



# LCDJFS E-Newsletter

May 2005

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

## This Issue

Spenddown Medicaid	1
Vast Numbers Served at LCDJFS	2
Staff Development in Review	2
Nursing Home Provider Training	3
More Families Receiving Help	3
Program Statistics	4
Managed Care Expansion	4
Disability Medical Assistance Update	4

## Director Notes

### Mary Lou Golski, Director

On February 8, 2005 Governor Taft delivered his State of the State address "Unleashing Ohio's Economic Potential" to the General Assembly. In his address he discussed tax reform, slashing personal tax rates, and more control over state spending by reducing Medicaid growth.

The SFY 2006-2007 state budget outlook is dismal with a \$4-\$5 billion deficit, Medicaid costs increasing by double digits, revenues rebounding slowly, and a sales tax that will expire on June 30, 2005.

From a Job and Family Services point of view the continued success of Welfare Reform requires adequate funding of the state share of food stamps and medicaid eligibility, directing TANF funds to counties to continue PRC and child care services, and maintaining medicaid eligibility for low income working families. Let's hope the General Assembly shares our point of view.

As the details of the next biennium budget unfold I will try to keep you informed on the fiscal impact as it relates to Job and Family Services.

## Spenddown Medicaid

### Marian Slovak Program Administrator

Medicaid for the Aged, Blind, or Disabled provides full medicaid coverage for single individuals or married couples whose income and resources are below certain limits. Individual resources below \$1500 and monthly income below \$524 will qualify an aged, blind or disabled individual for Community Medicaid benefits.

- Aged - age 65 or older;
- Blindness - refers to central visual acuity of 20/200 or less with correcting glasses;
- Disabled - refers to those receiving disability benefits through the Social Security Administration, or applying for SSI and determined to be disabled by the County Medical Services section (CMS) of ODJFS located in Columbus, Ohio.

For those whose income exceeds the need standard, but meet the disability criteria and resources limits, Spenddown Medicaid is available. The Spenddown

program allows individuals to "spenddown" their income, using their "excess" income to meet their own medical needs. Then, once their remaining income is below Medicaid need standards, a Medicaid card can be issued for the balance of the month. As an example, if the individual incurs a medical bill on 4/5/05 that meets his spenddown amount, a Medicaid card will be released for any other medical services incurred after that bill on 4/5/05 through the remainder of the month. In this way, individuals whose "excess" income will not cover their medical needs, can gain access to a Medicaid card once they have used their "excess" income for medical issues in order to qualify.

Since 1997, individuals have been allowed to meet their spenddown obligation with payment to the county agency. This option, called Pay-In is currently being used by Lorain County residents 64% of the time to meet spenddown. When Pay-In is used, a medical card is released for the entire month.

During 2004, Spenddown Medicaid cards were released to an average of 708



Medicaid spenddown clerks Yvette Candelario and Ted Brown

Individuals per month for a total of 8,490 released cards. 5,459 of those cards were released after Pay-In payments were received. The remaining 3,031 cards were released after medical bills were incurred to meet the spenddown amount. Spenddown Specialist Ted Brown and Yvette Candelario are responsible to release Spenddown Medicaid cards within 24 hours of receiving verification that the spenddown amount has been met. Timely access to medical services and prescription medication is critical for this population.

It is important to note that the spenddown program is an optional state Medicaid program and that Ohio's current financial situation could jeopardize its ongoing existence.

# Vast Numbers Served at LCDJFS

**Natalio Rodriquez and  
Joan Ziska**

Known as "The Building with the Big Green Ball," 42485 N. Ridge Rd, Elyria, Ohio, to anyone not a native of Lorain County, looks like one big tourist attraction. Cars pull in and out of the parking lot. It is on the transit route. People come walking. They come alone, they come in droves.

If there was a ticket taker at the door, keeping track of the numbers, would we have had our millionth visitor yet?

We are a service agency. People come in need of cash, food stamps, and medical. They come for day care, and for help with emergencies. They come for social services and they come to have paternity established and pay child support for their children.

Our traffic is funneled to two lobbies, a main desk and a child support reception area. They are greeted at the reception windows and meet with agency staff who are trained to handle their needs.

Our traffic in 2004 included:

93,379 people who checked into the main lobby under the clock tower. An additional 15,091 were logged in through the child support lobby to the left of the clock tower. This whopping 110,470 head count does not include friends, spouses, attorneys and representatives who accompanied our clients or the tag along children who came with them.

From the main lobby, our visitors were routed to income maintenance workers and social service caseworkers who determined eligibility and administered benefits.

10,208 of our visitors were in need of their first Food Stamp EBT card or were here to receive another service related to food stamp distribution, which includes replacement cards or unlocking cards that have inaccessible benefits loaded.

Those routed to child support lobby included clients with scheduled appointments and those who needed services of our fiscal department. Those clients made child support payments,

paid toward the Medicaid spenddown program, paid on overpayments, and received benefits including PRC vouchers to meet emergency needs.

Only 110,470 people? Is that all?

Actually, it is not. Behind the scenes, tucked away in a corner of the main reception area is a tiny room that houses our switchboard. From that area, two receptionist, just two, handled 311,250 local calls and 9,996 long distance calls during 2004. (Most phones throughout the agency are not equipped for long distance service.) New to the neighborhood, a call center handles an additional volume of calls to the Child Support Enforcement Agency. Income Maintenance and Social Service areas are equipped with direct inward dialing, which enables individuals who know their workers phone number to reach them directly. This feature saves time and promotes good customer service.

If you are ever in need of our services, we are here for you. You may not be our millionth customer, but we will provide services as if you are one in a million.

## Staff Development in Review

**Karen Stephens, Staff Development  
Supervisor**

A knowledgeable and well trained staff is key to providing accurate and timely benefits to our clients as well as promoting good customer service. To this end, the Staff Development Unit of Lorain County DJFS delivers in-house training to both newly hired and incumbent staff.

All new employees are required to participate in a two day agency orientation program. During this session, all necessary personnel forms and security agreements are reviewed and signed followed by an overview of the departments and programs offered by our agency. Those new to the Child Support and Income Maintenance departments receive between 4 - 8 weeks of in-house training which covers the program rules, agency procedures and computer systems they will be using.

Incumbent workers also receive training from the in-house trainers. Each month the FESS area receives four hours of training to either review an existing policy or procedure or to introduce new

information released by ODJFS. This type of training is also offered to the CSEA staff. This allows staff to keep up to date enabling them to perform their jobs effectively.

During 2004 we delivered in-house training to an average of 6 workers per day. This included orientation and new hire training for four classes of new IM hires, 6 new CSEA workers and a combined total of 27 classes on a variety of topics for our incumbent staff. The trainers also delivered technical training to partner agencies including the Prosecutor's office and Children Services along with general public speaking engagements.

Staff had the opportunity to participated in conferences for Welfare Fraud, Project Grad, Civil Rights, Americans with Disabilities, OJFSDA, Hispanic Family Violence, OCDA, Big 10 Food Stamp, UCOWF, Quality Performance, CAAA, and the AAFRO Fest as attendees, presenters or to receive awards on behalf of our agency.

To compliment the training offered in-house, training is scheduled through the ODJFS State and Regional training



*Training Unit members Joe Shapko, Petra Fazekas, Jo Ann Hamlin, Mike Provenza, Michelle Summers and Karen Stephens.*

centers. Contracted training is also made available when appropriate on a diverse range of topics. Customer Service, Principles of Adult Protective Services, and Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity are but a few of the many topics covered through contracted services.

The Staff Development Unit includes three IM Trainers, one CSEA trainer and a Statistical Specialist who is responsible for producing reports on error rates, timeliness, staffing trends and training needs. Our goal is to hire and maintain a staff of well trained, culturally sensitive employees who produce accurate and timely help to those of our community in need.

# Nursing Home Provider Training

**Marian Slovak**  
Program Administrator

On March 24, 2005, our agency hosted ODJFS-sponsored provider billing training specific to Nursing Facilities (NF) and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICF-MR). Medical Assistant Coordinator, Patti Wesenberg delivered a fast-paced presentation addressing pertinent OAC rules and regulations involving nursing homes and ICF-MR. Ms. Wesenberg works for ODJFS at the Toledo Regional Office and has over 20 years experience in this area. Rules regarding level of care, estate recovery, leave days, Medicare/Medicaid dual coverage, Personal Needs Allowance, hospice, therapies, level of care, temporary stays, were among the topics covered.



*Training provided by Patti Wesenberg, Medical Assistant Coordinator.*

Director Mary Lou Golski welcomed attendees representing over nineteen local nursing and ICF-MR facilities who were able to take time from their busy schedules to attend. CDJFS Nursing Home Supervisor Sally Davis and her six staff members also participated and were available to meet with representatives from individual facilities after the session ended.

A spiral bound pamphlet titled Long Term Care Facility ODJFS 9400/9401 Billing Information updated June 2004 was issued to each facility represented at the meeting. Other facilities who were unable to attend, should contact



*Sue Rosso and Kim Hornyak manage the registration table.*

Sally Davis at (440) 284-4251 to request a copy of this pamphlet as it contains excellent material including 9400 examples and instructions. Although the state department is rolling out direct billing for the NF and ICF-MR providers effective July 2005, the 9400 process will continue to be the means for any payment corrections for services prior to July 2005. ODJFS anticipates it will be over a year before the 9400 process used for services prior to 7/05 will end.

Several attendees stated the session was very helpful. We were very pleased to help facilitate this training and are grateful to Patti Wesenberg for her excellent presentation.



*Staff attends state training event.*

## More Families Receiving Help

**Marian Slovak**  
Program Administrator

Our local economy continues to take its toll. Once again, more families and individuals applied for and received assistance through cash, medical and food assistance programs in 2004. Over 10,000 applications were filed for initial assistance throughout 2004. The county saw an overall increase of 6% in the number of households receiving ongoing economic support.

The cash assistance program, Ohio Works First (OWF), increased by 8% as of December 2004. A total of 1,891 families received cash benefits, representing 5,137 individuals including 3,802 children. These individuals also received Medicaid health care benefits, and possibly Food Stamp assistance depending on household circumstances. An additional 9,702 families

representing 30,984 individuals also received family medicaid benefits, a 5% increase in the past 12 months.

A total of 10,532 households involving 26,352 individuals participated in the Food Stamp program as of December 2004. This was an increase of 900 households from the previous year. Based on 2000 Census data, we are reaching over 113% of the family population whose income falls below the 130% program standard. Many of those receiving Food Stamps are working part-time, or receiving other benefits such as child support, unemployment compensation, or Social Security disability or survivor benefits.

To assist working families receiving Food Stamps, a newly created Prevention, Retention, Contingency (PRC) program offers a transportation subsidy to those with children under age 18 years. At

the time of a family's six month reapplication, those who have been working for the past four weeks, are being approved to receive a one time \$100 gas card to help sustain their employment.

The department anticipates being able to help over 3,000 families with this benefit. The gas card is only available to families who currently have been receiving food stamps and is intended to assist them in their goal of self-sufficiency and to prevent the need for applying for OWF cash assistance. The cards are limited to gasoline purchases only. Individuals cannot specifically apply for this program. It is only available to our current food stamp beneficiaries. This program has been very well received by the community, and our staff are pleased to provide additional services to encourage employment and self-sufficiency.

# Job & Family Services Statistics for Lorain County

The number of families and individuals being helped by our programs continued to grow through the 2004 and the beginning of 2005. Quarterly statistics for each of these areas will be updated in future issues.

## Families receiving on-going cash assistance

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
2,033	2,043	2,111	2,120

## Individuals receiving employment-related training assistance

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
647	658	771	847

## Disabled individuals receiving on-going cash assistance

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
253	261	276	331

## Disabled individuals receiving Nursing Home or Home & Community-Based Service Waivers

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
2,067	2,053	2,079	2,080

## Individuals receiving health insurance through Healthy Start/Healthy Families Medicaid

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
38,538	39,100	39,744	39,983

## Individuals receiving food stamps

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
25,861	26,078	26,352	27,241

## Aged, Blind or Disabled individuals receiving health insurance through Medicaid

Jun. 2004	Sep. 2004	Dec. 2004	Mar. 2005
7,735	7,809	7,843	7,961

## MANAGED CARE EXPANSION

ODJFS staff will be meeting with county representatives in April to discuss Medicaid managed health care in Lorain County. The discussion will include information about the time frame for the implementation of the expanded managed care program; the identification of managed care organizations that will operate in the county; the ongoing outreach activities that target Lorain's CDJFS, providers, consumers, and community stakeholders; and specific handout materials with managed care materials. Currently, Lorain County is a Preferred Option County offering medical coverage through either fee-for-service Medicaid or a managed care plan for families receiving Covered Families & Children Medicaid or Healthy Start. Managed care has been delivered in our county through CareSource since 2002. The county anticipates returning to a mandatory HMO status with the addition of another plan. More information to come.

## Disability Medical Assistance Update

On 2/16/05, ODJFS Director Barbara Riley issued a letter titled "Disability Medical Assistance Program in FY 2005" to all county departments.

At this time, the department will not end the DMA program as proposed by emergency rule. DMA cost containment will be pursued in the SFY 2006-07 budget process.

For now, those on DMA can remain covered as long as they cooperate in their six month review process.

For any DMA client losing eligibility for any reason, the freeze on new enrollment effective 9/15/04 would prevent their reauthorization.

It is important that clients keep their reapplication appointments and provide verifications to continue their coverage.

## Contact LCDJFS

42485 North Ridge Road  
Elyria, Ohio 44035-1057  
Phone: 440-323-5726  
Fax: 440-323-3422  
TTY/TDD: 440-284-4125  
Child Support Office: 440-284-4401

Hours of Operation:  
7:00-4:30 Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri  
7:30-6:30 Tue

