

**PREVENTION, RETENTION and CONTINGENCY
PLAN**

developed by

*Mercer County Department of Job and Family Services
220 W. Livingston St., Suite 10
Celina, Ohio 45822
Effective January 1, 2010*

• INTRODUCTION

Effective January 1, 2010, pursuant to ORC Sections 5108.01 through 5108.10, the Mercer County Department of Job and Family Services (Department) will operate this revised Prevention, Retention & Contingency (PRC) service program within Mercer County, Ohio. A household (Assistance Group) that meets eligibility criteria may receive short-term, customized goods or services as determined by the Department. This PRC Plan may not conflict with the Title IV-A State Plan, Ohio Revised Code, or federal law. (see Ohio Revised Code Section 5108.02.)

The PRC program is not to be viewed or operated as an entitlement program. The intent and goal of PRC services and benefits is to overcome immediate barriers to achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency, employment and personal responsibility, preventing the need for public assistance.

The following are definitions of terms used in this PRC plan.

Prevention Services	Services provided with the intent to divert the AG from ongoing cash assistance. Individuals applying for or receiving OWF cash assistance are not eligible for Prevention Services.
Retention Services	Services provided with the intent of allowing an employed, adult caretaker in the AG to maintain earned income and employment.
Contingency Services	Services provided with the intent to meet an emergent need, which threatens the health, safety, or well-being of one or more of the AG members.
Assistance Group (AG)	An AG is composed of one or two adult caretakers and their minor child(ren), including step-child or natural children, for whom they have assumed responsibility. The AG must include at least one minor child or a woman whose pregnancy is medically verified or a noncustodial parent who has a legal obligation to pay child support to be a valid AG for PRC purposes.
Minor Child	An individual under age eighteen (18), or eighteen but not yet nineteen (19), and is a full-time student in a secondary school or its vocational or technical equivalent.
Year or 3-Year Period	For PRC benefit limitation purposes, a year period (or 3-year period) begins upon the first approval of relevant PRC benefits.

- PRC services: (1) have no direct monetary value to an AG.
 (2) do not include implicit or explicit income support.
 (3) is short-term assistance which is limited to the amount needed to meet the situation. All payments must be authorized within 60 days of application for PRC.

• **ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION**

Eligibility for PRC services and benefits is dependent upon the AG’s demonstration and verification (in a manner acceptable to the Department) of the need for financial assistance. Any person(s) found to have made false statements on their PRC application or to have received PRC services Fraudulently, may be prosecuted for fraud and **will be** required to repay any assistance/services received through the Mercer County PRC program.

• **APPLICATION**

The AG will apply for services by submitting to the Department an application form. A copy of the application for the free lunch program offered by Mercer County school systems, along with the approval letter, may be used by families applying for PRC in lieu of regular PRC Applications.

• **VERIFICATIONS**

The AG is required to verify:

- Mercer County residence
- Earned and unearned income of the entire AG
- Need for PRC services
- Liquid Assets of the entire AG. Liquid assets are to be reviewed in the PRC Application process for Contingency and Retention Services only. Liquid assets are those resources, over and above \$50, which are in cash or payable in cash on demand. For PRC purposes, liquid assets are those which can be converted to cash within 30 calendar days so that funds are available to help meet the need. The most common types of liquid assets are cash on hand, savings accounts, checking accounts, certificates of deposit, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, trust funds, promissary notes and burial accounts.

The AG is responsible for supplying all verifications in a manner acceptable to the Department. The PRC application will be denied 30 days after application if the AG does not supply the required verifications. The Department has the flexibility to accept applicant’s statement as verification on a case-by-case basis when reasonable verification efforts by agency and applicant have been exhausted.

• **INCOME**

Except where noted, for PRC services to be authorized, the AG’s income must be at or below the following limits:

- Gross income must be at or below the amounts on the following chart:

AG Size	Maximum Monthly Gross Income
1	\$ 993
2	\$ 1458
3	\$ 1679
4	\$ 2021
5	\$ 2364
For each additional person add	\$ 343

All earned and unearned income received by any member of the PRC AG are included when determining gross income. Only earned income of a minor child, who is attending school full-time,

is excluded. Copayments (see the **Copayment** section on page 5) are required in certain situations. There are certain types of income and resources excluded in determining financial eligibility for PRC benefits and services as referenced in Ohio Administrative Code 5101:1-24-20. Income excluded includes Child Support payments, all income that is federally excluded in the determination of eligibility for federal needs based programs, including certain drug discounts and transitional assistance under Medicare and certain Veterans Administration benefits for natural children of female Vietnam veterans.

• **RESTRICTIONS**

If AG members have already received PRC Shelter Expenses benefits in the previous 36 months, the maximum Shelter Expenses benefits can not exceed \$300 per 3-year period. Also the number of occasions of receipt of PRC Shelter Expenses can not exceed two per 3-year period. When applying for Shelter Expenses services a subsequent time in a 3-year period, all requirements of this plan must be met as at the time of the initial application. Budget period will be for 30 days ending with the date of application. This 3-year period begins at the time PRC benefits for the AG are initially approved. Individuals receiving or applying for OWF cash assistance are not eligible for Prevention services. Individuals who have a need for certain items or services to begin a job may receive PRC when they have applied or are receiving Ohio Works First program cash assistance.

The following individuals are not eligible for PRC services:

- persons living in public or medical institutions
- fugitive felons and probation/parole violators
- persons not U.S. citizens.
- an unmarried, nongraduate, teen parent, with a child more than 12 weeks old who is not attending high school or participating in activities aimed at enabling the teen to receive an equivalency degree.
- an unmarried parent under the age of 18, who is not living in an adult supervised living situation.
- an individual or assistance group ineligible for other assistance programs due deliberate non-compliance with the terms of their assistance, unless the PRC services would immediately assist the individual/ assistance group in obtaining or maintaining full time employment.
- a person who fraudulently received assistance in 2 or more states is ineligible for 10 years.

The income of these individuals is included in calculating the AG's income. Other members of the AG may be eligible as long as there is an eligible adult caretaker and minor child.

The following situations render the entire AG ineligible for PRC services:

- refusal, without good cause, on the part of an adult caretaker to accept a bona fide job within 90 days prior to the PRC application.
- terminating employment, or being terminated from employment, without good cause by an adult caretaker within 90 days prior to the PRC application.
- Under a current OWF or FSET sanction or penalty due to failing to comply with program regulations or policies, unless the PRC services would immediately assist an individual in the AG in obtaining or maintaining employment for 15 hours or more per week.
- Any AG containing an individual with an outstanding IPV/fraud claim or

disqualification penalty in any benefit program (ADC, OWF, PRC, FS, Medicaid or

Child Care) is ineligible to participate in the PRC Program. Ineligibility continues until

the cost of the IPV fraudulent claim is repaid, or the disqualification period ends, whichever is longer.

If, however, an overpayment was due to agency error, the AG may still be eligible, subject to the rules in the paragraph immediately below, for the following PRC Programs: Access to Better Care, Domestic Violence, Family Preservation and Reunification, Help Me Grow, Seek Work and Student Intervention Programs.

-Any AG containing an individual with an outstanding overpayment is ineligible if the individual has not established and complied with a current repayment agreement. This includes any and all identified overpayments: ADC, Disability Assistance, OWF, Work Allowance, PRC, Food Stamps, Medicaid or Child Care.

The MCJFS has the sole responsibility in determining good cause under these provisions.

An application for, or receipt of OWF cash assistance, renders the AG ineligible for Prevention services.

• **COMMUNITY & AG RESOURCES**

The AG must make every effort to explore the availability of other resources in the community, whether self-initiated or by a referral from the Department. The AG is required to apply for and utilize any program, benefit, or support system which may reduce or eliminate the emergent need. Failure to explore community resources will result in a denial of PRC services. The AG is also required to use liquid assets, excluding first \$50, as resources in order to meet their emergent need. Failure to do so will result in a denial of eligibility for PRC services.

If the community, the AG resources and PRC services cannot meet the emergent need, then Contingency PRC services will not be authorized.

• **PRC SERVICES**

Copayment-For Contingency and the Job Related Expenses part of Retention services only, families with income levels as indicated on the next chart must generate a 10% copayment of the total dollar amount approved. This 10% could come from family liquid assets or any other source. Please Note: all family liquid assets, less \$50 disregarded, must be used to meet the need, even if the family liquid assets are used to pay more than 10% of the need.

AG Size	Monthly Gross Income (Copay)
1	\$812--\$993
2	\$1093--\$1458
3	\$1373--\$1679
4	\$1654--\$2021
5	\$1935--\$2364
For each additional person add	\$280--\$343

Contingency services assistance meets TANF purpose or goal #1. Examples of some of the general

categories for Contingency services assistance, but not necessarily all-inclusive, are:

Shelter Expenses - are limited to the amount actually required to meet the emergent need up to a maximum of \$300 per 3-year period. Shelter Expenses may be utilized no more than twice every three years, subject to the \$300 limit every 3 years. Rent requires a written notice to leave the premises from the landlord, unless moving into HUD housing.

Utilities require a shut-off notice. Additionally, utility bills will not be paid for AG's who are eligible for subsidized payments, under PIP program (East Ohio Gas and Dayton Power and Light Company). AG's also do not qualify for assistance with heating bills during the dates of operation of the HEAP program unless written verification is received from the agency operating HEAP that the AG is ineligible for HEAP because AG has already received HEAP assistance in the current heating season. Applicants must also, for heating utility bills, provide verification that FEMA funding is unavailable. Repairs of furnaces are also covered services. Emergency Shelter is only for an individual(s) living in a domestic violence shelter, to allow these individuals to move from the shelters.

Job Related Expenses including job-related transportation are allowable expenses. Examples of covered job-related transportation expenses are car repairs (lowest of three quotes), car insurance, car payments, drivers license reinstatement fees (one time only-no DUI's or traffic fatality convictions or equivalent)and transportation through COLT or any outside provider. Job Related Expenses meet TANF purpose or goal #2.

There is no limit on the number of times per year that an AG can receive Job Related Expenses subject to the annual benefit limit of \$250. Any PRC payments for car repairs, car insurance, or car payments shall require proof of a valid drivers license and vehicle ownership.

PRC services are not available for medical bills or child care expenses.

Authorization of services for one AG does not constitute a precedent for any other AG as PRC services are not an entitlement.

- **PHYSICAL DISASTER SERVICES**

For **PHYSICAL DISASTER SERVICES** an ADDENDUM to this plan will be written for each disaster occurrence. This program meets TANF purpose or goal #1.

- **FAMILY PRESERVATION AND REUNIFICATION SERVICES**

Families with incomes up to the Income Guidelines listed below are eligible for soft Family Preservation and Reunification Services. This program meets TANF purpose or goal #1. AG's with incomes up to the Income Guidelines listed below are eligible:

AG Size

Monthly Gross Income

1	\$1805
2	\$2429
3	\$3052
4	\$3675
5	\$4299
For each additional person add	\$ 623

The Department may, pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rule 5101:2-39-06 and -07, provide the following family preservation and reunification services to a child and his parent, guardian or custodian as the Department determines is necessary and subject to the availability of encumbered funds:

Respite Care

**Emergency Housing
Shelter Costs**

**Domestic Violence Services
Case Management**

**Home Health Aide Services
Homemaker Services**

**Home Based Services
Parent Education Services**

**Transportation Services
Special Services for Alcohol and Drug Abusers**

**Mentoring Services
Youth Coaching**

Behavioral Support Services

Other services which in the judgment of Department staff will prevent the need to permanently remove a child from his/her home or to facilitate reunification of a child with his/her parent, guardian, or custodian.

Application for Family Preservation and Reunification Services may be made by an adult family member, his/her designee, or a Department representative applying on behalf of a parent, for a child being placed in an emergency shelter setting which may include a public or private foster home, group home, or residential treatment center.

Families on OWF or FSET sanction or families with individual(s) on OWF or FSET sanction will be eligible for Family Preservation and Reunification PRC Services, if such services will lead to the prevention of the removal of a child from the home or reunification of a child in the home with the parent(s) or other relative caretaker(s).

The PRC Program can be used to provide assistance to a family involved with the child protective services system. A county may design its program to help alleviate a family crises that could lead to the removal of children from their home, or to help a family so that the children can be safely returned to their family.

- **SYSTEM OF CARE NON-BEHAVIORAL CASE MGMT**

Subject to available funding from ODJFS and the rules herein, Mercer County JFS may operate services for children called System of Care, formerly, Access to Better Care. This program meets TANF purpose or goal #1. Non-behavioral Case Management Funds will be disbursed only for eligible children clustered at the local level with the Family & Children First Council (F&CFC) and F&CFC Coordinator. No Medicaid-covered services can be reimbursed under this program irregardless of whether the child involved is eligible for Medicaid. Please consult the **Restrictions** section, which starts on the middle of page 4 of this Plan for a listing of individuals and AG's who are ineligible for PRC services. This information is in the **Restrictions** section after the first paragraph. AG's with incomes up to the Income Guidelines listed below are eligible:

AG Size	Monthly Gross Income
1	\$1805
2	\$2429
3	\$3052
4	\$3675
5	\$4299
For each additional person add	\$ 623

- **TANF SEP-SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

Subject to available funding from ODJFS and the rules herein, Mercer County JFS will operate the **TANF SEP (Subsidized Employment Program)**. This program meets TANF purpose or goal #2. The TANF-eligible population to be served includes adults who have a minor child in the home to which they are related as a natural parent, specified other relative, legal guardian or legal custodian; pregnant women with no other children; and a non-custodial parent who lives in Mercer County and has a legal obligation to pay child support. TANF SEP funds can be used for: subsidy payments to employers for up to 50% of wages for six months to cover supervision of the program; work related items, such as uniforms, tools, licenses or certifications; skill enhancement training and job coaches and mentors.; supervision of the program; and other services to participants, including, work related items, such as uniforms, tools, licenses or certifications, skill enhancement training; case management activities related to the program; and recruitment and development of employers for the program.

The goal of the program is continued employment for the participant when the subsidies end. No subsidized position shall be similar or equivalent to any position from which employer has made layoffs. TANF SEP funds can be used to subsidize a new position, to bring a part-time position to full time or to preserve a position from a layoff. To the extent practical, employees of the Department will coordinate activities, referrals and services for this program with Ohio Area #8 WIA Board One Stop Center in Mercer County. Resource limits are the same as for other benefits and services provided under the Mercer County PRC Plan.

AG's with incomes up to the Income Guidelines listed below are eligible:

AG Size	Monthly Gross Income
1	\$1805
2	\$2429
3	\$3052
4	\$3675
5	\$4299
For each additional person add	\$ 623

A guide to how Monthly Gross Income is calculated is in the first paragraph at the top of page 4 of this PRC Plan

• **MCJFS RESPONSIBILITIES**

Eligibility for PRC will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with the Department retaining final authority to approve or deny the application. The purpose of the interview is to:

- determine if the AG meets specific eligibility criteria for PRC services,
- determine if PRC services can resolve the AG's situation, and
- determine the extent and level of PRC services to authorize.

If the applicant expresses a desire to apply for other programs/services, the agency will take the application and determine eligibility according to its usual procedure. Applicants will be given all information necessary for them to make an informed decision regarding PRC services and other Department programs and services. The Department will determine eligibility for PRC services within five (5) working days of receiving all required verifications from the applicant.

If the applicant has not supplied the verifications within thirty (30) days of submitting the application, PRC services will be denied. As required by the ODJFS, the Department will use the CRIS-E system to register and document PRC services. All forms, documents, verifications and case notes will be kept in an AG file. The Department will mail, or otherwise deliver, a notice of approval, the ODHS 4074, Notice of Approval of Your Application For Assistance, or denial, the ODHS 7334, Notice of Denial of Your Application For Assistance, for PRC services.

The Department Director, Ohio Works First/PRC Supervisor(s) or other designee of the Director will authorize payment for services from recognized community vendors. At a minimum, the vendor must be able to provide a federal employer identification number. The Department will use prudence in selecting a vendor in regards to the cost of services. The Department will authorize PRC payments via relief supply orders or warrants payable to vendors or applicants. All payment processing procedures will meet acceptable auditing requirements by the Mercer County Auditor, ODJFS and the Auditor of the State of Ohio.

The Mercer County Department of Job and Family Services agrees to implement the Mercer County

Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Plan as written herein.

Dale J. Borger, Director
Mercer County Job & Family Services

Date

The Mercer County Commissioners certify that Mercer County Job & Family Services complied with Chapter 5108 of the Ohio Revised Code in adopting the statement of policies of the Mercer County Prevention, Retention and Contingency Plan.

John Bruns, Chairman
Mercer County Commissioners

Date

Bob Nuding
Mercer County Commissioner

Date

Jerry Laffin
Mercer County Commissioner

Date