All families have secrets. Some are as wholesome as Aunt Susie’s secret recipe for chicken soup, and some are as harmless as your sister’s crush on your best friend in high school. But some family secrets are dark and terrible. The secret of child abuse and neglect lives in the dark and thrives in the silence – behind closed doors.

Children services workers confront the secrets of child abuse and neglect in our community everyday. Throughout our county, hundreds of children are prisoners of those secrets. The lives they live and the stories they tell are heartbreaking – truly the stuff of nightmares. For most of these children, our agency is the only way to safety.

We discover their broken bodies and damaged souls and find safe places for them to heal – to learn how to be children again.

This report is meant to break the silence and to shed light into the dark corners most of you never see. The dark places where child abuse and neglect flourish. Please don’t think that these dark corners exist only in poor areas or in someone else’s neighborhood. Horrors are committed against children of every nationality, in every neighborhood and of every race. You don’t know what goes on behind closed doors, but we do. Our workers reach out to children and families in crisis everyday in our community. Working hand in hand with our community partners, we help heal the hurt.

This report is not meant to shock you – although it will shock many. Our goal is to help you understand our work. We want you to know what we do and what the children and families in our community face. We hope this report promotes a better understanding of our work and inspires you to become a part of our efforts to help heal the hurt these children experience daily. Together we can help heal the hurt.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Fox
Executive Director,
Butler County Children Services

P.S. The stories about the children on the following pages involve real children, real cases, and real experiences from the case files of Butler County. The names and faces have been changed but the facts are, unfortunately, just as they happened.

Butler County Children Services Mission Statement

Butler County Children Services (BCCS) is committed to protecting children by strengthening and preserving families. Through open communication, we will partner with the community to ensure quality outcomes for the children and families we serve.
Hi, I'm Deshawn.

I'm 12 years old, and I love to play soccer. I scored two goals Saturday – I wish Mom had been there. Coach makes sure I get to all the games. He picks me up, and I get something to eat after. I always save some leftovers for my little brother. Coach called me into his office today and told me I couldn’t play until I bring my math grade up – I got a D. It’s really hard to do my homework. I couldn’t tell him our electric got cut off two months ago. I don’t have any light. I can’t see to do my homework. I told Mom – but she was really high.

Substance abuse is the #1 reason children are neglected or abused.

Caseworker Notes: Behind Closed Doors

An allegation of neglect was made by Deshawn’s school. Deshawn’s attendance is good, but he wears the same dirty clothes every day. He doesn’t bathe unless it’s after gym or soccer practice. He never has lunch. His grades have fallen drastically in the last few months. The school has tried to contact his mother, but she never returns calls. A worker went to the home to investigate. All the utilities had been disconnected – so there was no light, heat or water. There was rotting food and garbage throughout the house. Roaches were visible everywhere. The toilet was backed up, and there was sewage in the basement. The mother’s background check revealed a history of substance abuse. Children Services placed Deshawn and his brother with a relative and are working to stabilize mom and reunify the family.
My name is Rose,

My sister’s name is Anita, and we just turned six. She’s a pain sometimes especially when she follows me around, but most of the time I don’t mind. I make sure she stays close when Bob watches us. Mom works at night, and Bob and his son live down the street. I don’t like being alone with Bob. He wants us to sit close to him, and he really likes it when Anita sits on his lap. He gets real mad at us if we don’t sit still. He took Anita’s favorite doll away tonight. Anita started to cry and just kept on crying, and kicking her feet. I tried to get her to stop. He kept spanking her really hard and took her in the next room. She just kept crying.

Caseworker Notes: Behind Closed Doors

Children’s Hospital called in an allegation of abuse. A mother brought her 6-year-old daughter to the emergency room because of severe bruising on her bottom consistent with abuse. The examination also revealed vaginal bruising consistent with sexual abuse. The mother told the children services investigator that a neighbor watched her children last night, and she discovered the bruising this morning. The victim’s sister corroborated the mother’s story. She indicated that the neighbor liked “to have them sit on his lap or touch them.” During the interview, Rose revealed that she had been fondled by the neighbor. A background check revealed the neighbor had a history of assault.
Hi, I’m Josh. And I’m 9 years old.

Riding my bike is the best! Most days I ride to the park. I stay as long as I can, but I’m always home by dark — I promised my mom. I don’t like this time of year. It gets dark too early. I have to be home before Joe, my mom’s boyfriend, falls asleep on the couch. Sometimes, even when I’m trying to be real quiet — I make too much noise. Mom says Joe works real hard to pay the bills, and we should be grateful. I liked it better when it was just me and my mom. Joe gets real mad when I make too much noise.

Caseworker Notes: Behind Closed Doors

An allegation of physical abuse was received at 11:33 a.m. from the school. Josh’s teacher noticed a bruise on the boy’s neck and sent him to the nurse. During the exam, severe shoe-shaped bruises were found on Josh’s back. Josh told the Children Services Investigator that it was his fault, “I made too much noise, and Joe wupped me with his work boots.” Josh was sent to Children’s Hospital. The exam revealed that Josh is severely underweight and has numerous prior injuries, indicating prolonged abuse — multiple fractured ribs, spiral fracture of the right forearm and a concussion. The background check revealed that Joe, the mother’s boyfriend, has a criminal history of domestic violence and several child abuse allegations in other counties.
Untreated mental illness is one of the most prevalent reasons for child abuse and neglect.

Hello, I’m Michael,

I’m fifteen years old, and I miss my dad. I haven’t seen him in a long time. He left us a couple of years ago. He said it wasn’t my fault, but he couldn’t live with mom anymore. Mom did a lot better when dad was here - she took her medicine everyday. Now she only takes it some of the time. I try to help her remember, but I don’t think she likes taking her pills. After a few days she gets pretty out of it. I make sure she doesn’t hurt my little brother and sister. I tried to call Dad, but he didn’t call back.

Caseworker Notes: Behind Closed Doors

Hamilton PD called the Intake Line at 1 a.m. to report physical abuse. The police responded to a disturbance at a private residence. A mother and three children were in the home. The mother was screaming and threatening the children with a leather belt with a large heavy buckle. The oldest boy, Michael, was protecting his younger sister and brother. The mother was uncooperative and incoherent. The boy explained that she had not taken her medicine for several weeks; the younger children told police she had hit the oldest boy repeatedly. The life squad was called to transport the mother to the hospital for treatment. Children services placed the children in foster care and are working to stabilize mom and reunify the family.
You Can Help Heal the Hurt:
Here’s How

The emotional and physical scars of child abuse and neglect can last a lifetime. Fortunately you and every member of our community can play an active and vital role in softening the affects of these horrors and help us protect our community’s children and preserve our families. Here’s how you can help...

Report abuse when you suspect it, even if you’re not certain.

Be our eyes and ears – if you see any of the following signs of abuse or neglect – call us at (513) 887-4055 or toll free at 1-800-325-2685.

The Child:
• Shows sudden changes in behavior or extremes in behavior
• Unexplained absences from school or a sudden change in school performance
• Unexplained injuries burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, black eyes, etc.
• Frequent yeast or urinary infections
• Unusual and age-inappropriate interest in sex
• Nightmares and bedwetting
• Is not receiving needed medical or dental care
• Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
• Height and weight significantly below age level
• Lacks adult supervision appropriate for their age

Help us see behind closed doors.

Be a Foster or Adoptive Parent

Foster and adoptive parents come from all walks of life. They can be single, married, employed or stay-at-home, well-off or working class. You can own your own home or live in an apartment. Foster and adoptive parents provide a safe, stable home to children who have been abused or neglected.

Our children do not need perfect parents; they need one or more committed adults willing to meet their needs and incorporate them into a nurturing, stable family.

Light up the darkness for a child: Be a Foster Parent

Call: 1-800-792-3854
Or Visit: ButlerCountyChildrenServices.org

Butler County Children Services
Call: 513.887.4055 / 800.325.2685
Mail: 300 North Fair Avenue
      Hamilton, Ohio 45011
Fax: 513.887.4260
Visit: ButlerCountyChildrenServices.org

Contact Us Anytime,
24 Hours a Day.

Our caseloads go up every year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>10/31/2008</th>
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<td>Calls to Reporting Line</td>
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<td>Allegations</td>
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<td>Investigations</td>
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<td>2953</td>
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<td>2399</td>
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<td>Avg. Families Served</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2385</td>
<td>2372</td>
<td>2785</td>
<td>3100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Children Served</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>378</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Number of children placed outside the home</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>188</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Number of children placed with relatives</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>706</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Number of Days a Child Spends in Custody</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>706</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalized Adoptions</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
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* Data not maintained in this format.
You've already done a great deal...

The staff of Butler County Children Services would like to thank Butler County taxpayers for supporting abused and neglected children and their families by passing the Children Services Levy in March 2008. Your generosity enables our agency to protect more than 7,000 local abused and neglected children each year.

Be a Volunteer
We have many meaningful opportunities to help abused and neglected children or families.

You can:

- Mentor or tutor
- Help with special events or outings
- Sort donations
- Teach a self-sufficiency class
- Help recruit foster and adoptive parents
- Be a “big brother” or “big sister”
- Be a “grandparent”

Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent or Child Services Volunteer
Call: 1-800-792-3854
Or Visit: ButlerCountyChildrenServices.org

There are so many ways you can help.

We train every volunteer after completing the application process which includes a criminal background check. If you want to meet other people who share your desire to help children, call 1-800-792-3854 to volunteer today.

Share your joy! Help Heal the Hurt.

You've already done a great deal...
For the first time in recent years our agency will spend less than the previous year. Next year we will operate with significantly less and do it more efficiently. Our caseloads are smaller, our direct service budget is larger and we are spending more on support services and family preservation than ever before. We truly are doing more with less and doing it better.

We’re Doing More with Less and Doing It Better

- Reduced spending by 12 percent through budget year 2009.
- By the end of the 2009 budget, we will cut nearly $2 million in unneeded administrative and staff positions, redirecting the savings into direct services to children and families.

- Increased spending for family preservation and support services – enabling us to place children with relatives safely while saving taxpayer dollars by reducing the cost of paid placements. As of October 2008, this strategy reduced placement costs by 12 percent – an annualized savings of approximately $1 million.
- Our goal is to reduce the cost of paid placements by 20% through 2009, while maintaining a high standard of safety for the children we serve.
- Lowered caseloads to no more than 15 cases per worker.
- Improved the speed, access and quality of criminal background checks, providing the most extensive criminal background checks and law enforcement support available to any children services agency in the state.

### Financial Statement Summary (Unaudited)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>As of 6/30/2008</th>
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<td><strong>BEGINNING BALANCE</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>6,641,920.01</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REVENUE</strong></td>
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<td>Levy</td>
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<td>Federal</td>
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<td>State</td>
<td>1,883,967.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local &amp; Other</td>
<td>26,718,302.73</td>
<td>11,985,331.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduction in Fund Balance</td>
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<td>Total Resources Available</td>
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<td>4,591,408.40</td>
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<td><strong>EXPENDITURES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Salaries</td>
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<td>1,590,576.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Fringe Benefits</td>
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<td>Substitute Care (Paid Institutions, Foster Care, &amp; Subsidized Adoption)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster Care, &amp; Subsidized Adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothing, Food, Services, and Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Related Expenses for Children</td>
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<td>368,247.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building, Supplies, and Contracted Services</td>
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<td>Other Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending Fund Balance, December 31, 2007</td>
<td>Unaudited</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Our Promise to the Children and the People of Butler County

We promise to continue to do our best to protect children and serve families. We are dedicated to child safety first and all other considerations are secondary.

We believe that we owe the public a duty to be open and accountable. Our doors are open to the public. You are welcome to visit and meet with us anytime. We promise to be good stewards of your tax dollars, doing more with less, and constantly striving to do our jobs better.

It’s All About Protecting Children...

In the past year our agency has made significant improvements that have had a direct impact on the lives of children and families while being a good steward of the taxpayer dollar.

- Significantly increased the number of unannounced visits to check on children in our care and under our jurisdiction.
- Hired full-time police officers to work with and support our caseworkers.
- Expanded agency hours to 24 hours-a-day, with professional staff on site.
- Improved accountability for required visits to children and families.
- Awarded a 5-year federal grant to expand the Family Drug Court program.
  - Significantly improved outcomes for children by meeting five out of six federal performance standards.
  - The first metro child welfare agency in Ohio to join the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), a statewide computer system for child welfare cases.
- Increased the number of children placed with relatives by five percent in 2007.
- Reduced caseworker turnover to 10 percent – the lowest in a decade.
“Foster Care Set Me Free”
(excerpts) By Shawntel, a Butler County foster child

Many think that foster care doesn’t give kids what they need. But my outlook is different. My foster family changed my life completely. My name is Shawntel. I’m 17 years old. I’ve been in foster care since I was 14.

My foster family did so many things for me. But the first thing I noticed was that I was safe. I didn’t have to be afraid all the time. It set me free. My foster parents made it possible for me to concentrate on school and get good grades.

One of the greatest gifts the foster care system gave me was placing me in a Christian foster home. My foster family brought the love, joy and strength of Christ into my life. I learned to love and respect myself and others, and I learned how to accept love. But most of all, Christ taught me how to forgive the people who hurt me and why forgiveness is so important.

The most important gift of all is my foster family… I am so blessed. They have influenced me so deeply. They are my role models – they show me how to be positive, how to be a better person. I know they will always be there for me. And at the end of the day, I believe that they were always meant to be my parents and I was meant to be their child.

Foster care transformed my life. I would not be here if it were not for the love and support of my foster family. I really hope that more families will become foster parents. You can make a difference – just look at me.

Shawntel

Call: 1-800-792-3854
Or Visit: ButlerCountyChildrenServices.org
help heal the hurt
Butler County Children Services
2007-2008 Report to the Community
BE A FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT • BE A VOLUNTEER