

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8, 2014

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May Is Public Assistance Fraud Awareness Month

COLUMBUS, OHIO – May is Public Assistance Fraud Awareness Month in Ohio, and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has unveiled a new website that makes it easier than ever to report suspected fraud: www.jfs.ohio.gov/fraud.

“This is an excellent new tool that allows anyone anywhere to report fraud online instantly and anonymously,” said ODJFS Director Cynthia C. Dungey. “We have no tolerance for fraud. It wastes taxpayer money and creates an unfair stigma for people who actually deserve and are eligible for benefits.”

The new website allows individuals to report suspected fraud in any of the following programs: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Ohio Works First (OWF), publicly funded child care, unemployment compensation and Medicaid. Users are asked to provide as much information as possible but may remain anonymous if they choose.

In 2013, ODJFS disbursed about \$3 billion in SNAP food assistance, \$300 million in OhioWorks First cash assistance, \$600 million in child care subsidies and \$1.8 billion in state and federal unemployment compensation. Individuals who mislead caseworkers or lie on an application for benefits are believed to account for a small percentage of the funding disbursed, but ODJFS takes even small fraud cases very seriously.

“We work very hard with our county partners to detect and deter fraud,” Dungey said. “Fraud gets a lot of attention, as it should, but it’s important to remember that fraud rates for our programs are actually very low. The vast majority of people receiving our services honestly report information about their circumstances and use benefits as intended.”

Individuals found to be committing fraud are removed from the program, must repay any improperly obtained benefits, and may face criminal charges and jail time.

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