

OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER #1

June 3, 2002

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services
Directors, County Public Children Services Agencies
Directors, Child Support Enforcement Agencies

FROM: Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director
Office of Family Stability

**SUBJECT: DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE OF THE
NEW OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY**

This letter is intended to provide county agencies with general information about the new Office of Family Stability which was created earlier this year. It provides information on the respective Bureaus and Sections within the Office and indicates the programs and duties for which the units have responsibility. The letter is also intended to help counties understand how the new Office relates to counties through the services and assistance that the Office provides. The Office services and assistance are intended to augment the role of the Family Stability Executive Leadership Committee and to serve as an initial point of contact for counties to resolve specific issues. The Executive Leadership Committee should focus on those larger cross-cutting issues needing resolution at a higher level.

The Office of Family Stability is located at 145 South Front Street, Columbus, OH 43215-4156. The Office's general phone number is (614) 466-4815. A table of organization for the Office is attached to this letter and indicates the individuals assigned to each unit. All of these individuals are accessible by e-mail through Groupwise or by phone using the numbers listed in Groupwise.

The mission of the Office of Family Stability is to serve children, adults and families to sustain well being and to assure that resources are available, within legislated parameters, to enable families to become self-sufficient. The Office is composed of four bureaus, described as follows:

Bureau of Program Policy

The Bureau of Program Policy consists of three sections: The Cash Assistance Policy Section, the Food Stamp/TEFAP Section and the Work Activities Policy Section.

The Cash Assistance Policy Section consists of a section chief and three policy

developers. This area is responsible for administering statewide policy, procedures, and guidelines for the Ohio Works First (OWF), Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC), Disability Assistance (DA), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), and Repatriate Assistance programs. The area produces the Cash Assistance Policy Manual and various OWF/PRC Guidance Letters. Staff in this section are also responsible for reviewing each county's PRC plan and amendments.

OWF is part of Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and was established to provide time-limited cash assistance to eligible families. The OWF program allows participants to receive cash benefits while working or participating in training to develop skills that will help them become self-sufficient. The monthly average number of assistance groups for calendar year 2001 was 85,801.

PRC is part of Ohio's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program which was established to help families overcome immediate barriers to achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency. The program is designed to provide benefits and services to needy families and low-income employed families who are in need of help with essential supports to move out of poverty and become self-sufficient. Using broad-based federal guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Ohio General Assembly, and ODJFS, each county can design its own PRC program to meet the needs of local families. Total estimated expenditures for the first six months of SFY '02 are over \$87,810,000.

DA is state and county-funded and provides cash and medical coverage to certain persons ineligible for federally-supported public assistance programs. DA is designed to maintain health and help recipients meet basic needs. The monthly average number of assistance groups for calendar year 2001 was 11,645.

RCA provides time-limited cash payments to eligible refugees to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible.

The Repatriate Assistance program provides temporary assistance to needy U. S. citizens returning from a foreign country due to destitution or illness of the citizen or any of his dependents or due to a war or a similar crisis. The U. S. Department of State establishes eligibility for assistance under the Repatriate program. Upon notification that a repatriate is returning to Ohio, staff in this section will contact the appropriate CDJFS.

The Food Stamp/TEFAP Section consists of a section chief, three policy developers, and a management analyst. This area is responsible for administering statewide policy, procedures, and guidelines for the Food Stamp Program, Expedited Food Stamp Benefits, Disaster Food Assistance, Food Stamp Employment and Training, SSI Cash-Out Program, New Hire Reporting, Income and Eligibility Verification System, Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, the commodity food programs (The Emergency Food

Assistance Program [TEFAP], Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Ohio Food Program, Ohio Agricultural Surplus Production Alliance), the Family Nutrition Program, and the After School Nutrition Program. This section produces the Food Stamp Certification Handbook and the Food Stamp Supervisors Handbook.

The Food Stamp Program enhances food purchasing power to alleviate hunger, provide a more nutritious diet, and to improve food security for low-income families. Food stamp benefits are issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), through the county departments of job and family services (CDJFS) and are used to purchase specific staples and grocery items at participating grocery stores. Eligibility, determined by the CDJFS, is based on federal regulations and guidelines including income, resources, work requirements, immigrant status, and household size. More than 700,000 Ohioans receive food stamp benefits.

TEFAP and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program are USDA food distribution programs which provide over 28 million pounds of surplus entitlement food products and bonus food products to approximately 3.7 million individuals annually. The food products are allocated and distributed through the Ohio foodbank network for eventual use by soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and food pantries. Eligibility is based on federal income guidelines. The State commodity programs funded by the Department provide funds for purchasing excess food products which are also distributed through the Ohio foodbank network.

Additionally, the section manages contracts with the foodbanks for the commodity food programs, with the Ohio State University Research Foundation for the Family Nutrition Program, Public Safety for food stamp fraud investigations, and with the Department of Education for the school breakfast and lunch program and the After School Nutrition Program.

The Work Activities Policy Section consists of a section chief, two policy developers and four work activity coordinators. The section is responsible for: 1) developing rules and policy and procedural guidance letters and 2) providing technical assistance to counties for the Ohio Works First work activities, Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (FSET) work activities and the Individual Development Account (IDA) programs.

The section analyzes and interprets federal and state law and regulations; local and national research studies; state and local best practices; and other data/information as needed and analyzes and synthesizes the information to develop rules, guidance letters and program models.

Section staff are responsible for providing technical assistance and training on topics of work activity policy, welfare-to-work program models, job retention/career upgrade

program models, federal and state work participation rate requirements, work activity best practices and data reporting. In doing so, staff work closely with the Program Policy Services Section. Staff also conduct a periodic review of sanction cases to ensure compliance with program regulations.

Bureau of County Oversight and Support

This is a new bureau consisting of three sections which include the CRIS-E Help Desk, Program Policy Services, and Customer Services. This bureau is responsible for technical assistance and training to county departments of job and family services staff for the following programs:

- Ohio Works First (OWF)
- Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC)
- Food Stamp (FS)
- Disability Assistance (DA)
- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)

The CRIS-E Help Desk Section provides assistance with CRIS-E systems issues on all of the above program areas plus Medicaid. They provide software technical assistance, review the system for correct policy implementation/compliance and generate Service Request Forms for any necessary system fixes; assist System Development staff with software design, testing and generate Test Incident Reports; provide training to designated CDJFS staff, who in turn, train county line staff. While the FIAT Coordinator position has been eliminated, CRIS-E Help Desk staff will continue to assist counties with FIAT situations. FIAT instructions will be combined in the next quarterly Help Desk report to be released during the first part of July, 2002. Service for CRIS-E systems issues can still be accessed by existing county protocols; **call 1-800-686-1580** to speak with Help Desk staff or **fax your questions to (614)466-2269**.

The Customer Service Section responds to telephone and written inquiries from CDJFS customers, the general public, and legislators regarding customer issues (case specific) for the OWF, PRC, FS, DA, and RCA programs only. By July, customer service representatives will no longer be assigned to specific counties but will take calls on a rotational basis from around the state on a new 800 line. The new 800 number is not yet available, but will be announced through a CRIS-E bulletin when it becomes available. When addressing customer complaints, the Customer Service Representatives will coordinate with the appropriate CDJFS contact person or ombudsman for initial resolution. We will be requesting this contact information from each agency in the near future. In addition, ODJFS is required to respond to legislative inquiries within 24 hours. County cooperation and immediate attention in these matters is greatly appreciated.

The Program Policy Services Section will provide technical assistance and training to county agency staff for the OWF, PRC, FS, DA, and RA programs. Staff are not assigned

to specific counties, but will provide statewide coverage for technical assistance either by telephone, e-mail or on-site visits. Service delivery strategies for this section are still under development.

This section will provide statewide policy training; some will be done on-site in regional meetings, while other sessions will be conducted via video conference. Staff will still provide on-site CDJFS visits, upon request of the CDJFS or by referral from other ODJFS sections/bureaus. We will offer monthly video conference sessions (2 hours each) as one forum for policy communication. These sessions will be split in two in order to accommodate all 88 counties. Our goal is to provide more consistent and standardized forums for statewide communication of policy implementation issues and updates.

In order to provide timely response to county inquiries, two technical assistance specialists are assigned as “worker of the day” to take phone calls and e-mails from county staff. This practice will continue except for special circumstances when more staff are needed to present statewide training sessions for policy changes. These staff members may be reached at **(419) 245-2800 from 8:00am to 4:30pm**. Please ask for the TANF/Food Stamp worker of the day when you call this number. You may also e-mail policy questions to TANF-FSTA@odjfs.state.oh.us. This address can be accessed on Groupwise.

Bureau of Operations

The Bureau of Operations is responsible for the bidding and management of the EBT contract and assuring effective operation of the EBT system. It is also responsible for statewide implementation of eICMS, coordination of system design to reflect program policies and update and modification of system design in coordination with MIS staff.

The Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Section directs Ohio’s EBT program, which provides Food Stamp benefits electronically as an alternative to paper coupons. Currently, 324,000 households are being served each month. The chip card allows for a higher level of security than the current magnetic strip technology. It will allow ODJFS to add additional programs to the card such as TANF benefits, and the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Currently, Montgomery County is running a pilot issuing their WIC benefits on the card. The Ohio Department of Health will be making a decision shortly to determine if the pilot needs to continue or if inclusion of these benefits should be rolled out statewide. Ohio customers can conduct purchase transactions at over 5,200 retail locations in Ohio and approximately 100 retail locations in bordering states. The prime contractor for the Ohio Direction Card is Citicorp EFS Inc., Chicago, Illinois. Citicorp EFS has total responsibility for the successful operation of the system.

This section monitors the contract with Citicorp EFS on a daily basis. The section is the first point of contact for county agencies for resolving problems with customer's cards, equipment, basically all areas of the Ohio Direction Card operation. They are the decision making entity for lane coverage with the retail community, the point of contact with public officials, federal officials, media, and general population for all issues/questions regarding the operation of the Ohio Direction Card program.

The electronic Integrated Client Management System (e-ICMS) Section is responsible for maintenance and county rollout of the e-ICMS system. The e-ICMS system is an automated system which provides caseworkers with a common front-end to TANF-supportive systems and provides a case management toolkit which helps the caseworker assist the participants in becoming self-sufficient. The system assesses and tracks the service delivery of clients as they move through the system toward self-sufficiency. The system includes a process to collect information to see if participants' needs can be met before eligibility factors for OWF are determined, records the diversion or referral of a participant to another agency, and finally, e-ICMS can match participants and corresponding service providers through a Resource Directory. Twenty-seven counties currently have access to e-ICMS.

Bureau of Program Integration and Coordination

This is a new bureau consisting of two sections which will develop an outcome management program to assist county departments of job and family services to improve performance in critical areas associated with promoting employment and providing supportive services. The Outcome Management Section will promote program improvement of the Ohio Works First (OWF), Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC), Food Stamp, and Disability Assistance Programs. The TANF Carve-Out Section will manage the TANF Carve-Outs including both contracted and allocated carve-outs. TANF Carve-Outs consist of those legislated TANF "ear marks" designated in the biennial budget and targeted for specific program purposes (e.g., Head Start, housing assistance, pregnancy prevention). The Section will develop guidance to promote consistent contracting, eligibility and reporting requirements as well as establishing clear performance goals.

The Outcome Management Section consists of a section chief and six outcome management supervisors. The section develops outcome targets and measurement systems for programs administered by the Office of Family Stability. It establishes a quarterly "results and learning" process to enable improvements in program design and operational efficiency and assist counties in the development of process improvement plans to promote county goal attainment. Process improvement plans will be coordinated with other bureaus within the Office of Family Stability regarding training, technical assistance or policy issues as well as with other ODJFS programs that impact performance

on employment (e.g., WIA, Wagner Peyser, OneStops) or that provide transitional services (e.g., Medicaid, Child Care, Food Stamps). The section assists counties in developing corrective action plans in response to county findings, quality control findings and audit findings. The section publishes an annual performance report and will also serve as the ODJFS point of contact for the TANF Web Reporting Tool. More information on this Section will be issued in the near future.

The TANF Carve-Out Section will consist of a section chief and two carve-out management supervisors. This section develops guidance to assure that allocated carve-outs and contract carve-outs are operated in accordance with TANF regulations and in compliance with state statutes. It establishes a quarterly “results and learning” process to enable improvements in program design and operational efficiency to promote goal attainment of each carve-out. The section assists state departments, ODJFS offices, and counties in the development of process improvement plans. It develops contracts and procurement procedures for the carve-outs it administers and works with departmental staff and contract agencies to facilitate the input of carve-out data into the TANF Web Reporting Tool. Counties should realize that there is great variation among the carve-outs as to direct county impact. Some carve-outs may require significant county involvement (e.g., the contract with Dept. of Development for housing assistance) while others may entail little if any county involvement (e.g., the contract with Dept. of Education for Head Start). The section will publish an annual performance report.

Attachment: OFS Table of Organization

cc: Tom Hayes
China Widener
Melissa DeLisio
Robert Blair
All ODJFS Deputy Directors
Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association
Public Childrens Services Association of Ohio
Ohio Child Support Directors Association
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
Ohio State Legal Services
Lisa Hamler-Podolski