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State Agencies Collaborate to Help Sustain Ohio Families and Increase Child Support Collections

Columbus - In the past six years, Ohio has decreased by more than half the number of people coming to prison for not paying child support, saving taxpayers money. Agency partnerships, locally operated programs and legislative changes have led to the drastic decrease in those coming to prison, allowing these individuals to stay in their communities and continue to make their court-ordered payments. The total number of offenders entering prison for non-payment of child support has decreased to 342 in fiscal year 2014 compared to 781 in fiscal year 2008.

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) has been partnering with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), the ODJFS Office of Child Support and the Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors' Association to form a collaboration to enhance outcomes associated with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated parents who have child support obligations. Through these efforts, Community Corrections Act grants were initiated in targeted counties aimed at reducing the number of offenders sent to prison for a non-support offense and to increase collection.

ODJFS and DRC work together to improve outreach to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated parents, to give them more information about Ohio's child support program and to help remove barriers to the payment of support. ODJFS provides outreach materials during reentry fairs, makes presentations at correctional facilities, and conducts workshops at employment centers. ODJFS also visits correctional facilities and meets with inmates who are 60 to 90 days from release to share information about fatherhood, child support and available job search assistance.

"The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services does a great deal of outreach at correctional facilities, to help fathers become more engaged with their children," said ODJFS Director Cynthia C. Dungey. "We have collaborated with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to open employment centers inside five state prisons, and we discuss child support and responsible fatherhood with inmates who are nearing release."

"Ohio's recidivism rate is among the lowest in the nation, and partnerships such as the one we have with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services have helped to keep our recidivism rate low," stated DRC Director Gary C. Mohr. "The significant reduction of non-support offenders coming to prison is not only saving taxpayers money, but it is helping to sustain Ohio families and children."

In September 2011, sentencing reform legislation was enacted that encouraged judges to look at alternatives to prison for appropriate offenders, specifically those who have not previously participated in a local sanction for the same offense. DRC continues to fund these local efforts, and \$1,034,687 was provided for community alternatives in fiscal year 2014.

The total amount of child support collected by DRC-funded local programs in fiscal year 2011 was \$523,179, and it increased to \$583,828 in fiscal year 2014.