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Contact: Benjamin Johnson
Phone: (614) 466-2100
E-mail: benjamin.johnson@jfs.ohio.gov

Home Choice Program Earns National Recognition

COLUMBUS, OHIO – A unique partnership between the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) is garnering national acclaim for helping Ohioans move out of nursing facilities and back into the community. At a recent U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Housing Policy conference, Ohio was singled out for its efforts to help those in long-term care facilities move back into their communities and homes.

The ODJFS and CMHA partnership is part of the statewide HOME Choice program, which helps elderly or Ohioans with disabilities in long-term care facilities locate housing, set up their new home, and connect to necessary community services. The partnership has already helped 12 individuals in Cuyahoga County transition to the community and is currently helping six more move into a home.

“The partnership between ODJFS and CMHA helps Cuyahoga County residents who live in long-term care facilities and who are interested in living at home find affordable and accessible housing,” said ODJFS Director Douglas Lumpkin. “Partnerships like this are an integral part of the HOME Choice program, which has given hundreds of Ohioans the opportunity to move out of long-term care facilities and back into the community.”

HUD is showcasing the partnership between ODJFS and CMHA as an example of how agencies can collaborate to assist people with disabilities to return to the community. The federal agency recently invited both ODJFS and CMHA to speak at the bi-annual HUD Fair Housing Policy conference. In addition, John Trasvina, HUD assistant secretary of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, presented ODJFS and CMHA with an award at the 2010 National Fair Housing Policy Conference in New Orleans on July 22.

“We enjoy being part of such a wonderful partnership,” said CMHA's Chief of Staff and Operations Jeffery K. Patterson. “This program and relationship are an integral part of our efforts to increase the number of housing opportunities available to persons with disabilities.”

The ODJFS HOME Choice program began in 2008. It is part of the federal Money Follows the Person (MFP) project, which Congress enacted as part of the Federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Ohio is one of 29 states participating in MFP. The program is funded with a federal grant from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This demonstration grant provides support to states to shift their Medicaid long-term care spending away from a facility-based system to a more community-based orientation.

Since beginning in 2008, the HOME Choice program has transitioned more than 600 Ohioans out of long-term care facilities and into their own homes.

More information about HOME Choice can be found at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/OHP/consumers/homechoice.stm>.