

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bridges Continues to Help Former Foster Youth Achieve Success

COLUMBUS, OHIO –The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) today celebrated the fourth anniversary of Ohio’s Bridges program, which empowers former foster youth to achieve success in adulthood. Since its launch in 2018, Bridges has connected more than 3,100 former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21 to safe housing and supportive services.

“Helping youth aging out of the foster system transition into their community is critical to their long-term success,” said ODJFS Director Matt Damschroder. “To date, Bridges has provided more than 3,100 youth with the opportunity to build life skills at a time when they’re facing a huge transition, and puts them on a path to self-reliance.”

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.

“A few years ago, this program was just a concept, inspired by countless voices of foster youth and alumni,” said Mark Mecum, CEO for the Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio. “Today, we are engaging young people in every corner of Ohio. Youth are setting goals, graduating from high school, enrolling in college, securing job training and even landing competitive jobs. Their success – and the program’s success – is inspiring and we look forward to another impactful year.”

Approximately 1,000 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. 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.

