



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 1,250 Former Foster Youth Served by Bridges Program

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced today that more than 1,250 young people have been served by a two-year-old program to help former foster youth successfully transition to independence. The Bridges program allows young people who age out of foster care to request housing or other supportive services at any time between their 18th and 21st birthdays, as long as they are in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working.

“We are thrilled so many young adults are taking advantage of this voluntary program,” said ODJFS Director Kimberly Hall. “Bridges fills the gap for young adults who have been involved in the foster care system, by providing them guidance as they transition to adulthood. Bridges offers young people assistance with finding their first apartment, furthering their education, managing a household budget, and taking care of their health. As young adults gain their footing and achieve their goals, they lay the groundwork for successful futures.”

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.

“We are so proud of all the Bridges participants who have achieved their goals of enrolling in college, securing full-time jobs, and improving their overall well-being,” said Mark Mecum, CEO for the Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio. “We hope to connect with hundreds of more young adults to empower them to reach their potential and individual goals.”

About 900 youth age out of foster care annually. 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. Until July 2019, only youth who emancipated from the custody of public children services agencies were eligible for Bridges. However, the last biennial budget bill expanded eligibility to include youth who emancipate from Ohio’s juvenile courts and the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

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

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.