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Contact: Benjamin Johnson
Phone: (614) 466-6650
Email: Benjamin.johnson@jfs.ohio.gov

ODJFS Will Help Lead National Fight Against Unemployment Fraud

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio is a national leader in preventing and detecting unemployment compensation fraud. Now, the U.S. Department of Labor has asked the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to help lead a new, national anti-fraud initiative.

ODJFS will join Colorado, New Jersey, South Carolina and Washington in overseeing a new Unemployment Insurance Integrity Center of Excellence. The center will identify promising techniques for preventing unemployment fraud, reducing improper payments and improving payment accuracy, and share them with all state workforce agencies. The New York Department of Labor will lead the center, and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies and U.S. Department of Labor also will participate.

“Over the past two years, ODJFS has greatly improved our efforts to combat fraud in our unemployment system, and we also made it easier for Ohioans to report suspected fraud,” said ODJFS Director Michael B. Colbert. “I am honored that we were invited to sit on this national committee and excited to work with colleagues from around the nation to fight fraud and preserve benefits for those who truly need them.”

The Center of Excellence will focus on developing new technology, automated systems and training curricula that will help states detect and deter fraud and recoup benefits that were obtained fraudulently. As a member of the steering committee, Ohio will actively participate in the center's activities, solicit input from other states, and guide the center's work.

In calendar year 2012, ODJFS disbursed nearly \$2.3 billion in state and federal unemployment compensation to approximately 435,000 Ohioans.

Earlier today, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio and ODJFS announced indictments against ten individuals charged with collecting a total of \$151,492 in fraudulent unemployment compensation. The individuals are charged with wire fraud and theft of government funds. Conviction on a wire fraud charge is punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Theft of government funds carries a maximum potential punishment of ten years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. More information is available at www.justice.gov/usao/ohs/.

