



Family Empowerment Day a True Success!

The Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency in Columbus, Ohio, held its third annual Family Empowerment Day on August 17, 2011 at St. Stephen's Community House. This event, co-sponsored by the Columbus Urban League, was created to help empower families by providing them with access to community resources and valuable child support services. Opening remarks provided by Ohio Senator Charleta Tavares, Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady, and Franklin County Judge Elizabeth Gill kicked off the successful event attended by over three hundred and fifty families.

Families were able to gather information in the community resource area that included a variety of agencies such as Action for Children, Goodwill, the Legal Aid Society of Columbus, Job & Family Services, and Columbus State Community College. Kids were able to play in the expanded Kids' Zone. This year's Kids' Zone included a bouncy house, COSI Experience, balloon animals, face painting and more!

Many parents were able to take care of their child support-related business at the event. A total of 89 individuals took advantage of the opportunity to attend the event and sign for new hearing dates in order to have their civil warrant lifted. Attendees with FCCSEA drivers' license suspensions were also able to sign an agreement with the agency and make a \$50.00 payment to have their license reinstated. Licenses were reinstated on 49 cases with agreements being signed for over 100 more just waiting for payment. Requests for Administrative Adjustment Reviews were received for 22 cases. One great feature of Family Empowerment Day is the ability to make a payment on a support case at the event. FCCSEA collected \$2051.00 in 2011 which is a 55% increase from our 2010 event.

Family Empowerment Day was a success due to all of the hard work and dedication of our staff, volunteers, and community partners. This event would not be possible without the strong support of our County Commissioners, Courts, and public leaders. Thank you Franklin County!

If you would like more information about Family Empowerment Day, please contact Michael Miller at millem13@odjfs.state.oh.us.

News Today

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Franklin County CSEA Hosts Empowerment Day

In observance of Child Support Awareness Month, the Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency held its third annual Empowerment Day and Resource Fair on Aug. 17 at St. Stephen's Community House in Columbus. The event, co-sponsored by the Columbus Urban League, included a job fair, activities for children, and information sessions about child support, custody and visitation.

Director Colbert, ODJFS Office of Child Support Deputy Director Jeffrey Aldridge and Ohio Commission on Fatherhood Executive Director Tracy Robinson attended the opening session. State Sen. Charleta Tavares, Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady and Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge Elizabeth Gill delivered remarks.

Gill said the theme of this year's statewide observance, "Love and Support Complete the Child," underscores the importance of both parents' involvement in raising children.

"I see so many children who come through my court and don't have the complete package of



ODJFS Office of Child Support Deputy Director Jeffrey Aldridge, right, Columbus Urban League African American Male Initiative Director Glenn A. Harris, left, and Ohio Commission on Fatherhood Executive Director J. Tracy Robinson attended Franklin County's Empowerment Day.

support," Gill said. "It's about child support, but it's also about involvement."

O'Grady commended parents in attendance for demonstrating responsibility by participating in the event.

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In her keynote address, state Sen. Charleta Tavares spoke about the importance of both parents being involved in raising children.



Representatives of community organizations provided participants with information about employment and training opportunities.

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"Being here is a testament to who you are and how much you care about your family," O'Grady said.

In her keynote address, Tavares cited statistics indicating that children who miss out on the involvement of both parents often face serious challenges later in life.

"Children without fathers are two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to be victims of abuse, to become teen parents," Tavares said.

Legislators and community service organizations should provide tools to help parents overcome barriers such as unemployment, substance abuse and mental health issues, Tavares said.

"We've got to identify those barriers so that you're not punished for something you're trying to get help with," she said.

To help parents overcome obstacles to paying child support, the Empowerment Fair included one-on-one consultations with child support attorneys, financial literacy sessions, and information about how to obtain education and training. Eligible participants were also able



Some individuals who were behind on their child support made payment arrangements to have their driver's licenses reinstated.

to enroll on-site in the Franklin Drivers License Reinstatement program, whereby individuals who are behind on child support could make payment arrangements to regain driving privileges. Numerous employment services also were available, including a visit by the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation Mobile Unit, which offers job listings, resume assistance and career counseling.

GOT NEWS?

To submit an article or idea to News Today, email NewsToday@jfs.ohio.gov. Photos should be sent in JPEG or TIF format.

Feeling Stressed?

Help is available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) by calling 1-800-221-6327.

Project Title: ODJFS Ohio Fatherhood Initiative
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PROJECT SUMMARY/ABSTRACT

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will develop and implement a comprehensive approach to promoting responsible fatherhood through a **project known as the Ohio Fatherhood Initiative (OFI)**. The purpose of the OFI Project is to help fathers in diverse communities throughout Ohio **succeed as providers, parents and partners**.

Services The goal of the OFI Project is to strengthen vulnerable Ohio families through a comprehensive three-pronged approach: 1). create greater economic stability by helping fathers prepare for, find and retain long-term employment; 2) foster responsible parenting through skills-based classes and individualized mentoring; and 3) promote healthy marriage by providing mothers and fathers with conflict resolution and communication skills training. The OFI Steering Committee will be responsible for statewide oversight and management of the project in 26 different Ohio counties. Integrated into the three-prong approach, ODJFS will develop a comprehensive strategy for identifying, preventing and remedying domestic violence and child maltreatment in all local communities participating in the OFI project.

Population By partnering with 16 county agencies and local non-profits already providing services to vulnerable Ohio families, the OFI Project will serve over 1200 fathers and eligible mothers living in urban, suburban and rural counties including several in Appalachia, an under-served population located in pockets of poverty. The OFI Project's priority targeted population will be TANF eligible low income, non-married, unemployed and under-employed fathers ages 16 to 41.

Needs In Ohio, eligible fathers who reside in urban counties are predominantly black and those living in suburban, rural and Appalachian counties are predominantly white. Many of these men have not completed high school and lack marketable job skills. The majority are under-employed or unemployed and either pay or owe Child Support. Many do not reside with the mother of their child(ren) and have children by multiple partners. These men often were raised in father-absent homes and therefore lack experience in what it means to be a committed, involved and responsible father. As a result, the targeted population often needs skills and services in all three program component areas: employment, parenting and healthy relationship.

Goal The Project will meet the multiple needs by developing and implementing a comprehensive approach to promoting responsible fatherhood, including activities designed to promote economic stability, foster responsible parenting, and promote healthy marriage. ODJFS will create a seamless and continuous system of care that provides the father needed services based upon an individualized assessment. Fathers and family members in the targeted communities will be made aware of services through a coordinated public awareness campaign.