family
- Case can open for ongoing services to alleviate safety threats and reduce risk

In 2025 a total of 65 new cases were opened for ongoing services following the agency's investigation of child abuse/neglect allegations. This is a case opening rate of 17% of ongoing cases for 2025. This is also an increase of 15% from 2024.

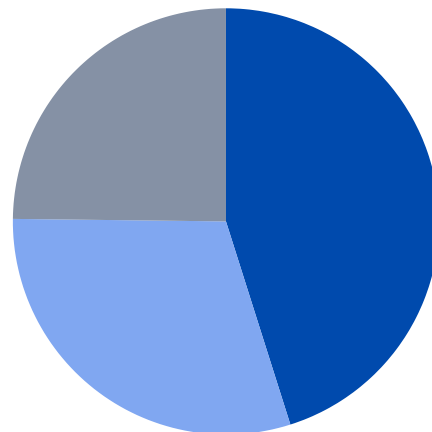


When a case is unable to be closed after an investigation the case will open for ongoing services. In an ongoing services case the caseworker and family will develop a case Plan to build upon the family's strengths and help them overcome any identified weaknesses. Once the family has reduced the risk in their home to an acceptable level, the case will be closed or in situations where the agency has custody, the child will be returned home. The agency will then monitor the home for a period of time before closing the case.

## ONGOING SERVICES

In December 2025, the agency worked with 133 children on open ongoing cases. The agency's goal is to allow children to remain in their own home while addressing safety and risk concerns. The agency worked with 60 children in their own home or in the home of their non-custodial parent during the month of December. When children are unable to remain with a parent or a non-custodial parent while services are being offered to reduce the safety threat the agency works to identify a kin placement. In December 2025, 33 children were placed with kin and 40 children were placed in a licensed substitute care placement while the agency worked to resolve safety threats.

- Own Home or Non-Custodial Parent's Home
- Kinship Placement
- Foster Placement/Group Home



75% of children on open cases were receiving services while living with a parent or in relative/kinship care in 2025

## VISITATION SERVICES

Children who have regular and frequent contact with their family while in foster care have a greater likelihood of reunification, shorter stays in out-of-home care, increased chances re-entry will not occur and experience overall improved wellbeing. Furthermore, visits between parents and children provide parents with the opportunity to learn and practice parenting techniques/skills, give the agency an opportunity to observe and assess families and their progress and ultimately promote the goals of safety, child well-being and permanency. The agency offers an extensive visitation program for the families with whom we work. In 2025 the agency scheduled 1061 supervised visits and 859 visits occurred. Of the 859 visits that occurred, 95 were held in the community or in a parent's home. In addition to agency supervised visits some of our families are visiting at Fremont Connections.

## PARENT EDUCATION SERVICES

Due to lack of interactive parent education available in our community the agency has committed to having trained staff to provide this service. The support services unit has completed the Nurturing Parenting Training. The agency has also certified one support service worker in a parenting coach program through the JAI Institute of Parenting and another staff member is working on becoming certified as a Parent Coach. In 2025, the agency provided 464 parenting sessions to parents actively involved with children services. In addition, the parent coach provided ongoing parent education sessions to adults incarcerated at the Sandusky County Jail.

## OHIO START SERVICES

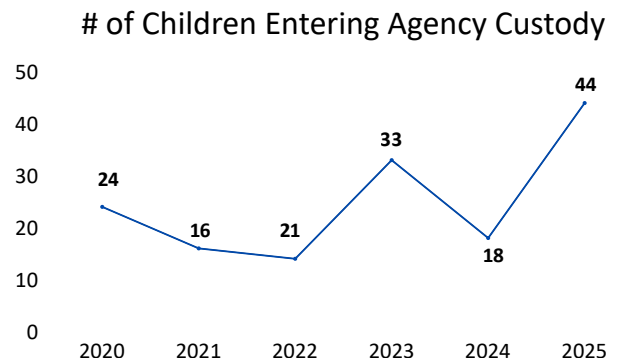
Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma) is an evidence-informed children services-led intervention model that helps public children services agencies bring together caseworkers, behavioral health providers, and family peer mentors into teams dedicated to helping families struggling with co-occurring child maltreatment and substance use disorder. Since 2022, our agency has employed an Ohio Start Caseworker and contracted a Family Peer mentor that are dedicated to helping parents recover and move forward with abuse-free and addiction-free lives. Since 2022, Ohio Start has helped 27 families.



## AGENCY CUSTODY ENTRIES

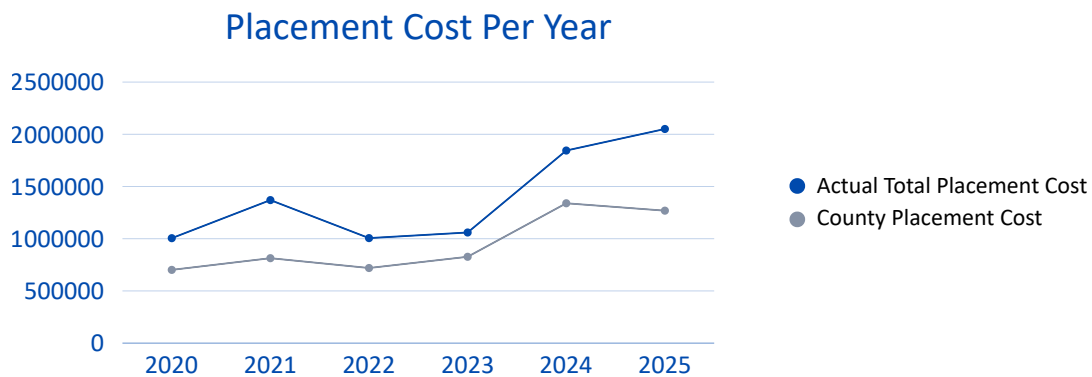
In 2025, 44 children entered the agency's temporary custody. This does not include children placed in the custody of relatives. This was a 59% increase from the previous year. This increase was due to several factors:

- Increased complexity of safety concerns within the family structure.
- Large sibling groups that were unable to remain safely in their own home.
- Lack of quick access to Multisystem Youth Funding.
- Inability to locate safe, stable and willing kin placement for children.



## PLACEMENT COST

The graph below shows a comparison of placement cost for children in agency custody for the past 3 years. The blue represents the actual total cost for placements, while the gray represents county costs after IV-E reimbursement. Despite the implementation of treatment foster care and the cost savings that this has brought the agency, it is apparent that there remains a placement crisis for children in congregate care, which continues to raise their daily rates exponentially.



## KINNECT TO FAMILY

The agency has a strong belief system that children should be placed with kin. This is why Sandusky County has continued to employ a Kinnect to Family Worker since 2019. Kinnect to family is a specialized, intense, family search and engagement program. The Kinnect to Family worker uses diligent search strategies to identify a vast array of connections for children and families encountering child welfare.



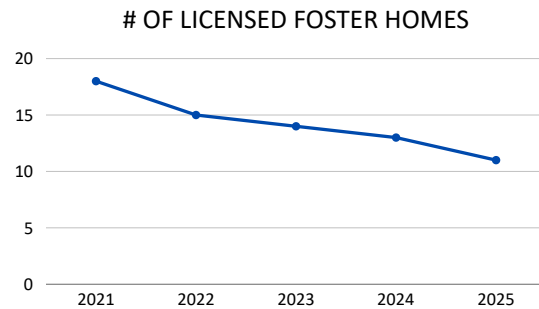
The goal of Kinnect is to:

- 1) Increase the number of children placed with relatives.
- 2) Ensure natural and community supports are in place to promote stability for the child.

## FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIVE SERVICES

Foster parents provide temporary care to children who are in the agency's custody. When a child is in the agency's temporary custody, reunification is almost always the goal. Foster parents have a responsibility to help the agency and the child achieve this goal. Some of the things a foster parent can do to help with this objective include; transporting the child to visits with their family, offering support to the family by listening to their needs and offering them advice. Adoptive parents provide a "forever family" for children in the agency's permanent custody. Just like foster parents, adoptive parents need to work hard to incorporate the child into their family so they may be successful not only in the placement, but in life.

Applicants can choose to be licensed as a Foster Home, approved as an Adoptive Home or opt for Dual Licensure which allows them to accept both foster and adoptive placements. The chart to the right shows the steady decline of licensed foster parents in Sandusky County. We are in need of local safe placements for children. If you are interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent please contact us at 419-334-8707.



## TREATMENT FOSTER CARE



As of February 2026, we have 11 treatment foster homes across six counties, with 23 children currently placed. We continue to prioritize keeping sibling groups together whenever possible. As a result, 11 of the 23 children are placed at a family level rather than a treatment level to prevent separation from their siblings. We also have three additional treatment homes currently pending approval.

In 2025, the treatment team supported the finalization of five adoptions from treatment foster homes and currently has two additional children placed in adoptive homes who are awaiting finalization dates. Since the inception of the program, we have served a total of 83 children and continue to receive daily placement requests from agencies across Ohio. Although the state's pilot program has recently concluded, we remain committed to mentoring other counties interested in developing similar programs. Our agency continues to maintain an active role with the Foster Family-based Treatment Association (FFTA). In July, Director Melanie Allen, along with PCSAO's Scott Britton, and one of our treatment foster parents will present on our treatment foster care program at FFTA's annual conference in Chicago. Our goals for 2026 include implementing Pressley Ridge pre-service training, expanding ongoing training opportunities for foster parents, and increasing the number of licensed treatment foster homes.

## AGENCY GROUP HOME



Due to the growing number of youth in custody, in congregate care, the rise in placement costs, and difficulties finding placement close to our county, our agency has decided to pursue licensing our own Group Home. We had 13 youth in congregate care settings all over the state of Ohio in 2025, and at one point one of those youth was out of state. In contrast in 2024, there were 9 youth in congregate care. We are hoping to bring those costs down by having a local placement option for our youth where we hope to expand our commitment to a more family-like continuum of care for our higher-level need youth. We are hoping to be licensed by the end of calendar year 2026 at Mel's Place on Birchard Avenue in Fremont.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES



The agency served 14 children in 2025 with independent living services. When youth in agency custody turn 14, the agency will start to prepare them for the transition to self-sufficiency. The agency will conduct a life skills assessment and determine which independent living services should be included in their independent living plan. The plan will include the youth's strengths, limitations and resources and outline the services the agency will provide. The caregiver and the child will be involved in the plan's development and will receive a copy.

Topics covered in this program include; cooking budgeting, job hunting, finding and maintaining an apartment, general hygiene and health issues, self-esteem building, community resources and educational opportunities just to name a few. In 2025, the Independent Living Worker took youth to Quarterly Ohio Youth Advisory meetings in Columbus, Ohio and accompanied youth at the Independent Youth Summit. Quarterly virtual group sessions were also held with youth focusing on resume building, CCMEP Hype Program, and other independent living topics.

## ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

**Our Mission:** Sandusky County Adult Protective Services is committed to protecting adults at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation while recognizing the importance of their right to live independently. This is achieved through the provision of appropriate supportive services and referral to community resources.



**Our Mandate:** Sandusky County Adult Protective Services is mandated by the Ohio Revised Code to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect (including self-neglect) and exploitation on adults age 60 and over. Ongoing protective services will be offered if determined necessary by the Department. Furthermore, the agency also offers voluntary services to adults who are 45-59 years old.

To achieve our mission and fulfill our mandates, Sandusky County Adult Protective Services works very closely with members of the community, other social service and health care agencies, churches, law enforcement and the court system. The Sandusky County Adult Protection I-Team has been in existence since 2015. A group representing different community organizations meets monthly and focuses on improving senior services in Sandusky County through increased communication, cooperation, and service planning.

In 2025, the agency received a total of 498 intake calls in the APS Unit and completed 55 investigations and provided services for 30 ongoing cases. The agency also collaborated with the ITEAM to host Elder Abuse Awareness events in Clyde and Fremont in June. APS staff also attended several events in 2025 to share the agency's mission of the protection of the elderly in our community.