

**Bob Taft**  
Governor



**Barbara Riley**  
Director

**30 East Broad Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215-3414**  
**jfs.ohio.gov**

**OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER # 33**  
JULY 28, 2005

**TO:** Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services  
Directors, Public Children Services Agencies

**FROM:** Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director, Office of Family Stability  
Rick Smith, Deputy Director, Office for Children and Families

**SUBJECT:** Access to Better Care (ABC)

This letter provides initial information regarding a major children’s initiative recently enacted as part of the state budget that is likely to affect your county and agency services. Known as “Access to Better Care (ABC),” the program creates an opportunity for Family and Children First Councils (FCFs) and their member agencies to better address the needs of children with behavioral health disorders (mental health and substance abuse) across the developmental spectrum and throughout the continuum of care. The recently enacted state budget included a total of \$26 million to support programs and services for prevention, early intervention and treatment, including \$12 million in new state general revenue funds (GRF). The funding also includes \$500,000 in GRF and up to \$500,000 in TANF to serve children with multiple needs who do not have a behavioral health diagnosis.

ABC incorporates a broad spectrum of efforts—some statewide, some to be developed as pilot projects, and some to be initiated in selected communities on a competitive basis—to meet children’s behavioral health challenges from three perspectives: prevention, assessment/early intervention, and improved treatment. This initiative requires increased commitment to collaborative community planning and decision-making to design local strategies through county FCFs. The array of potential ABC activities is being discussed in more depth during a series of summer regional FCF meetings.

Most of the ABC dollars will be allocated from the Ohio Department of Mental Health to the ADAMH/CMH/ADAS Boards. As part of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services’ commitment to this effort, up to \$500,000 in TANF funds will be available to local county departments of job and family services (CDJFS) to serve families with multi-need children. These services are described as “non-behavioral” because they are

being specifically targeted to vulnerable multi-need children who do not have substance abuse or mental health conditions. Before a CDJFS can begin to draw down these funds, the services to be supported must be defined in the county's Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) plan, meet all the criteria of TANF "non-assistance" services, and satisfy all the eligibility requirements of PRC. For many county departments, this will require an amendment to current PRC plans. The initial TANF allocation for this initiative will be \$5,600.00 per county. Based on actual utilization, dollars may be re-allocated to better address variation in local needs. ODMH will also be allocating \$500,000 (GRF) to the administrative agents of local Family and Children First Councils to serve this population.

We encourage you to meet with your local FCF Council partners to jointly establish the plans and identify the services to address the special needs of this population. Additional information will be forthcoming, and regional Fall Training Sessions will be offered to provide greater detail on all aspects of the ABC program.

For further information on the ABC initiative, please contact Sue Williams (Office of Children and Families) at 614.752.6275 or [willis07@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:willis07@odjfs.state.oh.us). For assistance with PRC plans or questions regarding the TANF funds available, please contact Joel Rabb (Office of Family Stability) at 614.466.4815 or [rabbj@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:rabbj@odjfs.state.oh.us)

Thank you.

c: Barbara Riley, Director, ODJFS  
Fred Williams, Assistant Director, ODJFS  
Deputy Directors, ODJFS  
Loretta Adams, OJFSDA  
Crystal Allen, Executive Director, PCSAO  
Larry Long, Executive Director, CCAO  
Kim Newsome, Director, OCDA  
Family Stability staff  
Children and Families staff