



## The partners making this possible



Ohio START is being led by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio in partnership with the Office of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

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OMHAS has dedicated CURES funding through the Institute for Human Services to support the training program and technical assistance led by Children and Family Futures.

The effectiveness of Ohio START is being studied by The Ohio State University's College of Social Work and the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs at Ohio University.

*For information about the Ohio START program and establishing it in your county, contact Fawn Gadel at the Public Children Services Association of Ohio at 614-224-5802.*

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Giving families struggling with substance use disorder a brand-new START.





PCSA CASEWORKER



FAMILY PEER MENTOR



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPECIALIST



**Ohio START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma) is an evidence-informed children services-led intervention model that helps public children services agencies (PCSAs) 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. The overall goal of this program is to stabilize families harmed by parental addiction so that both children and their parents can recover and move forward with healthy and safe lives.**

## Ohio START in action



Families being assessed or investigated for reports of child maltreatment are also screened to identify caregiver substance use. Parents who meet the eligibility threshold are told about the START program and given the option to voluntarily participate.

If they agree, the family will be assigned an Ohio START caseworker and family peer mentor. The parent will be referred quickly to the behavioral health partner for further assessment. Treatment recommendations will be made, and parents will receive expedited entry into intensive substance use disorder treatment. Both the parent and the child are also screened for trauma. Based on the trauma screening, children

may receive a targeted referral for further assessment and treatment.

For the first 60 days of the case, the family receives weekly visits from their Ohio START caseworker and family peer mentor. These tailored, in-home services ensure the safety of the child and adherence to the family's case plan. After 60 days, they continue to meet at least twice per month. During this time, parents also enter intensive substance use disorder treatment.

Family peer mentors are a critical part of the Ohio START model. The mentors are individuals who have personal experience with substance use disorder, who have achieved sustained recovery, and who

have had prior engagement with the children services system as a child or parent. Because the mentors have real-life experience in these areas, they can connect with families in a way that most caseworkers cannot. They provide accountability and support, and serve as role models for parents who may lack positive influences.

Through the dedicated Ohio START caseworker and family peer mentor—and constant, formalized communication with the behavioral health treatment team member—the family receives coordinated wraparound services targeted to their needs. This intensive care is already proving to ensure positive outcomes for more families.

**“Sometimes [parents struggling with addiction] view the caseworker as somebody they cannot trust or relate to. So Family Peer Mentors are there to bridge that gap.”**  
—Ohio START Family Peer Mentor

**“[Families] aren’t just trying to get us out of their lives anymore. They are trying to get the help that they need so that they can parent their children long term.”**  
—Ohio START Supervisor

## Encouraging results already

The program—which was first developed as the national START model in 1997—has been adapted to fit the varying needs and policies of rural and urban jurisdictions in several states, including Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, and Ohio.

Kentucky began implementing START in 2007, and it continues to deliver very positive results:

-  Women in START have nearly double the sobriety rate of non-START women (66% vs. 37%).
-  Children in START are about half as likely to enter foster care (21% vs. 42%).
-  At case closure, over 75% of START kids remained with or were reunified with their parent(s).
-  For every dollar spent on START, \$2.22 is saved in offset foster care costs.

Ohio START launched in March 2017 with 14 counties participating, expanding to 32 counties by the end of 2018. For the most current updates on Ohio START, visit <http://www.pcsao.org/programs/ohio-start>.

**“There has not been one case so far that the clients haven’t really engaged with the peer mentor.”**  
—Caseworker

**“We have been so downtrodden by the lack of success with the families with severe drug abuse issues that seeing the Family Peer Mentor who did it and continues to do it in her life, as well as the effect it is having on these families, I think it is a real boost to our morale.”**  
—PCSA Agency Director

## How to get started with Ohio START



This family-centered approach fosters integrated care among the PCSA, behavioral health providers and the family peer mentor, with shared decision-making among all team players, including the family.

The family peer mentor brings real-life experience to the team and is a person in long-term recovery with previous children services involvement. Mentors are rigorously screened, trained and supervised to provide Ohio START families with both peer support and help navigating the children services system.

Implementation requires a commitment of the PCSA and its county partners and a multi-year effort to achieve fidelity to the Ohio START model. Consultation and technical assistance are necessary to support implementation.

To get started assembling this integrated team in your county, contact your local PCSA to discuss Ohio START.