

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, October 16, 2014

Contact: Hanna M. Greer, Franklin County, 614/525-5848
Kim Newson Bridges, Ohio CSEA Directors' Association, 614/846-6652
Emily M. Lundgard, Cuyahoga County, 216/348-4395

**STATE OF OHIO, FRANKLIN AND CUYAHOGA COUNTY CHILD
SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES RECIPIENTS OF \$1.2
MILLION FEDERAL GRANT**

On September 29, 2014, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) was awarded a five-year, \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families to support and implement an innovative, process-designed approach to child support service delivery. The grant was awarded due to the successful proposal of the ODJFS Office of Child Support, the Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency and Cuyahoga Job and Family Services, which were selected as one of eight grantees for this highly competitive federal award.

The "Understanding Perspectives – Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services" (UP-BICS) expands upon Ohio's successful use of behavioral interventions in service design by applying the behavioral diagnosis and design process to improve the child support order review process, popularly known as the modification process. Behavioral intervention designs use a specific method called "behavioral diagnosis and design" to try to improve program outcomes through the application of behavioral principles. In this approach, program administrators and researchers analyze each step in a program's process to identify possible "bottlenecks" where the program is not achieving its desired outcomes. Then, adopting the perspective of the program's clients, the team searches for possible behavioral reasons for the bottlenecks — those related to decision-making processes and action — and tests the effects of the behavioral interventions.

ODJFS, the Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency and the Cuyahoga County Department of Job and Family Services' Office of Child Support Services will use these behavioral intervention techniques to revise and improve upon Ohio's current, complicated modification process. The goal of the project is to increase the number of parents who apply for, and complete, the order modification process. For child support to be reliable for the families that depend upon it, orders must be based on a parent's actual ability to pay. If noncustodial parents do not participate in the process, or their requests for review are denied, the cycle of mounting arrears continues, and families do not receive the financial support they need to build sustainable futures.

“Smart government policies should make it easy for people to make good decisions,” said Franklin County Commission President Marilyn Brown. “Programs such as UP-BICS will help us to identify and remove roadblocks and increase incentives to encourage and empower our residents to do what’s right and best for themselves and their families.”

“The award of this grant to Franklin and Cuyahoga Counties is the next step in a very exciting process that we were introduced to three years ago. Using these concepts to improve services and outcomes for families is a great next step for Ohio’s child support program,” said Kim Newson Bridges, Executive Director, Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency Directors’ Association.

“This is a low cost – high yield approach to human services policy making,” stated Franklin County CSEA Director Susan Brown. “By utilizing behavioral economics, public agencies are better equipped to identify and adapt to the individual needs of our clients. The behavioral mapping process will provide us a “roadmap” for service delivery design. Ultimately, the goal is to improve financial outcomes and self-sufficiency for our families.”

###

For more information on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, call the Office of Public Affairs at (614) 525-3322 or visit www.franklincountyohio.gov/commissioners.