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Governor



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OWF/PRC Guidance Letter No. 34

**TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services
Directors, County Public Children Services Agencies
Directors, Child Support Enforcement Agencies**

FROM: Jacqueline Romer-Sensky, Director

SUBJECT: Addressing Service Needs of Victims of Family Violence

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) strongly supports the provision of services to victims of family violence and their families in order to assist them in achieving self-sufficiency and safe, stable family environments. Family violence prevention services are clearly authorized under the first purpose of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), “To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.”

Research about family violence and public assistance indicates that a substantial number of public assistance recipients are past or current victims of family violence. This research also indicates that for some victims, efforts to achieve self-sufficiency may not promote safety. This letter transmits information regarding how counties can address family violence issues in three areas:

- a: Community Planning (The County Plan of Cooperation / The Community Plan)
- b: Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program (PRC)
- c: Ohio Works First Program (OWF)

There is a continuing need for collaboration between providers at the local level who work with this population to provide more seamless service delivery to their participants and to assure that families are referred to service providers who have the requisite expertise. Many counties have already involved family violence professionals in their planning committees. These collaborative working agreements may be delineated in Community Plans and County Plans of Cooperation. Counties have also involved family violence professionals in conducting family violence assessments, training of County Departments of Job and Family Services (CDJFS) staff, and using PRC funds for collaborative services. The department encourages the continuation and expansion of these collaborative efforts, as well as, written working agreements.

OWF/PRC Letter No. 34
Page 2 of 3

Since research has shown that many hard to serve families are victims of family violence, it may be essential to provide services that specifically address this issue. Both OWF and PRC allow counties to do this. House Bill 408 (Ohio Revised Code Section 5101.70) requires CDJFSs to assess whether family violence may necessitate assigning an OWF applicant to an alternative work activity once a recipient is determined eligible for OWF. Additionally, a number of counties are considering family violence as a factor in determining their time-limit hardship extension policies. CDJFSs may use OWF and PRC funds to support services to victims of family violence as a means of promoting self-sufficiency.

Below is a listing of various service options utilizing PRC or OWF funds which counties may want to consider in meeting the needs of families impacted by family violence:

- a: Family violence prevention services that do not provide basic income support such as:
 - a: risk assessment or screening (including health / disability screening)
 - C safety planning
 - C crisis intervention / needs assessment
 - C victim advocacy
 - C early intervention
 - C counseling services which are not Medicaid reimbursable
 - C individual and group peer support (supportive/educational discussions provided or facilitated by peers)

- C Non-recurrent short-term benefits to address the immediate needs of victims and their dependants such as:
 - C locksmith services
 - C relocation expenses (e.g. moving expenses)
 - C rent deposits and short-term rent subsidies
 - C short-term room and board
 - C payment of insurance premiums on donated cars
 - C transportation to and from services

- C Supportive services for families who are employed:
 - C transportation
 - C alcohol and other drug services which are not Medicaid reimbursable (e.g. substance abuse assessments)
 - C parenting classes

- C Dissemination of educational information and notification of domestic violence options under the OWF program through the following:
 - C CDJFS caseworkers
 - C Early Start home visitors

OWF/PRC Letter No. 34
Page 3 of 3

- C domestic violence shelter staff
- C employers
- C school programs (particularly GRADS)
- C Women Infant and Children Staff
- C public children services agency caseworkers
- C county health department nurses
- C Family and Children's First Council members
- C family resource center regional hubs
- C Ohio Department of Health Welcome Home nurses

Please note that in order to use OWF or PRC funds for any of the services identified above, the services must meet one of the four purposes of TANF (reference OWF/PRC Guidance Letter No. 13). ODJFS encourages local entities to continue to work together to address the needs of this special population and to enable individuals to be safe as well as self-sufficient. If your community has specific questions regarding family violence prevention, please contact Carrie Anthony, Section Chief, ODJFS, Family Violence Prevention 614-752-6248. Please contact your regional ODJFS Account Manager as you develop a more inclusive PRC plan and expand OWF services for family violence prevention.

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