



The Earned  
Income Tax  
Credit.  
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185%  
↓  
165%

A Lower  
Maximum Income  
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March 2004

CCDJFS

# E-Alert

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CLARK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES

## Clark CSEA Performance Strong as Collections Put Ohio Second Nationally

The collection of the child support obligation has become more sophisticated. Enforcement and collection remedies have evolved from the standard method of collection -- the court ordered wage withholdings. Today's remedies include collections from the multiple and single state Financial Institutions Data Match (FIDM), federal and state tax offsets, passport denials and license suspensions.

The Family Support Act of 1988 mandated wage withholdings be issued by the courts. The withholding process was simplified in 1993 when income withholding became an administrative process. The administrative process enabled CSEAs to issue withholdings in a more expedient and efficient manner. Ohio's collections from income withholdings

rose from \$1.33 billion in 2001 to \$1.41 billion in 2002.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PWORA) of 1996 initiated the FIDM process of "freeze and seize". Delinquent child support obligors now are matched with accounts held in financial institutions. The CSEAs can undertake actions to place liens and seize all or part of the accounts. Clark County's FIDM collection for 2003 was \$106,203. Ohio reported its FIDM collection last January at \$532,013. That amount was applied to 483 cases.

The federal and state Tax Refund Offset Program collects past due child support amounts from non-custodial parents through the interception of tax refunds. In 2003, Clark County intercepted

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After six months of work, the addition of more floor space and computers, the renovated WorkPlus Resource Room is ready to serve more Clark County residents. (See [RENOVATIONS](#), Page 3)

## Employment Opportunities Shared

Partners at the WORKPLUS Center are meeting every Friday morning to share employment opportunities and information with each other. Staff representatives from Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Clark County Department of Job and Family Services, Springfield OIC, Jobs & More, Job

Link, Express Personnel Services, Goodwill and BVR (Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation) participate on a regular basis.

During this meeting individual partners share employment opportunities that they have available. What works well with this group is that everyone is open and comfortable in sharing information. Members of the

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## Vital Statistics

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**Children under our protection who remain in their own homes**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
357	349	292	225

**Children under our protection who are in our custody**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
187	201	185	182

**Children receiving a subsidy for child care**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
988	873	782	638

**Families receiving on-going cash assistance**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
710	708	734	770

**Individuals receiving health insurance through Medicaid**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
23,604	23,811	23,894	24,229

**Individuals receiving food stamps**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
13,298	13,707	13,829	14,827

**Individuals receiving job training assistance**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
406	472	447	521

**Individuals paying on child support orders**

March 2003	June 2003	September 2003	December 2003
8,031	8,341	8,062	7,876

## CSEA Performance

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\$1,774,568 in federal refunds and \$232,526 in state refunds. Ohio reported federal refund collections of \$99,160,355 in fiscal year (SFY) 2002, and state refund collections that same year of \$14,428,677 -- for a total tax offset of \$113,589,032. The offset program also incorporates the Passport Denial Program, which denies U.S. passport applicants if their child support debt exceeds \$2,500.00. The tax offset program automatically forwards the information to the U.S. Department of State. Ohio reported collections of \$353,689 in SFY 2002 from 216 reinstated passport applications.

Another enforcement and collection remedy in use today is license suspension (ie. driver's license or professional licenses). This is not an automatic or required enforcement technique, but it is a successful collection tool. Clark County case managers have reported reinstated license collections amounting to over \$4,000 in 2003. Since January this year, Clark County has suspended 505 licenses and reinstated 205. To qualify for reinstatement, the obligor must (1) pay off arrears with a one-time payment if the balance is less than \$1,000; or (2) pay \$1,000 if arrears are \$1,000+, provide employment/bank account information to establish an income withholding with an arrears payment. Ohio reports license suspension activity for last January as: 2,641 suspended; 775 reinstated and 134 deleted.

Ohio child support collections continue to be second in the nation. To maintain this status, Ohio counties will need to employ creative strategies for enforcement that goes beyond automatic income withholdings. •

## Renovations Completed in WorkPlus Resource Room

Over the last six months, community use of the Resource Room in the WORKPLUS Center has grown to nearly 1,300 visitors per month. Many of the visitors come to use the computer-assisted job search services that we offer. These demands have resulted in crowded conditions in the Resource Room and back-ups at the computer stations that are available to the public. Renovations have recently been completed to increase the capacity of the room and allow visitors to complete their job search activities in a more comfortable environment.

Floor space in the area was made available by moving staff and interview stations into an adjacent area and opening up the entire room for public use. The results have been dramatic! There is now approximately one-third more usable space. Four additional computers have been secured and are scheduled to be connected in the next few weeks. •



## Child Care Update

With the implementation of revised eligibility criteria, 32 families in Clark County were terminated from the program. Also, the number of eligibility denials of new applications increased significantly over previous months with the lower maximum income standard.

The new eligibility criteria reduced the maximum income from 185% of the 2003 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 165% of the FPL.

Coupled with this maximum income change was an increase in the co-pay amounts for families. While not all were directly attributable to this increase, a large increase was experienced in the number of families requesting termination of services.

A ripple effect that this change in eligibility caused was a loss of income to the child care providers of these families. Many home providers rely upon this as sole income for the self-employed individual. The center providers may have reduced staff of low-wage earning child care staff to offset the lower number of children being served.

As child care is one of the programs to assist wage earners and students, it is ever more important to keep the public aware of the program. •

## Earned Income Credit. What's It All About?

The **Earned Income Credit (EIC)** is a federal tax program designed to assist low and moderate wage earners. Many people have heard of the program, but do not understand how many individuals qualify nor about the benefits that may be available. The requirements are few. Filing for the credit is simple. Yet, the program is very under-utilized.

### Who qualifies?

Many people believe that they earn too much to qualify for EIC. To qualify, incomes earned must be less than:

- \* \$29,666 (\$30,666 for married filing jointly) with one qualifying child,
- \* \$33,692 (\$34,692 for married filing jointly) with more than one qualifying child, or
- \* \$11,230 (\$12,230 for married filing jointly) if there is no qualifying child.

Other rules that must be met are:

- \* Employees and qualifying child(ren) must have social security cards,
- \* Filing status cannot be married, filing separately,
- \* Individuals filing for EIC must be U.S. citizens or resident aliens,
- \* Income reported for the tax year cannot include foreign earned income,
- \* Investment income must be \$2,550 or less,
- \* Individuals applying for EIC must have earned income,
- \* Individuals not applying with a qualifying child must be at least age 25, but under age 65.

### What are the benefits?

The maximum amount of EIC credit for filing year 2003 is \$4,204. Employees may qualify for the refund even if they are not required to pay taxes on their

income! If eligible, individuals can claim the EIC for three prior years even if they had not previously filed a tax return. The result could make hundreds, even thousands, of dollars available to workers.

EIC is not considered income and does not adversely affect individuals receiving Food Stamps, SSI, Medicaid, TANF, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance or Public Housing assistance.

### How does a person enroll?

A tax return must be filed with the IRS. There are free tax preparation sites throughout Ohio for help. People needing additional information should call the national toll free number (800-829-1040) or visit the IRS web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). •

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# Did You Know?

## Facts about Child Abuse and Neglect

*Child abuse and neglect cuts across all class, cultural, and educational groups.*

*Child abuse and neglect may be a cyclical or generational phenomenon.*

*Child abuse and neglect is a symptom of family dysfunction or crisis.*

**C**hild abuse and neglect is a community problem. This is a serious and widespread problem that cannot be stopped without everyone working together.

Here are some responses that can help:

- \* Learn to recognize the warning signals and indicators of child abuse and neglect. If you suspect child abuse and neglect, call CCDJFS at (937)327-1700 on weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Call (937)324-8687 on weekends and after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Encourage your friends in doing the same. Most people do not want to hurt or neglect their children, but are faced with problems they cannot solve alone. Help them get help.

- \* Work with members of local county & city commissions, as well as the mayor, to establish child abuse and neglect as a community priority.

- \* Volunteer to be a mentor, Big Brother or Sister. Offer to teach skills to parents and children who need your help. Abuse or neglect may occur because a family is isolated and without the support of friends or family.

- \* Help institute day care or latchkey, block or home-based service programs in the community.

- \* Work towards eliminating the causes of child abuse and neglect. Encourage local schools to provide classes in parenting education. Support the social ser-

vices programs in the community.

- \* Talk to your child every day and take time to listen and observe. Learn as many details as you can about your child's feelings and activities. Encourage him/her to share their concerns and problems with you.

- \* Apply to be a foster parent. Your home may be certified to provide care for children who are victims of abuse and neglect. If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, contact CCDJFS at (937)327-1760 for further information.

- \* Encourage members of your community to support children protective service programs. Call your radio

[SEE **FACTS**, PAGE 5]



## Employment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

group all work towards the same goal, placing people with employers and helping employers locate employees!

This unique arrangement is successful because the partners trust each other and respect established relationships that some organizations have with specific employers. Because some partners have established relationships, the employer may only want referrals from them. In those instances, the group reviews qualifications of the job and then forwards referrals supplied by the rest of the group to the employer. It's a Win-Win situation. Where else do you have multiple agencies working together to help employers meet their staffing needs? •

## Family Stability Process

**T**he Family Stability Team (FST) was established in 1996 through an incentive grant program administered by the Ohio Department of Mental Health. The Clark County Family and Children First Council was the recipient of the grant. FST was developed by an interagency team representing Children's Services, MRDD, Juvenile

Court, ADMH Board, Health District and other community partners. The team replaced the former Children's Services Placement Review Committee. Children's Services assumed the role of lead agency for the program and hired the Family Stability Coordinator. Soon after, Children's Services organized a Family Stability Unit.

The purpose of the incentive grant was to divert children from out-of-home placement. Clark County successfully met the goals of the grant for the 42-month term of the program. The primary changes brought about as a result were: community participation in decisions to remove children from their

[SEE **FAMILY**, PAGE 5]

## Facts about Child Abuse and Neglect:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

and television stations and ask them to run public service announcements and editorials about child abuse and neglect. Contact opinion leaders in the community. Ask your clergyman to deliver a sermon about child abuse and neglect.

\* Your attic or basement may hold dozens of items that would be of value to a needy family. Donate household goods, pots and pans, towels and linens, and canned goods to local social service agencies.

\* Encourage your friends and neighbors to learn about child abuse and neglect. Invite representatives from CCDJFS to talk to your clubs, school groups and churches about child abuse and neglect. Call (937) 327-1700 for further information regarding speaking arrangements. •

## *Family Stability Process*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

homes for either their own safety or that of the community; family and youth participation in the decision-making process including plans to divert placement; the use of flexible funding to support those plans.

The Family Stability Team has continued to meet regularly since the end of the grant. Recently, a committee

of the Family and Children First Council has completed work to align FST and the Family Stability process with the values and principles of the Wraparound Process. This work was undertaken based on feedback received from professionals who were members of the team, professionals who made referrals and brought cases to the team for staffing, and from

families whose cases were presented to the team. The Family Stability Team has now become Family Stability Committee (FSC). The number of professionals who constitute the Committee has been reduced. The forms and processes used for referral to FSC, conduct of the staffings, and development of plans have been revised. Child and family teams can use the Family Stability Committee for brainstorming, case planning, information and referral, consideration of placement options or to assist in resolving cross-system issues.

Children's Services recently named a new Family Stability Coordinator, Kristie Eberhart. Emergency placement cases are no longer referred directly to FSC, but are handled internally by Children's Services through a process led by former Family Stability Coordinator, Lynne Smith. •

### **Clark County Department of Job and Family Services**

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