



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2019

Contact:

Bret Crow
Communications Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
bret.crow@jfs.ohio.gov
(614) 466-6650

Mark Mecum
CEO | Child and Family Health
Collaborative of Ohio
mark.mecum@ohiochildrensalliance.org
(614) 461-0014

Bridges Program for Former Foster Youth Celebrates 1st Anniversary Successes

COLUMBUS, OHIO – A new program to help former foster youth successfully transition to independence celebrates its first anniversary this month, with a growing number of young people who are aging out of foster care in Ohio requesting Bridges services.

“By supporting transitional-age foster children with housing, education and training resources, this program helps ensure that all young Ohioans have the opportunity to live up to their full potential,” said Governor Mike DeWine. “As Ohio’s Attorney General, I was an advocate for the measure that created this program, and I am thrilled to continue that support as governor.”

Since launching in February 2018, more than 600 young adults have applied for Bridges services, which can include help finding housing to help applying for college. About 900 youth age out of foster care annually.

“We’re pleased that so many young adults are taking advantage of Bridges,” said Kimberly Hall, director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, which manages the voluntary program. “All young people need a guiding hand and someone they can turn to for advice when they’re 18, 19 or 20 and learning how to live on their own. For youth in foster care, who may not have a family member to provide that guidance, Bridges fills an important role.”

ODJFS administers Bridges through a contract with The Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio, which works in partnership with experienced provider agencies throughout the state. Through regular meetings with Bridges representatives, participants develop goals, learn skills and access services related to employment, education, health care and household maintenance.

“Every day, our Bridges team receives inspiration from the hundreds of young adults that we have the honor of serving,” said Mark Mecum, CEO of the Collaborative, a program of the Ohio Children’s Alliance. “Their resilience and drive to overcome life’s obstacles is remarkable. We are proud of the partnership we have achieved with ODJFS and look forward to making the second year of Bridges even better.”

To be eligible, former foster youth must be younger than 21 and in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working. If they don’t qualify for Bridges, or if they choose not to participate, they still can seek supportive services from their county public children services agency.

For more information about Bridges, visit bridgestosuccess.jfs.ohio.gov.