



LCDJFS E-Newsletter

Fall 2009

A newsletter from the Lorain County Department of Job & Family Services

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Director Notes

Mary Lou Golski, Director

Just some thoughts:

With record setting numbers of new applications for assistance, less staff to process the work, and decreased state funding, the future at Lorain County Job and Family Services does not look bright. Some predictions for the near future:

- Some form of regionalization or consolidation with Job and Family Service offices.
- Continued modification of regulations and/or streamlining of processes to be more consumer friendly.
- Expansion of the Benefit Bank into additional Job and Family programs and/or web based application processes.
- Less federal financial supports = smaller local government.
- If the public option for health services survives, Medicaid may somehow be factored into the option.

Hopefully 2010 will bring some needed relief to the current economic problems for all citizens of Lorain County.

Mary Lou

People Served at LCDJFS

**By Natalio Rodriquez
Program Administrator**

LCDJFS is a service agency and this year will turn into a record year for people who come through our doors. Applications for all programs administered by LCDJFS are setting records in 2009. There are more people in the community in need of cash, food stamps, medical, child support and child care.

If all statistics continue on present course, LCDJFS will see a 7% increase in traffic through the doors. We estimate 147,934 people will see our receptionists in 2009. In 2008, the receptionists handled 137,660 people. This number does not include friends, spouses, attorneys, and representatives who accompanied our clients or the children who come with their parent to appointments. The lines are always long and the parking lot is full with cars. LCT buses and taxi cabs make regular stops at our building.

So if you ever wonder what is going on in the building with the big green ball and clock tower, remember LCDJFS is providing many vital services, many needed for a family to survive, to the residents of Lorain County. If you or someone you know is in need of assistance, applications and many common forms used by the agency can be found on a rack hung on the wall to the right of the receptionists. There is no need for you to stand in our long lines just to ask for an application. You can either mail it back and receive an appointment in the mail or stand in line and have your application screens and an appointment scheduled.



Seasons Change and so does The Child Care Program at LCDJFS

**By Sue Goins
Social Service Administrator**

In the past few months, we've seen both program and staff changes. In August, the ELI (Early Learning Initiative) program was eliminated due to a decrease in state funding. This preschool education program for low income children will be sorely missed by many Lorain County families. Household income eligibility standards were also decreased state-wide as a means to live within our child care allocation. As the state recognized that we need to do more (for clients) with less (staffing and funding), the rules recently changed to eliminate six month reviews for child care clients. Instead, child care eligibility is now only redetermined yearly. Face-to-face interviews are no longer required to apply for child care; applications and redeterminations can now be done entirely by mail.



New staff joined the Child Care Units this fall. Due to layoffs, four social services workers from other departments moved into the Child Care area and have been busily learning all facets of client eligibility.

The state is working hard on a number of new computer systems for the Child Care program. These will help to streamline not only eligibility determinations but also payments to child care providers. New technology systems will be in place as early as April 2010.

New Intake Applications

**By Natalio Rodriquez
Program Administrator**

The year, 2009, is setting records on the number of new applications for assistance being filed at Lorain County Department of Job & Family Services. If the increase in applications filed continues to the end of the year, LCDJFS will record a 20% increase in new



applications. In 2008, there were 11,873 new applications filed. As of September 30, 2009, the agency has recorded 11,145 new applications filed. There has been three months where over 1,300 applications were filed for the month. These numbers have been unheard of in the past years. Another staggering statistic are the new faces being seen at LCDJFS who have never been known to our CRIS-E computer system. Sixteen percent of the 11,145 applications have never been on assistance. We are seeing families, singles, and couples without children who are applying for assistance that haven't been on assistance since the early 90's. In the past, when the economy sputtered it meant big business for LCDJFS but in today's economy along with State cut-backs in administrative dollars which resulted in lay-offs at the agency, LCDJFS is struggling to process the casework timely, yet the demand for services is at an all-time high.

PRC Services

**By Natalio Rodriquez
Program Administrator**

In July 2009, a decision to suspend the PRC program in its entirety was made by the agency. The 2010 operating budget was still unknown but a drastic cut was expected. The agency lost around 11% of their allocation for 2009 budget cycle. This time around the agency expected between a 20 – 30% budget cut. Since the PRC funds come from a portion of the agency's allocation, it was an area to save money.

Popular programs such as car repair and rental assistance have been set aside. LCDJFS was the only agency who provided help for the working poor with car repair. Other annual programs such as school supplies and school shoes have been halted too.

With funds being depleted at other social services agencies and the opportunity to receive new funds almost nil, low income families will find it harder to sustain households and employment.

Family Employment Supportive Services - New Delivery Systems

By Marian Slovak, Program Administrator

The economic downturn continues to increase the number of families and individuals applying for, and receiving cash, medical, and/or food assistance benefits through Lorain County. Our agency has experienced a 20% increase in the number of families and individuals being assisted by these programs in the past year. In addition, state budget cuts have impacted administrative dollars available to the agency reducing staffing levels. In the Family Employment and Supportive Services Division, most staffing reductions have occurred due to attrition, with vacant positions not replaced.

In order to do more with less, our agency is changing the delivery model for those applying for public assistance benefits.

Case Banking

Effective 8/1/09, two units combined forces to process work under a new model, called Case Banking. Under Case Banking, a team of caseworkers are assigned instead of a single staff member to process applications and maintain ongoing benefits. Individual worker caseloads have been combined into one caseload. Daily work is assigned to available staff each day. Select workers are assigned to interviewing, to processing reported changes, and to gathering medical documentation to determine disability status to qualify for Medicaid coverage. This means clients no longer have a specific worker, but could be served by any member of the team. Supervisors manage the daily workload and assign staff as needed.



A Quality Specialist assigned to the unit, will now be responsible for reviewing all State Hearing requests prior to the State Hearing appointment to see if the issue can be resolved locally. This internal second party review is helping resolve issues sooner than the State Hearing process. However, those who wish to continue with the State Hearing process are encouraged to do so.

Appointments for Initial Applications, Rescheduled Appointments, and Appointments for those needing to apply for other benefits are scheduled in the morning. Periodic Re-Application appointments are scheduled in the afternoon. Appointment Letters are issued under the worker name "ABD CaseBank". Individuals who show for their scheduled appointments will be seen by the next available interviewer. No one is turned away. Although there may be a wait if appointments back up, there are also times when interviews are completed earlier than scheduled.

Six other units will be combining to form three other Case Banks in the near future. They will be known as "Family CaseBank", "Combo CaseBank", and "Cash CaseBank".

Phone Re-Applications

In addition to Case Banking, there has been another major change in the delivery of our services. As of 11/1/09, the agency is opting to use Phone Interviews for Periodic Re-Application appointments vs. requiring individuals to come into the office for a face-to-face interview. The majority of those receiving cash benefits, food assistance, and/or Medicaid will have their reviews completed by phone as long as they can be reached at a local phone number and are willing to forego the face-to-face interview. This process is now allowed due to changes made in Ohio Administrative Code. Appointment times are scheduled, with notices going to households to advise of the date and time of the Phone Interview. Individuals may contact the agency to change this appointment to an office appointment if they wish. Three units spearheaded this process in 10/09, and early indications report positive reception by those included.



We anticipate that these changes will assist our agency in serving the increasing numbers of county residents requesting services from our agency. Pending changes in several Administrative Code regulations will continue streamlining processes to allow staff to better assist those in need.

Amnesty Program for Driver's License Suspension by CSEA

By Ann C. Eckstein, CSEA Administrator

During the month of August 2009, the Lorain County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) once again sponsored what is known as an "Amnesty Program" in conjunction with Child Support Awareness Month. Typically, the Governor and the Lorain County Commissioners proclaim August "Child Support Awareness Month". As part of that program, CSEA re-instated defaulting child support obligors' driver's licenses upon the payment of one month's worth of child support. The obligor was required to also pay a \$25.00 reinstatement fee to the B.M.V. Further, the agency attempted to collect information from the obligor regarding employment or a funds on account in order to insure continuing payment of the child support obligation.



O.A.C. 5101:12-55-25 specifies how a CSEA may suspend a defaulting child support obligor's license. As set forth in the rule, CSEA provides notice to the obligor that his/her driver's license will be suspended. In addition to the letter, the obligor must also have received what is commonly known as a "Notice of Default" at the time he or she became delinquent. CSEA attempts to work with obligors and offers several options for re-instatement other than monetary criteria. For instance, we will reinstate a license if the individual participates in the "seek work" program available through the Employment Network. Also, if a newly unemployed obligor provides proof that he/she has applied for unemployment benefits, CSEA will monitor the case to determine when OBES payments begin rather than suspend the license. CSEA has an internal policy with regard to driver's license suspensions that we follow in addition to the O.A.C. rule.

This is the sixth year that CSEA has enacted a license re-instatement program during the month of August. In addition to press releases and radio announcements, I sent letters to all of the Lorain County Municipal Court judges to inform them of the Amnesty Program. In addition, working through the Lorain County Bar Association, all members of same received notice of the program. The word spread, and our collections for August 2009 totaled over \$124,000.00. Laura Mandeville and Gloriemer Soto helped make this year's Amnesty Program a success.

Contact LCDJFS

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7:30-4:15 Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri
7:30-6:30 Tue

