



Geauga Family First Council  
Service Coordination  
Mechanism  
2024-2025

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## I. Introduction

The **Geauga Family First Council** (“**GFFC**” or the “**Council**”) is a collaborative organization that meets the diverse needs of families in Geauga County through a unified system of services. The Council, established pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 121.37, is dedicated to removing barriers for children with multiple needs through prevention, early intervention, and inter-system services that support the entire family.

The Council coordinates efforts among county agencies, sharing resources and information and establishing a unified, inter-disciplinary approach to address concerns impacting children and families. It is through this pooling of resources and ideas and the offering of coordinated services that we aim to create systemic change for the betterment of children and families in need in our community. The Council funds a wide range of community-based services, addressing service gaps in Geauga County.

One major function of the Council is Service **Coordination**. Service Coordination ensures that children and families served through GFFC-funded programs are viewed as the responsibility of the community as a whole and not just the responsibility of one particular service agency. The Council’s goal is to streamline services for children and families with multiple needs, preventing them from being passed between agencies or falling through the cracks and ensuring that needs are understood holistically.

The purpose of this document is to describe the Council’s Service Coordination Mechanism (as defined and discussed below) and serve as a resource for families and other community stakeholders.

Please refer to the enclosed Exhibit A: *Glossary of Key Terms* for definitions of terms presented in this document in **bold** text.

## II. SERVICE COORDINATION MECHANISM

### A. Overview and Purpose of the Service Coordination Mechanism

The **Service Coordination Mechanism** (“**SCM**”) represents the people, policies and processes that guide the planning, coordination, and implementation of services for families with multiple needs. The Council is committed to providing coordinated services for children from birth to age 21.

The purpose of the SCM, administered through the Council, is to:

- Provide an intensive collaboration approach for children and families, enhancing existing agency systems.
- Build on the strengths of current community services.
- Provide access to both formal and informal existing services and introduce new services or strategies to meet unmet needs.
- Encourage family-centered, individualized services and supports; and
- Offer a personalized process for youth and families with serious or complex needs.

The support team, including parents/guardians, relatives, natural supports, service providers, and agency representatives, will develop, implement, and evaluate a care plan over time. The goal is to help families build a system of natural supports, reducing their reliance on formal systems and becoming self-sufficient.

The levels of involvement in the SCM include (i) **Information and Referral**, (ii) **Basic Service Coordination**, and (iii) **Intensive High-Fidelity Wraparound**, each as discussed in Section [II.D.] below. Criteria will be used to determine the appropriate level of Service Coordination for each child and family, but no family will be refused the opportunity to refer themselves for consideration.

#### **B. Review and Revision of the SCM**

The SCM was initially developed by Council staff and reviewed by Council for refinement and approval. Council staff will review the SCM annually and make proposed revisions for consideration and adoption by the Council.

#### **C. Organizational Structure of SCM**

The organizational structure includes the Council, the **Council Coordinator**, the **Service Coordinator**, and the GFFC **Inter-Disciplinary Teams**.

The Inter-Disciplinary Teams, consisting of middle-level managers and staff from participating systems, serve as the primary working group for integrated service planning, identifying service gaps, and recommending strategies and services for assisting children and families in need.

The Service Coordinator provides direct support to children and families, acting as the neutral point of contact and formal wraparound staff under SCM.

#### **D. Levels of Service Involvement**

**Wraparound Services** and Service Coordination are offered based on three levels of involvement for families, depending on their needs. Families may move between these levels throughout their Service Coordination experience.

**Level 1: Information and Referral**

- *Description:* Provides resource and referral information to the family without further services.
- *Appropriate for:* Families with a single issue or basic need, experiencing a short-term crisis, or those new to using services from multiple agencies.
- *Length of Service:* Up to 90 days.

**Level 2: Basic Service Coordination**

- *Description:* A youth and family-driven, cross-system planning process that coordinates existing resources and supports to create the least restrictive plan for success.
- *Appropriate for:* Families with less intensive multiple needs across multiple systems who need additional support from a team.
- *Length of Service:* 3-12 months.
- *Process:* Child and family teams, including formal and informal supports, develop an individualized, strength-based plan, monitor it, and measure success over time. Team meetings are generally less frequent.

**Level 3: Intensive High-Fidelity Wraparound**

- *Description:* An evidence-based, intensive planning and facilitation process using a comprehensive team to develop a unique plan based on the youth and family’s unmet needs.
- *Appropriate for:* Families with complex, intensive multiple needs across multiple systems, including those at risk of out-of-home placement.
- *Length of Service:* 12-18 months.
- *Process:* Child and family teams develop an individualized, strength-based plan, monitor it, and measure success over time. Team meetings are more frequent. The Intensive High-Fidelity Wraparound process includes four phases:
  - Phase 1: Engagement and team preparation
  - Phase 2: Initial plan development
  - Phase 3: Implementation
  - Phase 4: Transition

## E. Target Population

The Council's target population includes youth aged 0-21. No family will be refused the opportunity to refer themselves for service consideration. The target population specifically includes:

- Children with mental and behavioral health issues
- Children who are abused, neglected, dependent, unruly, or delinquent.
- Children with a 504 plan or IEP, or those with behavioral or academic issues in school
- Children involved with the Geauga County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Children enrolled in the Early Intervention Program (birth to three years of age)

## F. Awareness and Training Regarding SCM

The Council Coordinator and Service Coordinator disseminate information about the SCM to GFFC member organizations and other relevant groups. Updates are provided annually to the Council, and comprehensive overviews are delivered at various collaborative committees and groups throughout the year. Referral forms, program flyers, and brochures are distributed during meetings and community events to ensure awareness. The SCM is shared and reviewed annually by the Council and is published on the GFFC website.

Additionally, the Service Coordinator participates in various trainings throughout the year, and relevant training opportunities are also offered to Council members.

## G. Alignment with County Service Agencies

Efforts are made to harmonize Council Service Coordination and Wraparound services with **Early Intervention Service Coordination, Job and Family Services**, the **Juvenile Court** system, and **OhioRISE Care Coordination**. This alignment aims to create a seamless continuum of care for individuals aged 0-21. Each agency actively participates to ensure ongoing alignment, referrals, and data collection.

- Job and Family Services: Youth and families involved in Child Protective Services are eligible for GFFC Service Coordination, regardless of custody status.
- Juvenile Court System: GFFC Wraparound collaborates with the Juvenile Court system to provide Service Coordination for youth

alleged unruly or adjudicated delinquent, and those experiencing excessive tardiness, chronic absenteeism, and truancy.

- Early Intervention Service Coordination: Ensures services received under Early Intervention are consistent with federal regulations and Department of Children and Youth policy. GFFC Service Coordination supports families as needed.
- OhioRISE Care Coordination: Available for youth enrolled in OhioRISE with complex behavioral health and multisystem needs. GFFC ensures youth/families are referred and connected to necessary services and supports.

No family will be denied the opportunity to refer themselves for Service Coordination. The Council is committed to identifying and addressing the needs of children and families who are not currently being served or whose needs are underserved to improve the local system of care.

#### **H. Procedure for Referring a Child and Family**

Agencies and parents can make direct referrals to the Service Coordinator at any time. To access services, contact:

- Email: tim.kehres@jfs.ohio.gov or lori.babik@jfs.ohio.gov
- Phone: 440-285-1201
- Fax: 440-286-6654
- Mail: Geauga Family First Council, Attn: Service Coordinator, 12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite 150, Chardon, OH 44024

The following information is necessary to make a referral for a child or family to access Council services:

- Date of the referral
- Contact information for the person being referred.
- Age, gender, and race of the person being referred.
- Brief description of the problems being experienced.
- Systems/agencies involved with the person to date.
- Contact information for the person referring.
- Identification of Medicaid Managed Care Plan, if applicable

The Service Coordinator will confirm receipt of the referral via email within one business day. The referral source is encouraged to arrange and attend the **Initial Engagement Meeting** with the family to discuss the referral and explain the Service Coordination process. If contact with the family is unsuccessful after three attempts, an “attempt to reach you” letter is mailed. If there is no response by the specified time, the inquiry is closed.



## **Initial Engagement Meeting**

The Initial Engagement Meeting with the family should ideally be scheduled within five (5) business days of receipt of the referral and be conducted at a time and location convenient for the family. The meeting should include the following:

- The Service Coordinator should explain the process, review the family's needs, and help decide if Service Coordination/Wraparound is suitable.
- The Service Coordinator should review the process, identify immediate service referrals, address crisis stabilization issues, and conduct an intake outlining the family's strengths, needs, and culture.
- Tools such as questionnaires, timelines, and social connections maps may be used.
- If additional team members are identified, the parent will be asked to sign a release of information.
- The Service Coordinator should complete the CASII Assessment to evaluate the youth's and family's needs and strengths.
- The Service Coordinator is responsible for creating and maintaining a family-centered team for each assigned family.

## **Data Entry**

Information collected at or prior to the Initial Engagement Meeting should be entered into the Ohio Automated Service Coordination Information System (OASCIS) and should include:

- Date referral is received, placement at time of referral, case record creation, and documenting process activities within case notes.
- If the youth meet OhioRISE eligibility, the family can change care coordinators and lead agencies.

### **I. Notification Procedure for Family Service Coordination Plan Meetings**

Family needs and schedules are prioritized when scheduling Service Coordination/Wraparound Team meetings. The Service Coordinator schedules meetings in consultation with the family and invites all appropriate team members, including natural supports, involved agencies, and school personnel.

- Invitations to the initial team meeting are extended by phone and/or email at least one week prior.

- Subsequent meetings are scheduled at the end of the current meeting.
- Notifications for the next meeting are sent by phone and/or email at least one week prior, except in emergencies.
- Emergency meetings are scheduled within three business days.

**J. Procedure for Families to Initiate Meetings and Invite Support Persons**

Families involved in service coordination receive contact information for all team members. To initiate a meeting, families email the Service Coordinator and team with the date, time, and location. Families can directly invite additional support persons and inform them of the meeting details. The Service Coordinator can assist with invitations if needed. Families can request a copy of their family plan at any time.

**K. Procedure for Out-of-Home Placements**

A team meeting will occur before an out-of-home placement or within ten days after an emergency placement. The Service Coordinator should be notified within three (3) business days of such events. The meeting allows team members to consider alternatives to placement and plan for community supports during and after placement. This does not override decisions of Child Protective Services or the Juvenile Court system regarding placements.

**L. Funding for Multi-System Youth Custody Relinquishment**

GFFC may seek funding from the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to support children at risk of custody relinquishment or those needing services to transition to community settings. Applications are vetted by a multi-system team and authorized by ODM. The Council Coordinator and Service Coordinator oversee financial tracking and submission of required updates.

**M. Procedure for Monitoring Progress and Tracking Outcomes**

Geauga County uses OASCIS reports to continuously monitor family outcomes, identify system gaps, and address community needs. The results are regularly reported to the Council. Data collected through this system informs decision-making, enabling GFFC to evaluate and prioritize services, address service gaps, and innovate approaches to enhance outcomes for families and children.

**N. Procedure for Protecting Family Confidentiality**

Protecting family confidentiality is a top priority and a legal requirement. All disclosed information is considered confidential. Families participating in

service coordination will sign a Release of Information, specifying what information can be shared between agencies. Only authorized parties will have access to this information. Team members will sign a confidentiality agreement, and exceptions include cases of abuse, neglect, danger to self or others, and other legally mandated situations.

#### **O. Procedure for Assessing Family Strengths, Needs, and Cultural Background**

The assessment process begins with an initial face-to-face meeting with the Service Coordinator to understand the family's strengths, needs, cultural background, and past trauma. This meeting encourages active family participation. Geauga County uses the CASII assessment tool to determine the appropriate level of service intensity needed by a child or adolescent and their family. The CASII assesses six dimensions:

- Risk of Harm
- Functional Status
- Co-Occurring Conditions
- Recovery Environment
- Resilience/Response to Services
- Involvement in Services

The CASII helps create comprehensive, strength-based, individualized, and coordinated service plans, supports active participation by the child and family, and measures progress in treatment.

#### **P. Procedure for Developing a Family Service Coordination Plan**

Families identified for Service Coordination and High-Fidelity Wraparound will partner in developing a **Family Service Coordination Plan**. The facilitator works with the family to identify formal and informal supports for the family team. The plan focuses on goals and objectives specific to the family's strengths and needs.

##### **Process for Developing a Family Service Coordination Plan**

- Review and add to the child/family strengths, needs, and culture discovery.
- Assess the level of family engagement.
- Create a team mission statement.
- Identify and record needs statements for the child and family members.
- Prioritize needs to help achieve the mission statement.

- Brainstorm strategies to meet the needs.
- Develop action steps/solutions.
- Assign team members to follow up on action steps.
- Identify outcomes/results for each strategy.

### **Family Service Coordination Plan Components**

- Service/Support Responsibilities: The Service Coordinator gathers information on involved agencies and unmet needs, arranges team meetings, and ensures families are referred to appropriate services.
- Tracking Progress and Facilitating Meetings: The Service Coordinator tracks progress, schedules, and facilitates meetings, encouraging family participation in the process.
- Responsive Services: Plans ensure services are responsive to the family’s strengths, needs, culture, race, and ethnicity, and are provided in the least restrictive environment. Family involvement in choosing services and providers is critical to successful outcomes.
- Establishing Timelines for Family Team Goals: GFFC recognizes that each family operates differently, so timelines will be established on a case-by-case basis. These timelines will hold families and agencies accountable while ensuring they have adequate time to complete tasks successfully. Timelines can be adjusted as needed. During family team meetings, team members will suggest appropriate timelines for achieving goals, but the family will have the final decision to ensure the timeline is achievable. Expectations for scheduling review meetings should be established at each meeting.

### **Q. Including Crisis and Safety Plans in the Family Service Coordination Plan**

Geauga County prioritizes the health and safety of all residents and family members. Planning for short-term crises and safety concerns ensures that family crises are anticipated and not seen as failures. The Service Coordinator will address crisis and safety plans at team meetings, using family strengths and unmet needs. Crisis and safety plans are distinct and will be treated as such. The family team will be prepared to respond appropriately and immediately to crises or safety concerns, planning responses during calm times to avoid overreactions. Efforts should focus on supporting the child and family during crises, keeping everyone safe, and maintaining family unity when possible. Crisis and safety plans will be integrated throughout family plans.

If needed services or supports are unavailable, the plan should outline how priorities are chosen and what efforts will be made to address such gaps.

## **R. Process for Dealing with Alleged Unruly Children**

Alleged or adjudicated unruly and delinquent youth may be referred to Service Coordination to divert them from the Juvenile Court System. Probation Officers can make referrals to Service Coordination, which helps prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Family Service Coordination plans for unruly children may include:

- Service Coordination to assess the child and family
- Assessment instruments, including the CASII
- Emphasis on the parent's role and voice in the plan
- Involvement of local law enforcement
- Referrals for respite, a mentor, parenting education, or alternative school programs, based on the child's and family's needs and service availability.

## **S. Dispute Resolution Process**

In the event of any disputes that might occur on an agency-to-agency basis or child/family to Council, the GFFC dispute resolution policy is available on the Council website at <http://www.geaugaffc.org>. The policy can also be requested in writing from the Service Coordinator. **Any disputes regarding Early Intervention should follow the Early Intervention dispute resolution process.**

## **T. Fiscal Strategies for Supporting GFFC Service Coordination**

A discussion of key fiscal strategies employed by the Council for maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of the utilization of GFFC financial resources in support of the Council's mission is presented below.

- **How Funding Decisions Are Made for Services Identified in the Individualized Family Service Coordination Plan.** The family team presents needs to the Council's Inter-Disciplinary Teams for approval and additional recommendations. For higher levels of care, the Inter-Disciplinary Teams' recommendation is taken to the full Council for funding approval.
- **How Flexible Resources are Maximized.** Funding requests are made only for expenses not covered by another payer source.

- **How Funds Are Blended, Braided or Coordinated to Support Service Coordination.** Local funds and flexible grant funds support formal Wraparound team facilitation. Each child and family team identifies activities to help the child. Financial support for these activities is sought from the Inter-Disciplinary Teams if not covered by another source.
- **How Resources are Reallocated from Institutional Services to Community-Based, Preventative, and Family-Centered Services.** Local GFFC member organizations contribute funds to support Wraparound facilitation, training, intensive home-based therapies, and other community-based, preventative, and family-centered services.
- **How Decisions Will be Made Regarding the Use of The Family-Centered Services and Supports Funds for Children and their Families in Service Coordination.** The GFFC determines the broad use of FCSS funds with oversight from the Council and Inter-Disciplinary Teams. Generally, these funds pay for Wraparound team facilitation and may also cover additional services, such as parenting classes, when a general gap is identified.
- **How Decisions Will be Made Regarding the Use of the Multi-Systems Youth/ODM Funds for Children and their Families in Service Coordination.** Technical assistance and funding through the Ohio Department of Medicaid (MSY) is available to help prevent custody relinquishment of children (ages 0-21) solely for the purpose of obtaining needed treatment. The State’s MSY Team can assist local entities in obtaining services for children and youth who have been relinquished and are transitioning back to community and/or non-custody settings. The Service Coordination team can request GFFC to apply for this funding.
- **How Decisions Will be Made Regarding the Use of Multi-Systems Youth (MSY)/PCSA Funds for Children and their Families in Service Coordination.** GFFC determines the broad use of MSY/PSCA funds with recommendations from the Inter-Disciplinary Teams. These funds are restricted to services and supports needed to prevent the relinquishment of custody of children ages 0-18 and to facilitate family reunification following a custodial episode. These funds may be used in any of the following manners:

- Care Coordination/Wraparound to prevent custody relinquishment or for a relinquished youth.
- In-home and/or community supports to prevent custody relinquishment.
- Residential treatment and/or room and board for treatment to prevent custody relinquishment.
- In-home and/or community supports to support family stability for a child returning from agency custody.

U. **Quality Assurance of the Service Coordination Mechanism**

Members of the Geauga Family First Council will monitor and review the mechanism based on this schedule.

- Review Service Coordination Mechanism: Annually
- Review and Update Wraparound Forms: Annually

## Exhibit A

### Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Meaning
<b>Basic Service Coordination</b>	Level two of wrap around services. <i>Description:</i> A youth and family-driven, cross-system planning process that coordinates existing resources and supports to create the least restrictive plan for success. <i>Appropriate for:</i> Families with less intensive multiple needs across multiple systems who need additional support from a team. <i>Length of Service:</i> 3-12 months. <i>Process:</i> Child and family teams, including formal and informal supports, develop an individualized, strength-based plan, monitor it, and measure success over time. Team meetings are generally less frequent.
<b>Child Protective Services</b>	A division within the county Department of Job and Family Services responsible for receiving referrals and investigating incidents of child abuse, neglect, and dependency in each county.
<b>Council Coordinator</b>	A Council Coordinator (Director) is hired to control and oversee all of Council operations, staff, programs, and initiatives. The Director develops and executes grants applications, communicate, and maintain trust relationships with agencies, business, and partners.
<b>Early Intervention Service Coordination</b>	A person who holds an early intervention service coordinator credential who assists and enables an infant or toddler with a developmental delay or disability and the child's family to receive the services and rights, including procedural safeguards, required under part C.
<b>Family Service Coordination Plan</b>	Ensures that assistance and services to be provided are responsive to the strengths and needs of the family, as well as the family's culture, race, and ethnic group, by allowing the family to offer information and suggestions and participate in decisions.



<b>Geauga Family First Council</b>	A Place that county agencies come to collaborate to help families. Council pools financial resources to meet the diverse needs of multi-system youth, ages birth to 21 years, living within Geauga County. We provide service coordination and fund pro-social, therapeutic, and residential services to help maximize each child's potential to succeed,
<b>Information and Referral</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level 1 of Service Coordination. <i>Description:</i> Provides resource and referral information to the family without further services.</li> <li>▪ <i>Appropriate for:</i> Families with a single issue or basic need, experiencing a short-term crisis, or those new to using services from multiple agencies.</li> <li>▪ <i>Length of Service:</i> Up to 90 days.</li> </ul>
<b>Initial Engagement Meeting</b>	A first meeting with the Service Coordinator and family to complete gathering the family's story, assessing for needs and strengths, and the completion of initial assessments.
<b>Intensive High-Fidelity Wraparound</b>	<p>Level three of wraparound services.</p> <p><i>Description:</i> An evidence-based, intensive planning and facilitation process using a comprehensive team to develop a unique plan based on the youth and family's unmet needs.</p> <p><i>Appropriate for:</i> Families with complex, intensive multiple needs across multiple systems, including those at risk of out-of-home placement.</p> <p><i>Length of Service:</i> 12-18 months.</p> <p><i>Process:</i> Child and family teams develop an individualized, strength-based plan, monitor it, and measure success over time. Team meetings are more frequent.</p>
<b>Inter-disciplinary Teams</b>	A team composed of knowledgeable, well-qualified, skilled representatives from different community agencies and disciplines in Geauga County. These experienced professionals provide well thought out recommendations for children and their families.
<b>Juvenile Court</b>	A court of law responsible for the trial or legal supervision of children under the age of 18.
<b>OhioRISE Care Coordination</b>	A specialized Medicaid managed care plan with tailored services to meet the needs of youth with complex needs. OhioRISE aims to shift the system

	of care and keep more kids and families together by creating new access to in-home and community-based services for youth with the most complex behavioral health challenges.
<b>Service Coordination</b>	Family focused and strengths-based coordination of services for families with multiple and complex problems to effectively address their needs through an individualized process which eliminates duplication and provides both traditional services and builds natural supports.
<b>Service Coordination Mechanism</b>	This is a plan to get agencies of the county government to deliver services to children and their families in a way that is simple and organized. This serves as a guide for coordination of services in the county. It says what must be included in the individual family service coordination plan.
<b>Service Coordinator</b>	A person who manages the delivery of services to clients. Their primary goal is to ensure that clients receive an organized and timely delivery of services that meet their specific needs.
<b>Wraparound Services</b>	This is a planning process that follow a series of steps to help children and families realize their hopes and dreams. It also helps make sure children and youth grow up in their homes and communities. It brings people together from different parts of the whole family's life.

## Attachment A

### FCFC Service Coordination Mechanism Cover Sheet

<b>County :</b>	Geauga
<b>FCFC Director/Coordinator Name:</b>	Tim Kehres
<b>Phone #:</b>	440-285-1201
<b>Address:</b>	12611 Ravenwood Drive, Suite 150, Chardon, OH 44024
<b>Email:</b>	tim.kehres@jfs.ohio.gov
<b>Online link address to access County Service Coordination Mechanism:</b>	<a href="https://geaugaffc.org/">https://geaugaffc.org/</a>
<b>Date of Submission:</b>	11/18/2024

## Attachment B

### Table of Contents for FCFC Service Coordination Mechanism

Please indicate the designated pages to reflect completion of each required components of The County FCFC Service Coordination Mechanism to indicate it has been included.

	Requirement	Page(s)
<b>A.</b>	An overview or description of the purpose of service coordination in your county that includes what entities/agencies/persons were involved in the review and revisions of the mechanism, the structural components (or levels/intensity of coordination) of service coordination in your county, a description of the criteria established, including age range, for children accepted for service coordination, a description of youth not served in service coordination, and a description of how families and agency personnel and community members will become aware of and trained in the service coordination mechanism process in your county	4
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<b>H.</b>	A procedure for assessing the strengths, needs and cultural discovery of the family.	11
<b>I.</b>	A procedure for developing a family service coordination plan to include:	
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	-Description of the method for designating service/support responsibilities.	12
	- Description of how plans will ensure services are responsive to the strengths, needs, family culture, race, and ethnic group, and are provided in the least restrictive environment.	12
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	-How resources are reallocated from institutional services to community-based, preventive, and family-centered services.	14
	-How decisions will be made regarding the use of the MSY/PCSA funds for children and their families in service coordination.	14
	-How decisions will be made regarding the use of the Family Centered Services and Supports funds for children and their families in service coordination.	13
	-How decisions will be made to access Multi-System Youth funds, monitor, and report progress to the MSY State Review Team.	14
<b>M.</b>	Quality Assurance of Service Coordination Mechanism	
	- Description of how the service coordination mechanism process will be monitored and reviewed. Please include who will monitor and review the mechanism and how often this will happen.	15