

Waiting for A Family

As the need for foster homes continues to grow, advocates hope more families will answer the call.



By **Mary Beth Sallee**
JOBE PUBLISHING, INC.

Every day across Kentucky, thousands of children wake up uncertain about where they belong. Some have been removed from homes because of abuse or neglect. Others have experienced trauma that most adults would struggle to overcome.

For children entering foster care, finding a safe and stable home can make all the difference.

Yet, according to Laura Murrell, Director of Programs for NECCO's Bowling Green and Elizabethtown offices, Kentucky continues to face a significant shortage of foster families at a time when the need is growing.

"Currently, Kentucky has 8,700 children in out-of-home care, but there is a foster home shortage," Murrell said. "As a result, some children have been temporarily housed in offices, hotels, or non-traditional settings while waiting for a long term placement."

The shortage has created difficult situations for those children, especially teenagers, sibling groups, and children with higher behavioral, emotional, and/or medical needs.

While foster care often receives attention through headlines and television portrayals, Murrell said many people misunderstand the children who enter the system, often mislabeling them as "bad kids."

"Children enter foster care because of abuse and neglect," Murrell

explained. "They have experienced trauma and need adults who are supportive, provide stability, and are understanding of their situation."

Once in foster care, challenges children face often extend far beyond simply moving into a new home. Murrell said many struggle with grief and sadness after being separated from their families, often feeling confused about why they cannot return home while simultaneously wrestling with loyalty to both their biological family and their foster family. The emotional impact of those experiences can manifest in a variety of ways.

"This leads to anxiety, fear, anger, aggression, withdrawal, and difficulty trusting adults," Murrell said.

Children who have experienced trauma may also struggle to form healthy attachments and often test boundaries as they learn whether the adults in their lives can be trusted.

Instability can further complicate those challenges. Murrell said children who experience multiple placements often develop feelings that they do not belong anywhere, making it more difficult to build relationships, and creating ongoing stress and uncertainty.

Foster children also have little control over many of the decisions that shape their daily lives, from where they live and attend school to when they can see family members. That lack of control,



▲ PHOTO | SUBMITTED
Laura Murrell serves as Director of Programs for NECCO's Bowling Green and Elizabethtown offices, overseeing the daily operations, quality, compliance, and growth of both programs while working to ensure children and families receive effective services.

Murrell explained, can leave children feeling helpless.

"Children can often wonder if it's their fault," she said.

Those struggles can also affect a child's education and development, leading to interruptions in schooling, difficulty concentrating, and delays in social and emotional growth.

While the challenges can seem overwhelming, Murrell said foster parents have the opportunity to make an immediate difference in a child's life simply by providing a safe, stable home.

"Children are sleeping in a safe home. Foster parents are helping children heal from trauma. They are providing stability in a difficult time," Murrell said. "Many foster parents form lifelong connections with former foster children and biological families."

FOSTER
CONTINUED ON PAGE NINE



▲ PHOTO | SUBMITTED
Staff members gather outside NECCO's Bowling Green office, where the organization provides foster care, counseling, adoption and independent living services. From left: Laura Murrell, Skylar Thompson, Jessica Faine, Autumn Reagan, Mariah Wells, Tayonna Greer.

NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF BUDGET ORDINANCE OHIO COUNTY FISCAL COURT Fiscal Year 2026-2027

BUDGET SUMMARY
AN ORDINANCE Relating to the Annual Budget and Appropriations.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE FISCAL COURT OF OHIO COUNTY, KENTUCKY:

SECTION ONE: The following budget is adopted for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and the amounts stated are appropriated for the purposes indicated.

General Fund		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	5,975,373.00
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	2,118,387.00
5200	GENERAL HEALTH AND SANITATION	323,265.00
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	370,580.00
5400	RECREATION AND CULTURE	787,160.00
7700	LEASES	0.00
8000	CAPITAL PROJECTS	0.00
9100	GENERAL SERVICES	268,317.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	123,500.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	0.00
9400	FRINGE BENEFITS- EMPLOYERS SHARE	580,008.00
Total		10,546,590.00
Road Fund		
6100	ROADS	3,569,462.00
7700	LEASES	32,758.00
8000	CAPITAL PROJECTS	120,000.00
9100	GENERAL SERVICES	85,434.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	0.00
9400	FRINGE BENEFITS- EMPLOYERS SHARE	507,982.00
Total		4,315,636.00
Local Government Economic Assistance Fund		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	0.00
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	25,000.00
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	10,000.00
5400	RECREATION AND CULTURE	82,964.00
6200	AIRPORTS	34,761.00
8000	CAPITAL PROJECTS	0.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	0.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	0.00
Total		152,725.00
FEDERAL GRANTS		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	150,000.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	20,000.00
Total		170,000.00
Forest Fire Protection Fund		
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	6,305.00
Total		6,305.00
LANDFILL FUND		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	30,000.00
7700	LEASES	137,191.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	9,134.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	0.00
Total		176,325.00
O.C.E.D.A. - REVOLVING LOAN FUND		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	36,384.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	400,000.00
Total		436,384.00
OPIOID FUND		
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	152,391.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	350,109.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	0.00
Total		502,500.00
EMERGENCY SERVICES (RESTRICTED)		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	1,000.00
5100	PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY	1,227,307.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	0.00
9300	TRANSFERS TO OTHER FUNDS	0.00
Total		1,228,307.00
ARCH PROGRAM		
5300	SOCIAL SERVICES	148,787.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	434,463.00
Total		583,250.00
COUNTY CLERK STORAGE FEES		
5000	GENERAL GOVERNMENT	39,050.00
Total		39,050.00
WATERLINE RESERVE		
5200	GENERAL HEALTH AND SANITATION	66,268.00
9200	CONTINGENT APPROPRIATIONS	0.00
Total		66,268.00
Total Budget Appropriations		18,223,340.00

Adopted this 23rd day of June, 2026

DAVID JOHNSTON, COUNTY JUDGE/EXECUTIVE

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

All interested persons and organizations in Ohio County are hereby notified that a copy of the county's adopted budget in full is available for public inspection at the Office of the County Judge/Executive during normal business hours.

Advertise with us!

Call
270-298-7100
or email:
ads@octimesnews.com

SUPPORT NEWSPAPERS
and keep your community connected!