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Ohio Welcomes Russian Delegates, Shares Child Welfare Strategies

COLUMBUS, OHIO — The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) welcomed a delegation of visiting Russian child welfare professionals this week for a meeting with child welfare staff and a tour of the Ohio Statehouse and ODJFS offices. Ohio is recognized as an example of best practice in child welfare services, education and training throughout the United States and Russia, and delegates are visiting Columbus to learn more about the state’s child welfare policies, practices and infrastructure. Russian officials are following what they call the “Ohio Model” as they work to improve their child welfare system. Ohio’s *Field Guide to Child Welfare* is used internationally and has been translated into both Russian and French.

The delegates included government officials, administrators from the ministries of education and social services, and directors of regional public child protection organizations in several Russian cities. They were accompanied by staff from Russia’s National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the North America Resource Center for Child Welfare and the affiliated Institute for Human Services.

ODJFS Director Michael Colbert welcomed the delegates and thanked them for visiting Ohio. “We’re very honored that you chose to view our child welfare system,” he said. “We are hoping today that not only will you learn from us, but that we can learn from you.” He then described some of Ohio’s recent child welfare initiatives, including the partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation to help identify permanent homes for children awaiting adoption and “Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to Employment and Independent Living,” which links youth in foster care to mentoring, job shadowing and independent living services.

“We’re very excited about these projects because they have the potential to make a big difference in the lives of children,” Director Colbert said. He then presented the delegates with a plaque in the shape of Ohio, as a token of appreciation for visiting.

In 2009, President Barack Obama and then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev created the Bilateral Russian-American Presidential Commission. Through this commission, 16 working groups are addressing areas of mutual concern. In August 2011, approximately 250 participants from 32 Russian regions and eight U.S. states, including Ohio, attended the inaugural meeting of the Russian-American Forum on Child Welfare in Russia. At this meeting, the “Ohio Program” was affirmed as an exemplary child welfare program that could serve as a model for child welfare reform in Russia.

After Columbus, the group travels to Chicago to take part in the second Russian American Child Welfare Forum.

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