

Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast
Prevention: Collaborating Across an Entire State TRANSCRIPT

Presenters: Female Narrator; Tom Oates, Child Welfare Information Gateway; Katina Simien, Louisiana Children's Trust; Lindsay Williams, Ohio Children's Trust

[00:00:00]: [Music Introduction]

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:00:02]: This is the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast, a place for those who care about strengthening families and protecting children. You'll hear about the innovations, emerging trends and success stories across child welfare direct from those striving to make a difference. This is your place for new ideas and information to support your work to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

TOM OATES [00:00:31]: Welcome into the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast, I'm Tom Oates. We're continuing our series on prevention looking into the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grantees - the CBCAP grantees. We're spending some time diving into different aspects of helping create change that improve prevention efforts. Check out the other episodes where we explore how CBCAP grantees are implementing and tailoring evidence-based programs, and how programs are evaluated from a state and local level. You know, the core of prevention efforts requires collaboration across systems and agencies. So, a question we wanted to answer today is how can prevention-focused organizations make the greatest impact in providing information and awareness, and influence decisions to support prevention across an entire community, region, or even a state?

[00:01:22]: Well, in this episode we'll dive into state and regional collaboration with two CBCAP grantees from Louisiana and Ohio. I want you to take a listen to how these organizations participate in committees and boards to provide a "prevention lens" to decisions, how they tailor collaboration across different regions of a state and how they find and cultivate dynamic partnerships and networks to make sure collaboration isn't a one-time affair. We're talking with Katina Semien, executive director of the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund and Lindsay Williams, the executive director of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. Now with Ohio, we're talking about a county-administered system, so the Ohio Children's Trust Fund works with a series of agencies and actions at a state level, but also collaborates with each of the states' regions.

[00:02:14]: Now, in Louisiana, the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund sits within a unique body within the Governor's office - it's called the Governor's Children's Cabinet - and the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund adds that "prevention lens" to funding and decision making. And it's that collaboration where we start our conversation here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast with Katina Semien, the executive director of the Louisiana's Children's Trust Fund.

[00:02:43]: So, we'll start off with Louisiana and Katina, thank you so much for joining us and let's just start at this overarching state level and what's been done at Louisiana with this Children's Cabinet, this collaboration at the very top. Give us a sense from the very beginning of who makes up this governor's Children's Cabinet.

KATINA SIMIEN [00:03:04]: Okay. So, first of all, thank you all for having me, I am thrilled to pieces to be with you this morning. And so, the Children's Trust Fund in Louisiana is really lucky in the sense that we are overseen by the Louisiana Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet serves as the governing body for the State of Louisiana, they are responsible for coordinating funding and programmatic services at the state and local level related to children and families. They consist of the Cabinet secretary of each

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state department - so, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Hospitals, the Department of, relative to juvenile services, and down the list. And each of those Cabinet secretaries, of course is appointed, usually by the governor and in addition the executive director of the Cabinet is appointed by the governor and currently, Dr. Dana Hunter holds that title. They have one mission and that is to achieve the most effective and efficient use of monetary, human and organizational resources to lift children and families out of poverty.

[00:04:14]: And so, they are at the top, the Cabinet like I said itself consists of members from all walks of life from, we have executive director who works, represents Louisiana's families of incarcerated individuals with children, we have an executive of technology solutions, we have energy secretaries, we have families helping families that sit on this board, we have Cane River Children's Services - so it's a host of people, including the Children's Trust Fund who holds seats on this Cabinet for the purpose of figuring out how we can solve problems of children and families in the state.

TOM OATES [00:05:04]: So, this entire collection of perspectives and experience come together to, you know, chart some strategic direction, so where the Children's Trust comes into play being, you know, having, you know, seats on this Cabinet - where is the Children's Trust's, you know, position to being able to influence and help, you know, advise this group on the directions moving forward?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:05:25]: So, we are able, so we, the executive director holds a seat as part of this cabinet and we are allowed to be at the table when decisions are being made that impact our children, impact our families, impact our moms and dads - it's important for me to say that Louisiana's governor John Bel Edwards has made a commitment to the families of this state. It was important for him to get everyone together at the table - you have all these agencies that we sometimes work in silos where we may be doing something and someone else is doing the same thing. Governor Edwards has a mission of bringing us all together at the same table to talk about how we can move Louisiana forward and how we can move Louisiana's families forward.

[00:06:18]: And so, the Trust Fund sits at this table, we're able to make suggestions, we're able to talk about everything from how current immigration laws are impacting our families in this area, we're able to talk about everything from funding, how we're gonna put Families First into action, we talk about human trafficking, so, you name it. And so, just having a voice, having a seat, being able to talk about those things that impact our families has been important for the Children's Trust Fund.

TOM OATES [00:06:47]: And this has only been in action for, in recent action, this is not a long-standing group, we're talking a couple of years, or-?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:06:54]: Well, it's been, no the Cabinet itself, the Louisiana Children's Cabinet has been around for, through at least the past two or three administrations, however, it is up to the seated leadership whether or not the Cabinet itself remains in action, in service, etcetera - and it has been consistently. I became executive director of the Trust Fund in 2017, so that's when I was able to start sitting on this board to make this decision. This particular governor brought the Children's Trust Fund to the table and say listen, we're all here, let's make sure that we're all talking the same language, and we are, and it's a wonderful thing for this state.

TOM OATES [00:07:37]: So, give me a sense of what comes out of the Cabinet in terms of campaigns or the actions that, you know, when we see the Cabinet in action.

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KATINA SIMIEN [00:07:47]: Mhmm. So, one of the things that we do, for example, that we're working on now in the Cabinet is budget recommendations that we make - where the funding, where money should go, whether it be education, whether it be to attack the hunger initiative in our state. There is, we have about five workgroups and those workgroups all make recommendations that are then put into a summary for the governor of recommendations of where funding needs to go within our state.

TOM OATES [00:08:16]: So, when it comes to, you know, determining - and you mentioned before talking about, we're talking about funding, we're talking about programs and services to dedicate resources and money to - so, what are those, kind of, guiding principles that determine, alright where, you know, where does the Trust Fund, you know, where are the, where are the funds gonna go, what gets approved and what doesn't?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:08:39]: So, relative to the Trust Fund, we receive funding as it is now from two specific sources. One of them, of course is the CBCAP federal grant that we are appreciative for that we are able to further prevention efforts. Another area that we receive funding is through statute in the state. We receive four dollars from every duplicate birth certificate sold in the state. Believe it or not, that accounts for about \$800,000 of our budget every single year. I know I say the same thing, my face always lights up, people are buying that many duplicate birth certificates a year.

[00:09:19]: What decides on where our funding goes is the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund, we also are operated by a board. And so, our board, we put out an annual request for applications for grants for agencies that are working to prevent child abuse throughout the state and once an agency applies for a grant, we have grant reviewers that are volunteers that come from throughout the State of Louisiana. We review their - and the grants are very intense, they are grants that we pride ourselves on looking for those programs that are directly impacting every community in every region throughout the state. So, we look for compliance, they're reviewed and independently scored by grant reviewers and then we select based on the funding we have for the fiscal year, we select those agencies throughout the state that we believe are going to help us reach our target, which is of course to prevent child abuse and neglect.

TOM OATES [00:10:22]: So, you know, as we pull in, we're talking about collaboration at the Cabinet level. And that kind of joint, you know, a team of influencers, team of perspectives that add to it, but then there's collaboration actually with the Trust Fund at, you know, kind of the execution end. So, you talked about all of those grants that come in and you used a really important word - the volunteers that dedicate time to take a look at these reviews. So, who joins you in reviewing these, because I'd love to get that sense of the other perspectives that you're bringing in to look at the grants and kind of decide where the right direction is?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:10:56]: So, we send out an announcement to agencies, to universities throughout the state requesting volunteers to serve as grant reviewers for our grants each year. Those, anyone who signs up has to be trained. They come into a training session - we usually host about four training sessions a year for those who are interested in reviewing grants. It's an honor for me because I see instructors, professors, people from all walks of life, those who work in social service who wanna have an opportunity to contribute in some way to this effort and so, they're able to come to the table to review these grants.

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[00:11:38]: Once we receive the scoring back, the scoring then goes before our board of directors and it's important for me to talk a little bit about the Trust Fund's board. Our board also consists of members from the Department of Children and Family Services, our current chairman is Attorney Francesca Hamilton Aker, she has been a long-standing member of the criminal justice community, the juvenile justice community in the state. We're represented by representatives from the Department of Education, those who represent - I mean, it's just a gambit of individuals who serve on our board. And so, once the recommendations from the grant reviews come back, our board assesses them and we decide who can be better served by the funding.

[00:12:27]: Now, let me bring you back a little bit. Our funding, or how we fund each region is decided by, is based on the number of child abuse and neglect cases that are reported in each region throughout the state. We get that information from the Department of Children and Family Services yearly. So, for example, if the New Orleans region has a higher level of abuse and neglect cases reported, then we try to put more funding towards that part of the state so that we can try to combat abuse and neglect in the area. Once the board decides how that funding will be broken up, then we make the recommendations that came from the grant reviewers based on scoring, the board votes on that and then we send it to the Children's Cabinet for further review and the Children's Cabinet - and this is by statute - they will then decide whether or not we have chosen adequate agencies to fund and once they give us the approval, we are able to move forward with providing these necessary resources.

TOM OATES [00:13:28]: So, just to follow up on that, you've got the, you know, the community of grant reviewers and all of these folks come together and there's collaboration at that level, then there is your board, another group of diverse members that then take a look and then to the Cabinet itself. So, when we start talking about this, now, three-tiered level of collaboration, how are decisions not only made, but then agreed upon with so many people, with so many perspectives in the room?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:13:59]: You know what, I have a note that I keep in my office and that I share with everybody that says "collaboration, not competition, is what moves us forward." So, you know, we genuinely believe in the idea that by collaborating, listen, we all win, you know. It doesn't matter where you live in the world, there are families that are suffering whether it be because of poverty, whether it be because of a lack of resources, a lack of opportunity, we all agree that the only way to combat that type of issue - particularly in our state - is for us to come together and say, hey, listen.

[00:14:40]: So, you know, our board, particularly the Trust Fund's board consists of members from the religious community, the university community, we bring the state medical society, the Louisiana Council of Family Court Judges, the Louisiana Association of Social Workers. All these people are saying, listen, collaboration, not competition, is what moves us forward in this state. And so, when you ask the question of how are decisions made, it isn't always easy, you know, we don't always sit at these board meetings and sing and hug and there are times when things get heated, but what we start with and certainly what we start with the Children's Trust Fund is that we are here to make a difference in the lives of children. How do we take out ego, take out everything that would put you, take out politics, as hard as that is - and let's talk about how we can make a difference in our communities. And we're doing it, one step at a time.

TOM OATES [00:15:35]: Well, with those grants and once, you know, a program is approved, if you've got that, you know, as you mentioned, kind of what is our end goal, what are we all here for - so with those grants you've got then determine, hey, what does success look like for us? And if you've got that,

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and then they're able to then see it, maybe it's this cycle of, well we've seen this work before, I'm now bought in, I will continue to buy in for this success and this cycle goes. So, let's talk about those, the ability to turn and look at these programs and saying, you know, what does success look like for those agencies and once it is approved, how are you monitoring and pulling out the data to really see where's that money going and are you getting, you know, the return on that investment?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:16:21]: Right. So, we partner with LSU, Louisiana State University with their social research and evaluation department. They provide us with evaluations yearly, we receive mid-term evaluations and yearly evaluations that are put together in a beautiful report that I hate that everyone who isn't looking can't see, but if you visit us online at www.louisianactf.org, you're able to download our year-end summaries that come from, we call them SREC, it's the Social Research and Evaluation Center, and I apologize, let me make that correction. We partner with them so that we can get the best data possible from these agencies that we fund.

[00:17:09]: So, for example, for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, we're funding 40 prevention programs, we are helping to support 11 conferences in addition to that throughout the state. The only way that we're able to adequately assess whether these programs, whether these conferences are benefitting our community is to make sure we partner with a research center so that they can evaluate these programs yearly. So, a couple things happen. They do their research and evaluation and polls and they put all the data together for me twice a year, but additionally, I visit each and every one of our grantees every single year. So, I personally go in and evaluate whether or not they are meeting the goals that we've set in LCTF. So, I love it because my event calendar stays full, I go to events throughout the state all the time, particularly these events that we're able to sponsor. So, at least once a year, I visit each individual agency to see how they are functioning and I usually provide a report back, not just to my board, but also to the Children's Cabinet. I provide an executive director's report four times a year to both boards so that we can basically keep up with, you know, all these great things that we have going on.

[00:18:29]: At the beginning of the year I also do an annual report that is provided to both the governor in addition to state and, state representatives and senators so that people can see the good work that the Trust Fund is doing throughout the state.

TOM OATES [00:18:43]: Well, you know, we pulled out, you started to talk about conferences and so, we had not mentioned that with everything else going in. So, not only - and you know, of course, you've mentioned, I think you used the work partner about 17 times so far and rightfully so. You know, so, there's also this network that's being created along the way, so, to foster collaboration at just that almost informal level that I can pick up the phone and address the folks that I've learned and known. So, walk me through the conferences that the Trust Fund is setting up, is organizing and the purposes that you're trying to get and the goals for these conferences.

KATINA SIMIEN [00:19:21]: So, let me give you an example, and it's important for me to say that, so, some of these conferences are conferences that we are funding that we support at any time that the agencies reach out and ask us to assist with organization and we are able to do that as well. So, one in particular that's coming up for us in the next couple of weeks, there's a partnership with Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond Louisiana. This is our first year working with Southeastern to put together this particular conference and the title of the conference is Skills and Interventions for Professionals to Identify Human Trafficking Survivors to Break the Cycle of Abuse and Neglect. And so, the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund is featured on the program and we will be talking about our efforts

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and the efforts and giving strategies to these professionals so that we can try to figure out how to end human trafficking in this state. That's a very big issue for us.

[00:20:18]: Another conference that I'm really proud to say that we're gonna be assisting to host and organize this year is with the Walls Project here in Louisiana, it's a conference called the JOLT: Teen Empowerment Conference and let me tell you, I'm so proud about this one. So, this conference is going to be for high school students throughout East Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana and it's gonna be like mini TED Talks. They get to show up and there are gonna be TED Talks by other teenagers about everything from life skills to how to cope with bullying. And so, we're pulling other teen leaders to come out and do, like I said, mini TED Talks for other teens. It's gonna be a free conference, the funding that we're able to assist the Walls Project with is gonna also assist with this conference.

[00:21:14]: Additionally, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Listen, that organization in our state, I think I speak for everyone on this call - I'm not sure what's going on in Ohio, but I can imagine it's the same thing - that grandparents play a huge part in helping to raise children, they fill in the gaps with families. We know that because they're there, because they're able to help with everything from childcare to feeding that that is in itself preventing neglect in our state, so we are proud to provide funding and assist the executive director of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren with their annual conference.

[00:21:51]: This provides help to not just grandparents, but other kinship caregivers that enable to provide better care for their grandchildren. Everything from talking about professionals that are available for therapy in the event that they're having behavioral issues to, like I said, feeding sites throughout the state, social media - grandparents are always asking, you know, how do we handle that? So, we're happy to be able to fund programs like that. We, you know, Triple P Parenting, I mean, I could just go on. There's 11 of them that we have partnered with for the next year. LAPEN, which is a parenting education network conference that we've become involved with. I just wanna say, Tom, that we just again, we know that if we can provide families with resources at the core, if we can give them what they need at the core - so before neglect even happens, before you, when you realize that you aren't able to provide a meal for your child, we wanna make sure that you know that we have agencies that can help you with that. We can get you to the person. Not next week, not next month, today. Today. I can, you call me and today, I can get on the phone and get you that resource and so, that's our goal.

TOM OATES [00:23:11]: Well, you've talked about network, you know and a lot of folks would think about a professional network. But, what you've done with the teen conference, and now you're, you know, you've been getting the grandparents, you know, connecting with other grandparents, you know, you're talking about developing not only a network within profession, professionals, but really, the network that you've created of peer to peer learning with teens. So they get their own network. The grandparents get their own network. We are all looking for word of mouth, we are all looking for, you know, what do my friends advise and we talk about that from your mechanic, to who's gonna hopefully paint your house or where the right places I can go, or what should I do in this situation. So, you know, as we start to have this collaboration theme, you're also, with that conference, so I just wanna call it out because I do think it's a great example of setting up those conferences to, you know, empower the community itself, that sometimes the agency won't always be there, but then again, if you always know a neighbor is, or I've got somebody else to rely on. So, your partners don't necessarily have to come in with a business card, you know, they could come in with a shared experience.

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KATINA SIMIEN [00:24:22]: That's correct, and I think that in every state, prevention is, you know, it's crazy that prevention, we've always talked prevention, but it's surprising to me how many professionals don't start at prevention. Because, I'll tell you, I've been an attorney in this state for almost 20 years, I started in family service work and I always came in after something happened. I represented, you know, incarcerated parents, etcetera. I tell people that getting folks in a prevention mindset, it takes a lot of work because a lot of people are used to providing the resources after it happens, after the neglect happens, not before. The Children's Trust Fund is determined to teach and spread the word about prevention throughout the state so - and we're doing it with only about \$1.2 or 3 million a year - but we're gonna provide that framework so that we never get to the space of abuse and neglect. Or we try to lessen those numbers, that's our goal.

TOM OATES [00:25:24]: So, Katina, for other agencies out there, those community-based prevention organizations, you know, that take an example of what you're doing, let's say at the grassroots level, at the grant review level, but also, back up to where you have that seat at the table and where you're able to maybe guide policy or shape some big decisions - what advice would you give those other community-based prevention organizations to help them influence policy and kind of expand their footprint?

KATINA SIMIEN [00:25:52]: Goodness. Two things. One, as I said earlier, collaboration, not competition. Listen, there is room at the table for every single person. We want you there. And the second thing is also really easy. Show up, right? Show up. You know, a lot of us, as I said, we talk about the problems, we talk about what potentially could happen if we, let's stop asking what if and start showing up and doing the work. It's really that simple. So, collaborate and show up. We need you, we need all the hands that we can get, our children need us. I think about what Louisiana in particular is gonna look like in the next 20 or 30 years when I'm nice and retired and I can't retire if our babies aren't able to have the same opportunities that I've had that has helped me to arrive in this place. So, collaboration, not competition and show up, we need you.

TOM OATES [00:27:00]: Alright, so, we wanna switch now from the approach that you're hearing from Katina in Louisiana to know a county-based system in Ohio. And, so, for that, you know, Lindsay Williams is with us here. So, Lindsay is running the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, which falls within the state's Office of Family and Child Services. So, Lindsay, walk me through the role and position that the Trust Fund in Ohio plays within the Office of Family and Child Services.

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:27:32]: Yes, good morning. So, the Children's Trust Fund, we are the prevention arm for the state in Ohio, focusing on primary and secondary prevention services and our mission is really to prevent child abuse and neglect by investing in strong communities, healthy families and safe children. So, as a, similar to Louisiana, as a quasi-public agency, meaning that we duly report to a 15-member board and also sit within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Office of Children and Families who acts as our administrative agent. And so, we, our board consists of 15 members, including four legislative members, three agency directors or their designees, which includes the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Health and then Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services, as well as public members who are appointed by the governor representing fields such as social work, human services, medical field, education, business and the volunteer sector.

[00:28:42]: And so, really, our role is to fund prevention services and ensure prevention services are up in all of Ohio's 88 counties. And we, again, very similar to Louisiana, accomplish this through three main

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avenues. We have a regional service-delivery model, we also offer statewide grants and we do a number of board-specific initiatives. And then, additionally, we fund a variety of professional training, such as the Keeping Children Safe training, which is a mandated reporter training for the early childhood professionals and we also do a training on the state's human trafficking prevention curriculum, kind of a train-the-trainer curriculum for trainers that are working with high risk youth.

TOM OATES [00:29:31]: So, with the groups that you have to work with, you now, and Katina mentioned it - and it's not surprising for anybody in any state or jurisdiction - about trying to avoid working in silos, or trying to avoid, you know, everybody doing the same thing, but not coordinating or collaborating. And so, as we take a look at collaboration, I'd like to your sense of those other departments within the state, be it within, you know, the Office of Family and Child Services or without, that, you know, the Ohio Children's Trust Fund is working in lockstep with. What does that collaboration look like across different agencies?

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:30:06]: So, in general, I think we are a very collaborative state. So, as I mentioned, we sit within the Department of Job and Family Services, so we do a ton of collaboration work with them, kind of in lockstep in terms of the children services continuum of care, so, obviously, we do the primary and secondary prevention, but we sit in the same office as the folks that are doing the tertiary prevention and working with children who have been reported to public children's services agencies. And, I know you had mentioned we are a county-administered state, so, we have, you know, 88 counties that each have their own public children's services agency that takes those referrals and works with those families and that's kind of guided at the state level.

[00:30:52]: And then, additionally, we work closely with the Ohio Department of Health on a number of things. We work with them every year on the child fatality review report, an annual report that we issue and we sit on a number of committees with them in terms of the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. We sit on a number of groups doing federal planning. So, with the Ohio Department of Health, the State Health Assessment and the State Health Improvement Plan, we sit on those groups within JFS, we sit on our Children and Family Services Program Improvement Planning Group and the, provide a lot of input into Children and Family Services Plan. Pretty much any of the sister agencies you can name in Ohio, Department of Medicaid, Department of Public Safety, we do a lot of work with them around human trafficking, Department of Adult Mental Disabilities - we're there, we're linking arms with them to really come together to serve Ohio's children and families.

TOM OATES [00:32:02]: Yeah, you mentioned being able to kind of, you know, sit at the table, well, you're at a lot of tables which gives you an audience. And, you know, but with that point, I'd like to get a sense of where you are contributing with that seat at the table in terms of, you know, what does bringing that - 'cause we're talking about prevention and we are talking about that mentality that sometimes needs a kickstart, or sometimes needs a greater awareness to what that means, so, you guys when we were talking earlier, we talked about bringing the "prevention lens" to help influence others. Give me a sense of what does that influence not only look like when you're sitting at the table, but then, what does it look like in practice?

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:32:44]: Sure. So, it really is coming together to speak for children and families that are maybe going through a tough time. They may be struggling but they are not at a level that they have risen to the attention, coming to the attention to the children's services agency. And so, then, the question becomes, how do we kind of link arms with sister agencies and ensure that throughout the

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continuum of care in Ohio that we have the services and supports available for those children and families when they need it to strengthen family protective factors to kind of come in as a community to support those families and link them with those services early so that they can, before a crisis would occur, before they come to the attention of child welfare, with the ultimate goal of preventing child abuse and neglect from occurring.

[00:33:42]: And so, let's see, part two of your question was what does that look like in practice. And so, we, similar to Louisiana fund a lot of grants with local providers, both through our regional model and then through our state-wide grants program such as Triple P, other parenting programs, we work very closely with the Ohio Department of Health, who kind of heads up our home visiting programs related to helping grow in Ohio - so that's Healthy Families in America, Parents as Teachers, Nurse/Family Partnership. We provide some supplemental funding for some of those programs in Ohio, we do a variety of parent cafes, which is a program where a parent leader sits with a group of other parents to kind of facilitate, just all those challenges on the day to day of being a parent. They're able to offer a meal to the family, so they can come, bring their kids, they have childcare set up and kind of can just sit down and talk about those challenges and help each other work through them.

TOM OATES [00:34:52]: You know, for a lot of agencies and organizations that are understanding the prevention approach but still may be stuck in the - we've always been a reactionary organization, we've always had to, you know, come in after the fact - are you, how do you help them kind of recognize, no here's what you can do now to help prevention, to kind of give them an understanding of where their role or where their value is, because, I think prevention is a concept that is easily understood, but when it comes to an agency that says, well I used to operate this way, how do I best operate in a prevention, kind of, with that "prevention lens" to, you know, apply my skills or services - where does the Trust Fund kind of fall in, you know, you talk about influencing others to kind of help them chart, okay, here's where your value becomes in a prevention kind of approach?

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:35:42]: Sure. So, we've been doing a lot of work over the last year, really focusing on how can we bridge that continuum of care. So, we're at a really good time both at the state level and at the national level. I think there is a lot of focus currently at the national level with Associate Commissioner Jerry Milner and his views and passion around prevention, in addition to at the state level under Governor Mike DeWine's administration - children's services transformation is a key priority for him, as well as tripling home visiting services for families and children in Ohio and really that whole prenatal-through-three population and how do we, you know, strengthen families, support them, ensure that we have, you know, safe and cared-for children that are ready and prepared to enter kindergarten. And so, now, I feel like I'm rambling here and losing track of -

TOM OATES [00:36:44]: Well, I mean, you know, you've got various agencies and approaches that they wanna turn around and say, okay, where's the best place that I can help in terms of that "prevention lens", you know, moving away from I've got services after the fact instead of services to aid prevention knowing, again, we don't wanna work in silos, how do we best add value as a group and it sounds like with the Children's Trust Fund, having these various seats at the table that there's a, there's an opportunity there and I'm wondering if those agencies are receptive to it, but the opportunity for the Trust Fund to say, hey, here's where you can add value in this kind of new approach - and prevention is not that new, but it is getting much, much more attention.

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LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:37:27]: Mhmm. So, one thing that I will share that we are really excited about is, we have recently been awarded one of nine federal Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families grants by the Children's Bureau. And so, this is our proposal for this concept is creating a community based prevention model and its working with several counties in Northeastern Ohio and the concept is how do we provide kind of a central point of contact to receive those prevention services that meets families where they're at and addresses their unique needs. Anything from one-time service and consultation to intensive home visiting and support programs where they can receive services such as financial literacy training, financial assistance in terms of concrete supports, weaving in evidence-based practices such as Triple P services and parenting classes, basic life skills training, motivational interviewing to be able to work with families at all levels of that continuum and kind of offer that universal prevention services.

[00:38:43]: And so, we're partnering with other state agencies and local agencies on that project and then additionally, we have been very involved in the work around Families First in Ohio and sitting at the table with all of our sister agencies. Actually, just last week, we participated in a two day Families First planning retreat that was facilitated by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and not only did we talk specific about tertiary prevention and how we're gonna implement Families First in Ohio, but really there's a lot of conversation around how do we build out that entire continuum of care way down to from universal services to, kind of, specific targeted families all the way up to that tertiary prevention level. So, that was incredibly encouraging to be a part of that conversation.

TOM OATES [00:39:36]: Yeah, I am really curious, now, of course, you know we mentioned Ohio where, you know, a county system, so how is the Trust Fund, then, working 'cause, you know, Ohio is a diverse state and you mentioned 88 counties, 88 agencies. Where does the Trust Fund, kind of, find a role and kind of change that role maybe, even, when you are dealing with now at a new level of the county based, more boots on the ground level?

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:40:05]: Yeah, so, we transitioned to a regional model of service delivery maybe four years ago and so, instead of, so we used to - previously each county would be allocated so much of the Trust Fund money to provide prevention services in their local community and we really said well, how do we kind of try to leverage this funding and use the little bit of funding that we do have available - we work off of about a \$5.5 million budget here at the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, but about 3.5 of that is what we have allocated towards that regional model, services in the local counties - and so, how do we really kind of pool those fundings to meet the needs of those communities? And Ohio is really geographically diverse, we have urban counties, rural counties and everything in between and so, we have eight prevention regions that we divided the state into and each region then worked on a comprehensive evaluation of the services needs for their local communities and those are gonna be updated every five years, they'll be updated for the first time in 2021.

[00:41:14]: But, based on those comprehensive needs assessments, they developed a prevention plan for their area of the state. So, what needs have risen to the highest? So, in some regions, you know, Ohio, like every other state has been hit very hard with the opioid epidemic. So, some regions have strategies regarding helping substance-using parents or substance-using pregnant women and how do we connect them to services. Some regions have, like our Southwest region of Ohio has really seen a need in terms of kinship caregivers and kinship relatives and how do we better support them. And so, just kind of depending on what needs are rising to the top in terms of those local resources they've been able to come together and develop their own plans and their own strategies.

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[00:42:04]: And this approach I think has really helped to be able to leverage funding, but it's also helped to increase collaboration because now you have leaders from each of those individual counties coming around the table together at least quarterly and so, in addition to just, you know, determining what to fund and getting the programs out there, they're also able to have some of those systemic level conversations and do some advocacy things like above and beyond just providing the services for the local communities.

TOM OATES [00:42:37]: Well, I'm hearing kind of this theme of, you know, even at the statewide level of with all of the agencies that the Children's Trust Fund is joining and communicating with and advising, part of it is what is your need, let me meet you where you are as opposed to walking in and stating a purpose or stating here's what you're gonna deal with or here's my advice without even consulting. So you've got that meeting somebody where you are but then at the same time, fostering that communication amongst the group and so you're seeing that, you know, I'm hearing that from the state level but then it's then applied at the regional level for each of those regions where that community and collaboration not only is the Trust Fund involved but if I'm hearing it right, it's all of the folks in the region kind of creating their, you know, like Louisiana, this peer, this peer network. So, you're building this kind of strength in collaboration, strength in communication and, you know, really effective partnerships. Am I hearing that right?

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:43:35]: Yes. And what I think you're really saying is it's a parallel process, so we talk about parallel processes a lot in Ohio and the way that we serve and interact with families and children through that collaborative partnership process is the way that we need to interact with our partner agencies and the kind of leadership that, say, a case worker or home visitor or somebody going into your home is going to work well with a family at that level kind of just being very open to hearing what they have to say and really wanting to meet them where they're at. That's what the county agencies do for families and that's what state agencies in Ohio hope to do for, to support county agencies and that are actually out there working directly with family and children every day.

TOM OATES [00:44:23]: So, I'll pose the same question that I asked Katina from Louisiana and I'll pose it to you about the advice you'd give other, you know, community based prevention organizations to help them in terms of influencing policy and expanding their footprint.

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:44:40]: I, and I guess I would say that it's having the conversation, it's willing to show up at the table and have the conversation and we have, you know, so many families and children that don't always have a voice, so it's how can we be a voice for those families and those children and how do we engage, you know, families, children, caregivers into the conversation. We talk a lot about parent leadership in Ohio and how do we, how can we bring those parents into be leaders and be advocates for other parents. Similar with grandparents, you know, how do we hear their voice and ensure that their voice is being heard and that we're not just creating a system where we are giving services saying, oh, this is what we think you need - no, it's you sit at the table with us, you're a partner with us, you tell us what you need and we'll figure out the best solutions together.

TOM OATES [00:45:40]: Yeah. It's that partnership and that continuing based on not structure, not programs, but relationships. And, you know, there's your collaboration lesson that I think, I think we've all been learning and preaching but need to be applying as we move forward. So, I love the perspectives both from Louisiana and Ohio and so, you know, Lindsay Williams and Katina Semien, I wanna thank you

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guys so much for your perspective, for your energy and for being a part of this with us here, on the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast.

KATINA SIMIEN [00:46:16]: Thank you.

LINDSAY WILLIAMS [00:46:17]: Yeah, thank you for having us.

KATINA SIMIEN [00:46:19]: Appreciate it.

[00:46:23]: So, over on this episode's web page at <https://www.childwelfare.gov>, we'll provide a link to the reports Katina Semien mentioned from the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund: their Annual Report and State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. We'll also give you a link to learn more about the CBCAP program and their grantees from the FRIENDS National Resource Center. You can also access information surrounding cross-system collaboration in prevention services, the National Child Abuse Prevention Month website, we'll send you a link to that and you can also access the Prevention Resource Guide. We'll also have other episodes of the podcast where we dive into other CBCAP grantees and their programs – so, all of this will be over on this episode's webpage on Child Welfare Information Gateway.

[00:47:10]: Hey, if you haven't subscribed to the podcast, I encourage you to do so. The Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, Stitcher and SoundCloud, so you can get each new episode every month and listen to all our previous episodes, as well. So, hey, my thanks to Katina Semien from the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund and Lindsay Williams from the Ohio Children's Trust Fund – and all the CBCAP grantees - for joining us here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. And thanks to you for listening and spending your time with us. Until next time, I'm Tom Oates. Have a great day!

FEMALE NARRATOR [00:47:51]: Thanks for joining us for this edition of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Child Welfare Information Gateway is available at www.childwelfare.gov and is a service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The views and opinions expressed on this podcast do not necessarily reflect on those of Information Gateway, or the Children's Bureau.