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Ohio to Expand Differential Response in Child Protective Services to More Counties

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Based on the results of a successful pilot project, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Supreme Court of Ohio are expanding the Differential Response program to include eight additional counties. This brings the total number of participating counties to 33.

Differential Response gives caseworkers the freedom to use an alternative approach when investigating some reports of child abuse and neglect in Ohio. That freedom helps keep families together and reduces the number of children placed in out-of-home care, all without compromising child safety. Differential Response begins with a non-threatening, non-adversarial, family assessment. It allows caseworkers to guide the family to local social service programs that might meet the child's and the family's needs.

“In some instances, a traditional child-protection response is needed in order to ensure a child's safety,” said ODJFS Director Michael Colbert. “However, for many children, partnering with a caseworker, connecting with local services and supports, and keeping the family together leads to better outcomes and happier children.”

Parents, children and caseworkers all have reported increased satisfaction with the Differential Response approach. In addition, because it reduces the number of children in out-of-home care, Differential Response saves taxpayers money.

As ODJFS works to implement Differential Response statewide, the following counties have been selected to participate in the next phase of the project's expansion: Butler, Carroll, Delaware, Miami, Putnam, Sandusky, Scioto and Seneca.

In December 2009, Ohio completed an 18-month Differential Response pilot project with the Supreme Court of Ohio. The final pilot report and evaluation study are available online at http://www.law.capital.edu/adoption/ohiochildlaw/AR_Final_Report_10.06.14.pdf. For a complete list of participating counties, visit http://www.law.capital.edu/adoption/AR/2010_Pilot_Map_Levy.pdf.