

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 2011

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Corrective Compliance Plan will Help Put Ohioans Back to Work

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has finalized a corrective action plan designed to bring Ohio’s cash assistance program into line with federal welfare-to-work requirements, avoid more than \$130 million in federal penalties, and put more Ohioans back to work.

Since 2007, Ohio has failed to meet federally required work participation rates for families in the Ohio Works First (OWF) program. OWF is the financial assistance portion of Ohio’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides cash benefits to eligible needy families for up to 36 months

“For too long, work participation requirements for OWF recipients have been an afterthought,” said ODJFS Director Michael Colbert. “Work participation is important not only because it is federally required, but because it helps those we serve improve their skills, build their resumes and find jobs. OWF is designed to help Ohioans become self-sufficient, and work activities are a crucial component of the program.”

Federal law requires most able-bodied adults receiving cash assistance to work at least 30 hours a week. States must show that at least 90 percent of adults in two-parent households and at least 50 percent of all adults are working the required number of hours each week. Several “work activities” also are potentially allowable, including on-the-job training, community service and education directly related to employment.

ODJFS is taking several steps to bring Ohio into compliance, including:

- Requiring OWF applicants to complete a self-sufficiency assessment before receiving their initial assistance check.
- Hiring additional hearing officers to ensure timely hearings for OWF recipients who have been sanctioned for failing to meet work participation requirements.
- Developing a new web-based time and attendance verification system that will allow caseworkers to more easily verify when work-eligible individuals complete work hours.

ODJFS is also launching Ohio Works Now, a temporary program that will provide a small additional TANF benefit to eligible working families with children, allowing those families to be counted in the state’s work participation rate. Ohio Works Now benefits will be food assistance benefits, not cash assistance benefits.

To raise awareness of the work requirements, ODJFS is distributing the attached poster to all county departments of job and family services and, in the coming months, will launch a radio and television advertising campaign.

“Most families can receive cash assistance for only three years,” said Colbert. “We must do all we can so that adults leave the program able to find jobs and care for their families.”

OWF provides a monthly cash benefit to about 214,000 Ohioans who earn no more than 50 percent of the federal poverty level. All recipients have children, and many earn less than \$7,000 per year.

OHIO WORK'S FIRST

You **must work**
to receive cash
assistance. It's
the law, and it's
the right thing
to do—for you
and your family.

Talk to your caseworker today about your work requirement.