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Ohio START Expands to 14 Additional Counties

COLUMBUS, OHIO – A family-centered treatment and trauma-informed care pilot program has expanded to 14 additional counties, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced today. They include Allen, Ashland Auglaize, Cuyahoga, Harrison, Licking, Lucas, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Tuscarawas, Union, Wayne, and Williams counties.

“Working to keep families together while parents begin treatment for substance use disorders, helps minimize trauma children face,” Governor Mike DeWine said. “Expanding Ohio START’s unique approach helps give families the tools they need to support long-term recovery and put them on paths to brighter futures.”

Ohio START brings together children services, juvenile courts, and behavioral health treatment providers to support families struggling with co-occurring child maltreatment and substance abuse. In addition, family peer mentorship is a critical part of the program. The mentors are individuals who have personal experience with addiction, who have achieved sustained recovery, and who have had prior engagement with the child welfare system as a child or a parent. The accountability and support they provide helps create a community collaboration aimed at helping families succeed.

“Thanks to the support of Governor DeWine, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, and our local children services agencies, Ohio START has made a difference in the lives of families all across the state,” ODJFS Director Kimberly Hall said. “With these newest additions, there are a total of 46 Ohio START counties and we look forward to expanding that number to 62 over the next two years.”

Governor DeWine launched the Ohio Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma (START) program in 2017 during his time as Ohio Attorney General, with a mission of helping entire families impacted by child maltreatment and parental substance abuse disorders.

“There is no place children and parents would rather be than together,” said Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Director Lori Criss. “The Ohio START program helps to keep families healthy and together by connecting them to treatment and peer support to break the cycle of addiction and trauma.”

To date, the Ohio START initiative has served 894 people in all and 389 children. The Ohio START program is helping mothers struggling with substance use disorder give birth to drug-free babies, reuniting families, and helping parents gain independence and maintain sobriety.

Governor DeWine included \$16 million in the budget to fund the expansion of evidence-based programs such as Ohio START.

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

