



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ODJFS to Sponsor Conference for Teens and Young Adults in Foster Care

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is sponsoring a conference to help teenagers and young adults who have been in foster care transition more successfully to adulthood. The “2012 Connecting the Dots Conference for Foster Care Teens and Young Adults” will be held August 3 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Worthington. Ohio State football icon Archie Griffin will be the keynote speaker, and more than 200 young people from across the state have registered to attend.

“Unlike most conferences, which are geared toward social workers and child welfare professionals, this one is geared toward the young people themselves,” said ODJFS Director Michael Colbert. “It will be filled with workshops and seminars on topics of immediate and urgent concern to young adults embarking on college or a career.”

More than 40 speakers will present on topics including “Employment,” “Higher Education,” “Youth Voice in Court,” “Personal Health” and “Lifelong Connections.” Workshops also will be offered for child welfare professionals.

The conference is part of a larger ODJFS initiative called “Connecting the Dots from Foster Care to Employment and Independent Living,” which is aimed at providing better support to the 1,000 to 1,300 young people who age out of the foster system in Ohio each year. Connecting the Dots brings together foster care caseworkers in eight pilot counties and staff at Ohio’s One-Stop Career Centers in order to provide vocational services, including mentoring, tutoring and work experience, and better independent living support services. Best practices learned in Hamilton, Cuyahoga, Lake, Summit, Montgomery, Preble, Greene and Clinton counties will be shared with counties across the state as Connecting the Dots expands.

“Connecting the Dots allows us to break down silos and give our young people the help they need,” Director Colbert said. “I am 100 percent committed to better supporting our young people in foster care and our young people aging out of foster care. We must invest in these young adults. They cannot raise themselves.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Members of the media wishing to attend the “2012 Connecting the Dots Conference for Foster Care Teens and Young Adults” should contact Benjamin Johnson at benjamin.johnson@jfs.ohio.gov.

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