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**OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER #44**

January 12, 2006

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

FROM: Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director   
Office of Family Stability

**SUBJECT: *New Ohio Direction Card (EBT)***

This letter is being issued to provide information about the new Ohio Direction Card. The time for the conversion of the Ohio Direction Card (EBT) from an offline to an online system is almost upon us. We would like to review with you the timeline and processes involved and request your assistance in relaying this information to the appropriate staff and ultimately to your clients.

Beginning March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, clients who have active balances on their current Ohio Direction cards will begin receiving their new blue and silver magnetic stripe cards in the mail. They will be sent directly from the new vendor, ACS, to the client's home. Clients will also receive informational brochures and inserts with their cards, both in English and Spanish, that will explain how and when to use their new cards. We have attached copies of the information that they will receive with this letter for your information.

In addition, we have attached a timeline to help you and your staff to understand how the conversion will work. This is for your county's use only; it is not intended to be shared with clients as it may be confusing for them. Please review the important milestones below:

The new Ohio Direction Card will be distributed beginning March 3, 2006 to all clients who have active balances on their current Smart Cards.

The last Smart Card issuances and replacements will be done by the counties on Friday, March 24, 2006. At the close of business on March 24, 2006, please verify that the final settlements on both the CMS and POS are **successful** and unplug all of the EBT equipment.

The old Ohio Direction Card (Smart Card) will no longer be functional as of Sunday, March 26, 2006 at midnight.

Clients who are eligible for April, 2006 benefits will have those benefits available in their new Ohio Direction account on Monday, March 27, 2006 at 12:01 a.m. and can begin using their **new** cards on that day. This is a one time change only, and beginning in May, 2006, clients' benefits will be available in their account on their regular day of issuance.

Clients who have balances on their **old** Direction Card (Smart Card) will not have access to their benefits beginning 12:01 a.m., Monday, March 27, 2006 until approximately 6:00 a.m. Wednesday, March 29, 2006. This down time is necessary to transfer the old card balance to the new card account. We would like to emphasize that most of our clients will have a seamless transition, as they will have their April benefits in their new account immediately on March 27<sup>th</sup>, when the old card is no longer functional. All benefits from the old cards will transfer on March 29<sup>th</sup> and the clients will have full access to their new card accounts. This is similar to the 48 hour process it would take to replace their cards on the old system.

Additionally, we are enclosing a flyer which can be enlarged and used as a poster. We strongly recommend that you post this over your POS equipment in your lobby, in caseworker's offices/cubicles, as well as all entrances to your agency. We would also encourage you to share this flyer with any organizations or agencies in your communities that work with our clientele, such as churches, shelters, etc. We will also be working closely with advocacy groups in educating our clients.

We will be presenting a detailed overview of the new Ohio Direction Card at the county video conference on January 18<sup>th</sup>. This is the same video conference that policy hosts on the third Wednesday of each month. Important information will be presented at this session, and it is imperative that appropriate staff attend. The EBT presentation will be from approximately 9:10 – 9:40 in the morning session, and from 1:10 – 1:40 in the afternoon session. If staff is unable to attend, please record the video so they can view it at a later time. Due to time constraints, we will not be able to provide a transcript of the video.

In review we have attached the following information:

1. Card Mailer
2. Card Mailer Insert
3. Cardholder Brochure
4. Tips Card
5. Conversion Timeline – for county use only
6. County EBT Fact Sheet
7. Poster/flyer for duplication by the county.

Please share this information with any of your staff who may be fielding questions from clients about the new Direction Card. As always feel free to contact us with any and all questions. We are committed to making this a smooth transition for your clients and your staff.

OFS Letter # 44

Page 3 of 3

Contact Person: John Scaggs at [scaggj@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:scaggj@odjfs.state.oh.us).

CC: Barbara Riley, ODJFS Director  
Fred Williams, Assistant Director  
Bruce Madson, Assistant Director  
China Widener, Assistant Director  
ODJFS Deputy Directors

Family Stability Staff  
Loretta Adams, ODJFSDA  
Crystal Allen, PCSAO  
Kim Newsome, OCDA  
Larry Long, CCAO