



**Youth Concerns and Proposed Solutions:  
Working to Address Challenges  
In Cuyahoga County**



## **OHIO YAB Mission**

We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.

## **Youth Serving**

## **Youth Empowering**

Youth are viewed as the passive recipients of programs, services, and resources.

Youth act as developers, facilitators and evaluators of programs and services and resources.

Youth are showcased as a “Success Story” to promote a program.

Youth act as agency representatives to promote the program’s positive impact to community/other youth.

Youth receive pre-packaged issues and topics.

Youth are invited to identify issues that need to be addressed, and to map out proposed solutions.

Youth receive no formal education or training about advocacy movements and systemic change.

Youth receive preparation, including tools such as Strategic Sharing.

# Benefits of Involving Youth

Lived  
experience

Sense of  
Urgency

Ability to  
connect with  
peers

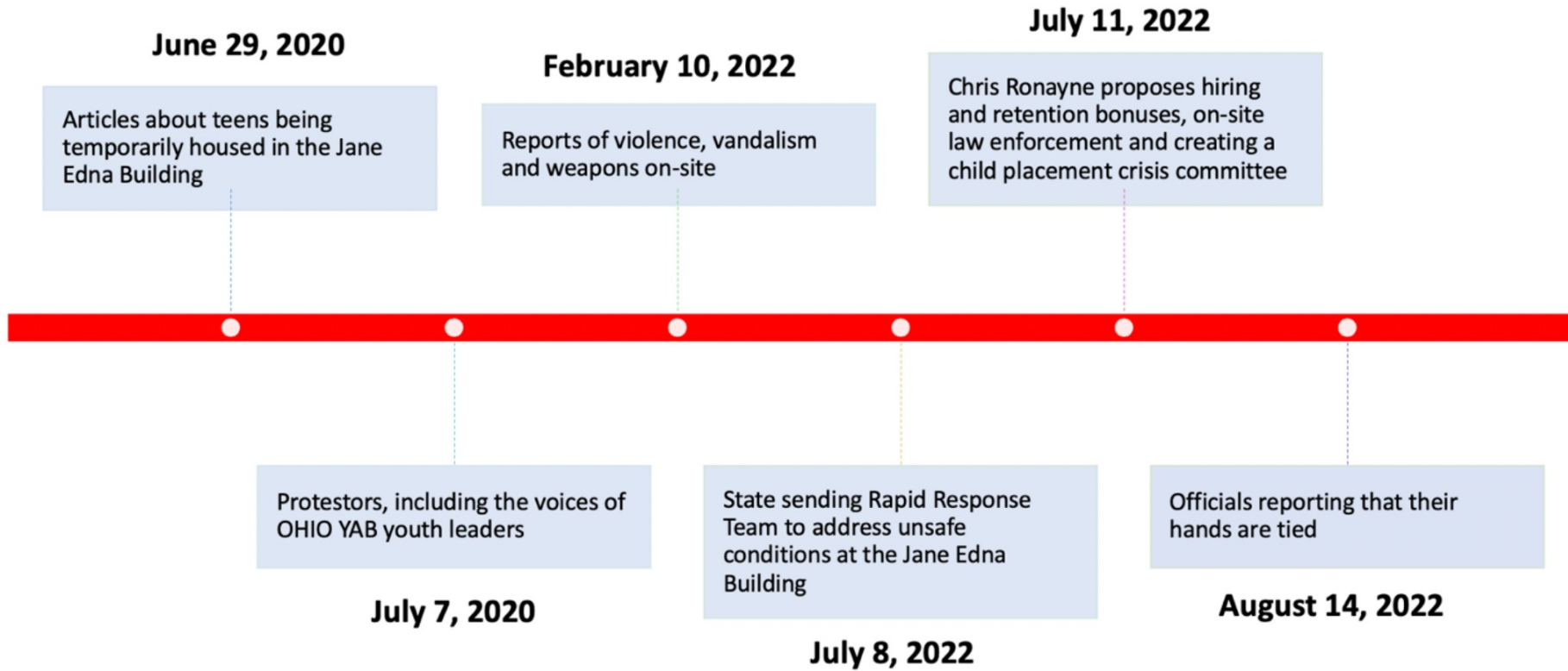
# Detriments of Not Including Youth

Undertow of  
the status quo

Slow-moving  
progress

Lack of long-  
term  
effectiveness

# Timeline



# Child Protection doesn't look like this...

11-year-old who was waiting for placement: how did she end up leaving the building and being raped?

15-year-old reporting a sexual assault from an 18-year-old while they were both staying at the Jane Edna Building.

Jane Edna Building has become a hub for sex trafficking recruitment.

Cleveland police reporting that youth ran away from the building 135 times in the first months of this year.

Average 6-12 children sleeping in the building at a time.

# Transparency and Community Partnership

## Opportunities for local and state support

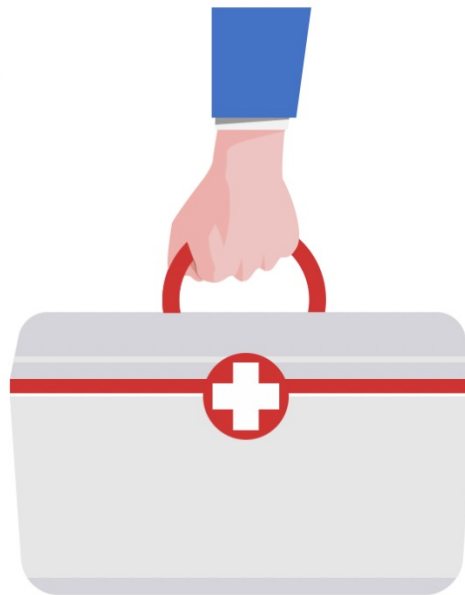
ODJFS could temporarily take over; with training, acclimation support



Local behavioral health agencies could assist with screening



Mobile response teams, Ohio RISE



Utilize beds and 24/hour staff at residential, local agencies...



Family and youth advocates could come to the building to help



Recruit emergency respite parents, as well as regular foster parents



## County-Proposed Solutions

## Youth Concerns and Questions

Spending \$27,000 on keycards for stairways?

This doesn't safeguard youth.

Issuing an RFP with a "No eject or reject" policy

Risks creating a dumping ground; concerns about placing youth with pending charges with those with specialized needs?

Asking Cleveland Christian Home to hold eight beds for emergency county placements.

Will eight beds be enough? According to reports, there are an average of 6-12 youth spending nights in the Jane Edna building. What services, including therapy, and oversight will be provided? How long will youth stay there?

## County-Proposed Solutions

## Youth Concerns and Questions

Increasing wages to make Cuyahoga County workers the highest paid in the state.

Money might bring in initial applicants, but will they stay?

What will be done to improve day-to-day working conditions?

Where is the accountability for Cuyahoga County Administration?

It doesn't make sense to take staff members off the child abuse hotline to monitor youth, just because they are the only ones in the building 24/7. Why weren't other staff hired/allocated to fulfill this role?

## County-Proposed Solutions

## Youth Concerns and Questions

Assigning a sheriff's deputy to the building full-time.

This could be harmful or helpful, depending on how it's rolled out.

What is the deputy's role? Will the deputy be restraining youth? Arresting youth? Keeping them from leaving the building? Will the deputy be trained in trauma-informed care and crisis prevention?

The county is drafting plans to convert the Metzenbaum Center into a residential drop-off site where youth can receive services while awaiting placement.

This is coming full circle to this building's prior role. What measures will be put in place to keep youth from staying there too long?

Will there be trauma-screening, and therapists onsite? What will be done to ensure accountability, child safety, and proper supervision?

## County-Proposed Solutions

The county is working with law enforcement agencies to draft a protocol for what steps officers must take before turning over a child to county custody, including de-escalation tactics that might allow a child to remain at home.

## Youth Concerns and Questions

Does this risk of undermining the role of law enforcement as mandated reporters?

What if the child feels unsafe in their biological home?

### **Ohio Revised Code: Section 2151.022. Taking a child into custody.**

By a law enforcement officer or duly authorized officer of the court when any of the following conditions are present...

There are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is in immediate danger from the child's surroundings and that the child's removal is necessary to prevent immediate or threatened physical or emotional harm;

There are reasonable grounds to believe that a parent, guardian, custodian, or other household member of the child's household **has abused or neglected another child in the household and to believe that the child is in danger of immediate or threatened physical or emotional harm from that person.**

## Results of 2021 Case Western Study

- Cuyahoga County's rate of confirmed abuse or neglect-related child deaths is significantly higher than the national average.
- Black and Brown children are disproportionately victimized.
- A suspected history of child abuse or neglect is a risk factors for child homicides, and yet early warning signs are too often missed by providers.

*\*Addressing and Preventing Child Abuse in Cuyahoga County: Toward a Coordinated Approach, Case Western Reserve University, Schubert Center for Child Studies, released April 2021*

## Discoveries during 2021 Case Western Study

- Although Cuyahoga is uniquely resource-rich with three major hospital systems that come into contact with child victims of abuse...
- The study revealed that there was limited collaboration between the coordinating agency (DCFS) and hospital systems.
- Typically, a hospital would refer a client to DCFS and allow DCFS to “take it from there.”

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# Benefits of Involving Youth

Trauma-  
Informed  
Training

Life Skills  
Preparation

Foster Parent  
Recruitment  
Videos

# Strengths-Based Trauma-Informed Training

## Strengths-Based

**Example:**  
*Helping Youth Develop  
Trauma Coping Skills*

## Needs Specific

**Examples:**  
*Supporting Youth with  
Developmental Delays*

*Supporting Youth with  
Disabilities*

*Supporting Foster Youth  
Who Are Teen Parents*

*Supporting Youth  
Who Struggle with Addiction*

*Supporting Youth  
Who Struggle with Food*



## Trauma-Informed

**Examples:**  
*Understanding the Importance of  
Physical and Emotional Safety*

*The Roots of Parentification: How to  
Provide Support and Reassurance*

## Diversity and Inclusion

**Example:**  
*Supporting Youth with  
Identity Development*

## Helpful in the Moment

**Examples:**  
*De-Escalation Strategies*

*Understanding Power Struggles*



# Interdependence

## Education

Academic Support, including Post Secondary.

## Workforce

Career preparation, including Vocational Training and Employment Programs.

## Budgeting

Financial management.

## Housing

Including Home Management, and Room and Board.

## Health

Health Education and Risk Prevention.



## Relationships

Boundaries and how to build safe and stable relationships.

## Mentoring

Understanding what a mentor is, connection with available mentoring programs.

## Assessments

Ongoing assessments and efforts to support skill development.

## Planning

Mapping out a plan for the future and revising it as needed.

## Vital Records

Birth certificate, Social Security Card, Proof of Citizenship, etc.

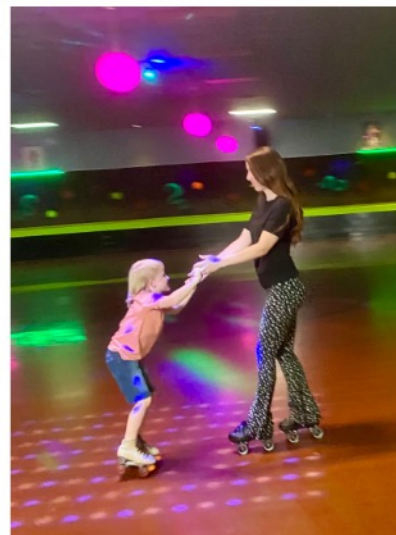
**Youth have proposed following up on Life Skills pathway designed by youth for foster parents by creating one for caseworkers**



**OHIO YAB Ambassador Jewel's video about the rewards of fostering teenagers**



**OHIO YAB adoptees share the  
journey and joy  
of their “chosen family”**



**OHIO YAB Ambassador Kelsie's three-part video series on Teen Moms in Foster Care**