



## Muskingum County

**Prevention**

**Retention and**

**Contingency**

**Plan**

REVISED 7/15/11



“People dedicated to helping people.”

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## **Section I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

PRC is not ongoing OWF (TANF) Assistance. PRC services are: 1) services that have no direct monetary value to an individual family and do not involve implicit income support; or 2) one-time, short-term assistance which is limited to the amount actually required to meet the presenting need.

A PRC Assistance Group (PRC AG) is a group of individuals containing at least one minor child and treated as a unit for the purpose of determining eligibility for the PRC Program. Grandparents(s) who are raising their grandchildren, but may not be in receipt of court ordered child support, will be considered a unit for the purpose of determining eligibility for the PRC program. The PRC AG unit for the prevention and retention portion of the PRC program will be determined based on OWF standard filing unit procedures.

The payment amount for PRC benefits is no more than \$450.00 per PRC Assistance Group, per the 12 consecutive month period beginning with the initial PRC payment. Any number of individual payments can be made during this period as long as they are distinctive, non-ongoing occurrences and do not exceed \$450.00 for the PRC AG over the 12 month period.

## **Section II**

### **EMERGENT NEED AND EXPLORING COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Every reasonable effort must be made to explore the availability of resources within the county prior to the authorization of PRC. An Assistance Group (AG) is required to apply for and utilize any program benefit or support system(s) which may reduce or eliminate the presenting need. County personnel determining eligibility for PRC should be aware of community resources which may be utilized to help meet the need. Failure on behalf of the applicant to accept or utilize available community resources will be grounds for denial of a PRC application. The PRC Program is designed to provide **temporary** assistance to families with a demonstrated emergent need. In all cases, the amount of PRC issued must meet, but may not exceed the emergent need of the AG and fall within the established caps of the program. If the amount of PRC available cannot prevent the onset or continuation of the emergent situation, there is no eligibility for payment. In addition, multiple requests (more than one) for PRC services will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Services may not be provided if an abusive pattern of usage is established.

## **Section III**

### **ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION**

The PRC applicant must complete the ODJFS 3800, Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program (PRC) Application to request PRC.

Eligibility for PRC is dependent upon the PRC AG's demonstration and verification of the need for financial assistance and/or services, and whether the county determines that a provision of PRC will satisfy the need. In order for the PRC AG to be found eligible, the PRC AG's income must be at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) in effect at the time of application. PRC assistance is only available to members who haven't received PRC assistance above the monetary cap during the previous 12 consecutive months. Families receiving assistance under another program may receive PRC assistance.

The county is responsible for using objective criteria when determining eligibility and approving or denying the application within 30 calendar days after completion of the application process in a fair and equitable manner, which includes verification of information. Eligibility will be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Immediate needs, whether or not the PRC Program can be of benefit, will be determined by the CDJFS. Under this program, an assistance group that includes at least one minor child and meets the program's eligibility requirements may receive customized assistance, goods, or services, as determined by the CDJFS. This program is designed to help people overcome immediate barriers to achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, thereby preventing the need for ongoing public assistance. However, the fact that an ongoing Medicaid, OWF, or DA assistance group is active is not a determining factor in the consideration of eligibility for the PRC Program. In addition, the CDJFS must inform individuals about other programs (i.e., Medicaid and Food Stamps) that are available and of hearing rights that are applicable.

PRC assistance will be authorized with the expectation that the PRC AG will then be able to function without additional agency help. Services are provided to an assistance group to prevent them from reliance on and divert them from ongoing cash assistance and guide them to self-sufficiency by helping them through the presenting crisis. When possible, services are also provided to a PRC AG to help members retain employment and, thereby, to achieve or continue self-sufficiency.

Former Family Emergency Assistance (FEA) program policies and benefits are replaced by the PRC Program. The CDJFS shall enter the PRC AG into CRIS-E for statewide clearance and PRC authorization. If during the statewide clearance for PRC AG, it is discovered that the household has received PRC benefits from another county in the last 12 months, the PRC AG will only be eligible to receive the difference between the amount issued by the previous county and our county's maximum benefit level.

Households who have received PRC benefits and then subsequently divide into two or more potential PRC AG's will have their eligibility for future PRC benefits during the twelve (12) month period based on whether they were included in the original PRC AG. If all individuals had been included in the original PRC AG, each individual may be entitled to the difference between the original PRC issuance and the county's maximum benefit. If an individual moving into a household has received the maximum county benefits and it is determined based upon the presenting need that they must be included in the PRC AG by definition, and then the new potential PRC AG would be ineligible for benefits. All income which has been received by any member of the PRC AG during the 30 day budget period is considered when determining financial need. The 30 day period begins 30 days prior to the date of the application and ends on the application date. The income received during this period is used in the computation of

financial eligibility. This includes all income which is normally exempt or disregarded when determining eligibility for OWF or DA.

Income of all Assistance Group members must be verified. Only **earned** income of an AG member under the age of 18 will be **excluded** (unless child is a parent). No other exclusions apply.

With the above exceptions, the total gross income, both earned and unearned, of all the PRC AG members, must be counted. There are no deductions or exclusions allowed from any type of countable income. Written or verbal verification of income is required. For any verification which is obtained by phone, there must be clear documentation in the PRC AG record concerning the name and position of the information provider, the date the verification was obtained, the amount of the verified income, and the name of the individual who obtained the verification.

Once the total gross countable income of a PRC AG is determined and verified, the amount is compared to the 125% Federal Poverty Guidelines for the appropriate PRC AG size. If the total PRC AG income is equal to or less than 125% of the FPG amount for the applicable PRC AG size, the PRC AG meets the income requirement.

Applicants who are ineligible include: 1) fugitive felons and probation parole violators; 2) individuals with any outstanding OWF, PRC, Child Care or Foodstamp overpayment who were determined guilty of fraudulent receipt of such benefits or who were determined to have committed an intentional program violation (IPV) to receive such benefits; 3) individuals ineligible for other programs due to deliberate non-compliance with the terms of their assistance; 4) AG's who are under sanction on the OWF program; 5) an un-married, non-graduate parent under 18 not attending high school or equivalent; 6) an unmarried parent under 18 not living in a supervised setting; or 7) a person found to have fraudulently misrepresented residence in order to obtain assistance in two or more states is ineligible for ten years.

Any assistance group having an overpayment will not be eligible for PRC benefits until a repayment agreement is in place. If payments are not maintained, any subsequent PRC requests may be denied.

### **Pattern of Usage**

Recurring requests for PRC services will be evaluated on a case by case basis. An application will be subject to denial if an abusive pattern of usage is established. An abusive pattern of usage is established when following occurs: PRC request(s) occur routinely, around the same times of the year; or, PRC request(s) coincide with the availability of PRC funds.

Applicants who exhibit a pattern of usage may be asked to provide evidence that they are actively participating in a credit counseling service in order to be considered eligible for approval for PRC services. Participation or non participation in counseling services does not guarantee approval or denial of services. Situations will continue to be looked at on an individual basis according to the emergent need and all other eligibility factors.

## **Section IV**

### **RECOVERY OF BENEFITS FRAUDULENTLY RECEIVED**

PRC fraud is defined as the intentional withholding, altering or falsification of information necessary to make a proper determination of eligibility for PRC, and as a result the applicant received assistance for which there is no eligibility. If it is determined that an applicant has falsified this or any other information the application will be denied. If it is discovered, after authorization of benefits, that information was falsified the applicant will be required to repay any PRC assistance received through fraudulent actions. The Benefit Recovery Unit will actively pursue repayment of any and all erroneous payments through all legal means available to the Muskingum County Department of Job & Family Services, up to and including referral to the Muskingum County Prosecuting Attorney for criminal prosecution.

#### **5101:1-23-75 OWF and PRC: Assistance group ineligibility due to receipt of fraudulent assistance.**

##### **A. "Fraudulent Assistance"**

1. For purposes of this rule, an "intentional violation of the program's requirements" is defined as an act by an individual, for the purpose of establishing or maintaining the family's eligibility for OWF, Child Care or PRC or for increasing or preventing a reduction in the amount of assistance, which is intentionally: a false or misleading statement or misrepresentation, concealment, or withholding of facts; or any act intended to mislead, misrepresent, conceal, or withhold facts or propound a falsity, as set forth in Chapter 5101:6-20 of the Administrative Code.
2. An intentional program violation of the OWF, Child Care or PRC program requirements can be established in one of the four circumstances described in paragraphs (A)(2)(a) to (A)(2)(d) of this rule.
  - a.** A court of appropriate jurisdiction has found that the individual has committed a criminal offense connected to violation of the OWF, Child Care and/or PRC program requirements.
  - b.** An administrative disqualification hearing decision finds that the individual has committed an intentional program violation, as set forth in rules 5101:6-20-16 and 5101:6-20-17 of the Administrative Code.
  - c.** The individual signs a waiver of the disqualification hearing as set forth in rule 5101:6-20-30 of the Administrative Code.
  - d.** The individual signs a disqualification consent agreement as set forth in rule 5101:6-20-40 of the Administrative Code.

##### **B. CDJFS director determination:**

If a CDJFS director determines that an assistance group has received fraudulent assistance in accordance with the provisions set forth in paragraph (A) of this rule, the assistance group is ineligible to participate in the OWF program or the PRC program until a member of the assistance group repays the cost of the fraudulent assistance. Ineligibility as a result of an IPV, begins not later than the first day of the second month following the issuance of the notice of disqualification for intentional program violation (i.e., the issuance of the JF 40062, "Notice of Disqualification for Intentional Program Violation").

**Section V**

**AMOUNTS AND TYPES OF ASSISTANCE**

PRC payments are limited to the amount required to meet the presenting need, up to \$450.00 per 12 consecutive month period of eligibility. Any number of individual payments can be made during this period as long as they are distinctive, non-ongoing occurrences and do not exceed \$450.00 for the PRC AG during the 12 month period. **All payments must promote self-sufficiency of the PRC AG.** All PRC payments issued must be determined by CDJFS to be of a reasonable amount and must be the minimum amount needed to prevent the presenting crisis. The CDJFS reserves the right to deny a PRC application based upon program criteria in relation to the PRC AG’s need and financial situation.

An example of some of the general categories of assistance, goods, and services which may be provided via PRC follow, but the list is not all-inclusive:

<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>JOB RELATED EXPENSES</b>
Automobile Repairs/Tires	Clothing/Uniforms
Car Payments	Tools
Car Insurance	Safety Equipment
Gasoline	

To qualify for PRC assistance for automobile payments or repairs, the applicant must be scheduled or have worked for a minimum of 20 hours per week at minimum wage (or the equivalent), or scheduled to participate at a verifiable work experience program site for a minimum of 20 hours per week. Automobile payments and repairs will be provided only in those situations where the automobile is needed to retain employment or meet the above work activity requirement.

Failure to complete scheduled hours after the payments or repairs have been made may result in an overpayment referral for the PRC assistance issued.

Payments for car insurance, license plates and driver’s licenses will be provided for a PRC Assistance Group only if the expense is determined to be work related. Gas vouchers will be provided for a PRC Assistance Group only if the expense is determined to be work related.

**Any Other Expense or Services which the CDJFS believes will help a PRC AG obtain Self-Sufficiency.**

Applicants who receive benefits under the PRC program on an annual basis or exhibit a pattern of PRC requests may be required to attend credit counseling or some form of education program. These programs will be made available to each applicant by the CDJFS at no cost to the applicant. Refusal on the part of the applicant may result in future denial of a PRC request.

Applicants who request PRC assistance for a work-related need in excess of twice during a 12 month period may have their PRC request for this specific need denied.

The CDJFS Director or his designee will have the final decision on all benefits issued to an assistance group through the PRC program.

Once eligibility for PRC is established, the CDJFS director or designee will authorize and generate payment for the assistance, goods, and/or services. Authorization may occur at any time during a period beginning on the date that PRC is approved. As long as payment is authorized within the appropriate period, actual payment may be made to vendors according to the procedures in place at the CDJFS. All PRC payments are made by the CDJFS to the vendor. The county must ensure that its policies meet all auditing requirements.

**Section VI**

**PRC FUNDED PROGRAMS**

In Muskingum County PRC programs are designed to utilize TANF funds in a manner reasonably calculated to accomplish any of the four purposes of the TANF program. 64 Fed. Reg. 17826 (April 12, 1999). The four purposes of TANF can be found in federal law, 42 U.S.C. 601. As a result, in Ohio, this means that a program or service provided through the PRC program must accomplish one of the four purposes of TANF.

**Purpose 1: “To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.”**

**Purpose 2: “To end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage.”**

**Purpose 3: “To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies.”**

**Purpose 4: “To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.”**

The following is a list of specific programs which are funded through the PRC program:

Program	Poverty Level	TANF Purpose
Non-Custodial Assistance Services	125%	TANF Purpose 1

**Non-Custodial Assistance Services:** Regular PRC services will be provided to eligible individuals through the Non-Custodial Assistance Services.

Under these services, the child /children covered under the support obligation will be added to the PRC assistance group.

In order to be eligible for benefits, the non-custodial parent must have a current child support order in effect for a minor child and must be cooperating with the child support enforcement process as determined by Muskingum County Department of Job and Family Services. Guidelines for cooperation are as follows:

- Substantial child support payment must have been made by the non-custodial parent in the 30 day budget period.
- A minimum of 75% of court ordered obligation is considered substantial payment.
- If substantial payment has not been made in the last 30 days, then payments will be evaluated on a 6 month or 12 month basis.
- If substantial payment was made 4 out of the preceding 6 months, or 9 out of the preceding 12 months, then the applicant may be eligible for work-related PRC needs only.
- Child Support payments must be made through the Ohio Child Support Payment Central or County Department of Job and Family Services, Child Support Division.
- The receipt of benefits by the non-custodial parent will not count against or begin any time frames that will affect the children who are included in the non-custodial parent's assistance group.
- All conditions of our current plan will remain in effect for these services.

Program	Poverty Level	TANF Purpose
Transportation Services	150%	TANF Purpose 1 TANF Purpose 2

**Transportation Services:** Provides transportation for work-related services for individuals referred by an Eligibility Referral Specialist 1, employee of the Muskingum County Department of Job and Family Services (i.e. bus passes, cab fare, bus fare).

All conditions of our current plan will remain in effect for these services with the following exceptions:

- The income eligibility limit for these services will be 150% of the Federal Poverty Level for the appropriate family size.
- The receipt of these benefits will not count towards the PRC benefit limits covered under any other part of our plan. The receipt of these benefits will not start or count against any time limits of any other part of our plan.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Poverty Level</b>	<b>TANF Purpose</b>
<b>Mental Health Evaluation Services</b>	<b>150%</b>	<b>TANF Purpose 1 TANF Purpose 2</b>

**Mental Health Evaluation Services:** Will assist MCDJFS staff in determining the extent of limitations for employment based on a mental health assessment or psychological evaluation for eligible OWF applicants/recipients who are required to participate in work activities. Service will be provided based on a referral by an Eligibility Referral Specialist 1, employee of the Muskingum County Department of Job and Family Services.

All conditions of our current plan will remain in effect for these services with the following exceptions:

- The standard for making referrals is that the household receives and is eligible to receive an OWF cash grant.
- The receipt of this service will not count towards the PRC benefit limits covered under any other part of our plan.
- The receipt of this service will not start or count against any time limits of any other part of our plan.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Poverty Level</b>	<b>TANF purpose</b>
<b>TANF Program for Financial Stability Coordinator through Muskingum, Perry and Morgan Counties United Way</b>	<b>200%</b>	<b>TANF Purpose 2</b>

This TANF funding will provide salary, benefits and start up overhead expenses for the services of a Financial Stability Coordinator whose job duties will include working with the Muskingum County Financial Stability Steering Committee to define the need for community awareness with regard to foreclosure rates, predatory lending practices and low savings activity. Other duties include educating the Muskingum County community about available resources to strengthen the financial health of our community and individuals; coordinate events such as tax preparation programs, public events, financial education seminars and identify additional resources and grants to support this initiative.

Program	Poverty Level	TANF purpose
Youth Diversion Title XX Programs	200%	TANF Purpose 1

Provides services for child welfare services through Muskingum County Children Services. Program participants shall complete an application and the Federal Poverty Guideline cannot exceed 200%.

All conditions of our current plan will remain in effect for these services with the following exceptions:

- The receipt of other benefits will not count towards the PRC benefit limit covered under any other part of our plan.
- The receipt of these benefits will not start or count against any limits of any other part of our plan.

Notice of Approval/Denial: If it is determined that an application for PRC is approved, the CDJFS shall mail or otherwise deliver the JFS 04074, “**Notice of Approval of Your Application for Assistance.**” If it is determined that an application for PRC is denied, the CDJFS shall mail or otherwise deliver the JFS 07334, “**Notice of Denial of Your Application for Assistance.**”

Muskingum County Department of Job and Family Services agree to implement the PRC County Plan as written above.

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Randy L. Cochrane, Director

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Date