

Lorain County Job & Family Services

2023
Annual Report

Agency Director
Barbara Tamas

Lorain County Commissioners

Michelle Hung
David J. Moore
Jeff Riddell



Mission Statement

Lorain County Department of Job and Family Services is committed to promoting the dignity and self-worth of those in need. We believe that given a choice, people prefer self-sufficiency. It is our mission to maximize available community resources to support, encourage, and assist families and individuals in achieving their goals for self-sufficiency; to assist in elimination of barriers; and to respond to ever-changing needs in a progressive, caring, professional manner.

Contact Us:

Lorain County Job & Family Services
42485 N. Ridge Rd.
Elyria, OH 44035-1057

Phone: (440) 323-5728 or
(440) 244-4150

Child Support: (440) 284-4401 or
1-800-808-2991

Fax (440) 323-3422

TTY/TDD: (440) 284-4125

Website: www.lodjfs.com

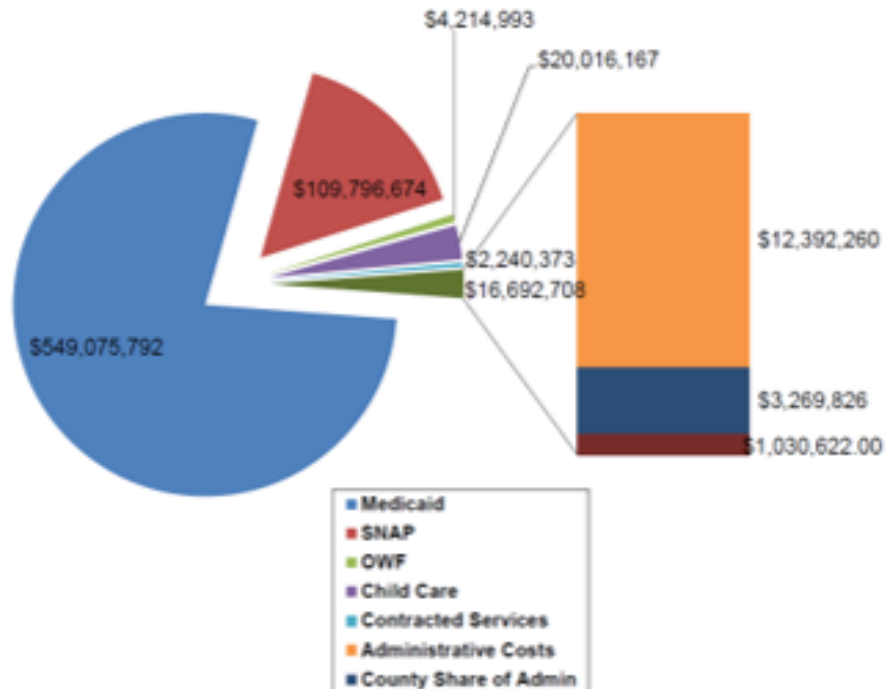
Hours:

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

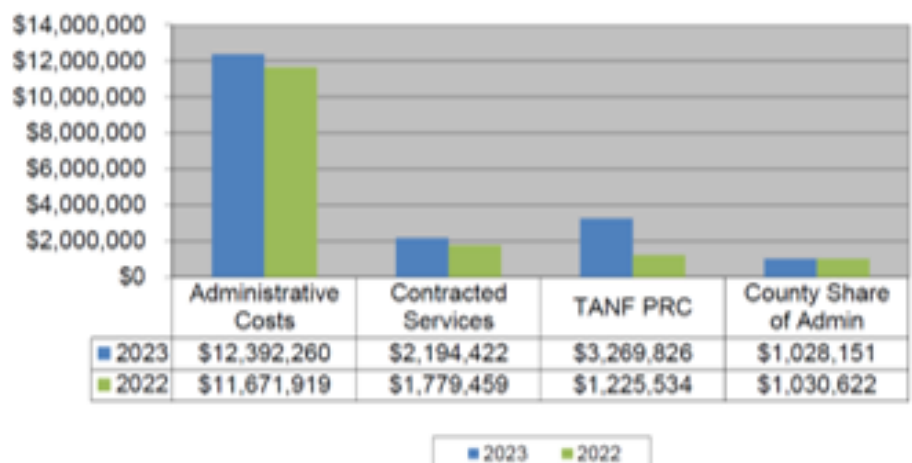
Snapshot of 2023

- The Customer Shared Service Call Center logged 137,657 Inbound calls and 21,808 Outbound calls in 2023, an average of 13,272 phone calls per month.
- 60,271 of those calls were specifically to apply/reapply for benefits or to speak to a caseworker, while 54,443 were general inquiry calls that our Customer Service staff were able to complete.
- In all, the average answering speed was 10.1 minutes with a 17.1-minute handling time.
- We are typically able to authorize 19% of SNAP benefits in real-time and 30% of Medicaid benefits in real-time, meaning while on the phone with clients.
- SNAP Monthly Application Timeliness Rate averaged 95.7%, with a high of 97.50% in 2023.
- In 2023, our agency delivered 1,374 voter registration forms to the Board of Elections.

2023 Expenditures by Category



Comparison of Expenditures



Family Employment and Support Services - 2023

The Family Employment and Support Services (FE/SS) Division provides economic support to individuals in Lorain County in need of financial assistance through cash, medical, and food assistance programs.

Claims Processing

The Claims Processing Unit pursues collection of OWF, PRC, Medicaid, and SNAP overpayments. Referrals are made to the Investigative Unit for further action if a client fails to cooperate in making restitution or if an intentional program violation has been committed. In conjunction with Claims Processing, the Treasury Offset Program (TOP) assists in collection of delinquent Food Assistance and OWF accounts by diverting federal and state income tax refunds to the department in addition to voluntary collection and benefit reduction.

A total of \$940,777 was collected for SNAP, \$50,467 for TANF, and \$5,257 for Medicaid for a total of \$996,501 applied to claims in 2023.



Investigation

The primary responsibility of the Investigative Unit is to investigate taxpayer complaints and allegations of welfare fraud by assembling the best available evidence including documents and accounts of witnesses. New claims were established on 136 cases, totaling \$460,978 which is subject to collection.

Twenty-seven individuals were disqualified from receiving future benefits for committing Intentional Program Violations.

Ohio Works First (OWF)

The OWF program is a work performance program to earn cash assistance. OWF provides short-term, time-limited cash assistance to families while they develop skills leading to self-sufficiency. The three-year lifetime limitation may be waived for those meeting Hardship criteria as determined by the Time Limit Extension Review Team; or those with Good Cause who may receive OWF cash for up to an additional 24 months after being off cash assistance for 24 months. Adults in one and two-parent households must participate in work activities for 35 to 55 hours per week until employment and self-sufficiency are obtained.

In 2023, an average of 829 households (35 adults, 1,310 children) received OWF cash assistance with an average of 22 Work Eligible Individuals required to meet the work participation requirements. There was 1 Hardship Extension approved but there were no Good Cause exemptions requested.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is a federally funded program designed to subsidize family and individual income to purchase food necessary for maintaining good health. Lorain County continued to strive to deliver these benefits with accuracy, while meeting or exceeding strict federal and state performance standards. Individuals between the ages of 18-52 years old must have a work activity or meet an exemption to qualify for SNAP.

In 2023, the monthly SNAP issuance averaged \$8.95 million dollars in benefits each month with an average of 33,932 individuals receiving assistance (19,151 adults and 14,781 children).

Medicaid

Medicaid is a federal and state funded program for health care coverage for children, adults, families, and those who are aged, blind, or disabled. The scope of coverage includes prescription drugs, medical services including inpatient and outpatient care, family planning services and special equipment.

The State contracts with several Managed Care Plans to deliver services in an effort to reduce costs and save taxpayer dollars, yet still provide quality health care services to eligible citizens. Medicaid works in conjunction with Medicare and private health insurance plans.

The Unwinding of the Public Health Emergency started in April 2023 and is scheduled to end in March 2024. During this time, individuals will be reviewed for continued eligibility and coverage will end for those who no longer meet the income or household requirements. At the start of the Unwinding, 58,624 individuals were covered by Medicaid, and by yearend a total of 41,661 remained covered.

Emergency Rental Assistance

During the height of the pandemic, millions of Americans faced deep rental debt and fear of evictions and the loss of basic security. The Emergency Rental Assistance program made funding available to assist households that were unable to pay their rent or utilities. Two separate programs were established: ERA1 provided up to \$25 billion under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 and ERA2 which provided up to \$21.55 billion under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Lorain County received \$9.28 million for ERA1 and approximately \$7.3 million for ERA2. In 2023, \$3,215,623.27 was paid to assist 757 households with their rent and utilities.

OWF Employment and Training

In October 1997, Ohio's welfare reform law created the Ohio Works First (OWF) program. It became the temporary assistance program for needy families. The focus was and continues to be to prepare families for self-sufficiency within the three-year time limit. All OWF adults and minor heads of households are required to participate in work activities which prepare them for self-sufficiency.

LCDJFS provides support and training venues to assist our clientele in

overcoming barriers to employment, allowing them to rejoin the work force, and regain their self-sufficiency. We contracted with Harbor to provide employment services for OWF and SNAP participants.

Federal law requires most able-bodied adults enrolled in the Ohio Works First cash assistance program to participate at a minimum, 30 to 35 hours per week in an approved work activity. Failure to comply, results in a sanction for the household.

States must show that at least 90 percent of adults in two-parent households, and at least 50 percent of all adults are working the required number of hours. Non-compliance by the state results in a potential federal penalty. In May 2023, Lorain County was presented with a Gold Award Certificate of Achievement for achieving a 68.30% All-Family Work Participation Rate in FFY 2022, the highest rate of all Metro counties. We were also recognized with the most improved rate compared to FFY 2021.

Child Support Enforcement

Modification

This unit reviews child support orders for an administrative adjustment of the order. Investigators in this unit answer calls from clients daily as well as managing caseloads, reviewing tax documents, and running child support guidelines. The review process may take anywhere from 30 - 120 days for completion. The average number of support orders that are modified each year are approximately 1,000.

Establishment

This department consists of two units that are responsible for establishing paternity and support orders for the collection of child support in an administrative capacity and through the judicial system by working closely with the County Prosecutor's office. Investigators have regular contact with clients daily through the call center in order to gather information necessary to process cases for location of absent parent, to determine paternity, or to establish support orders. Investigators also work with an onsite phlebotomist four days a week to conduct genetic testing for establishing paternity orders.

The Lorain County CSEA administers and enforces collection upon an estimated 25,000 cases. The Agency is ranked as a "large" county in the State of Ohio.

Enforcement

This department consists of four enforcement units. Investigators in three of the four units each manage approximately 1,000 cases. The fourth unit is the CSEA enforcement call center. Experienced enforcement staff exclusively answer phone calls and address requests/questions submitted through the client's web portal, all while maintaining a small non-IV-D caseload which allows for other investigators to manage higher volume caseloads. They monitor the orders for payment compliance and use various enforcement tactics to enforce the collection efforts within the bounds of Ohio statutory law.

CSEA has the ability to intercept federal & state tax refunds, work bonuses, and lottery & casino winnings. Specialized workers can intercept lump sum payments from employers, garnish workers compensation payments, and seize bank account funds.

Fiscal & Data Entry

These units consist of data entry clerks, auditors, bookkeeper, and payment accuracy accountants. All work produced by these two units is very time sensitive. Legal documents pertaining to child support and/or spousal support produced from the Lorain County Domestic Relations Family Court and the administrative hearing officer must be entered into the Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS). Fiscal maintains and updates financial corrections, monitors and releases payments, balances spreadsheets, works reports, places/releases impounds, balances budgets, and conducts audit requests from the court, parties, attorneys, or the state.

Administrative Hearing Officers

CSEA employs one full time hearing officer. The Hearing Officer conducts hearings in order to issue paternity determinations, establish administrative child support orders, decides mistake of fact requests, and issues any other necessary administrative decisions.

Case Management

Case Management works with identified individuals and families who are struggling with multiple barriers in following through with the process of applying for SSI and/or Medicaid. Those individuals are assigned a case manager that will assess the barriers and give guidance throughout the application processes. They work towards obtaining the medical records required to determine the disability, coordinate doctor's appointments and transportation services as needed. There was a monthly average of 18 individuals who received case management services.

Child Care

The Child Care Unit enables parents who are on OWF or income eligible, and either employed or attending school or training to receive childcare provided at licensed centers or in certified childcare homes.

In 2023, an average of 1,358 families, 2,964 children were authorized to receive Publicly Funded Child Care. Licensing workers completed 166 home inspections of Type A & B providers. There was an average of 62 certified and active providers throughout Lorain County, 48 of which are Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) rated.

Non-Emergency Transportation

The NET Program assures non-emergency transportation for Medicaid recipients to services delivered by Medicaid Providers. This program allows clients to receive medically necessary transportation for dialysis, radiation, chemotherapy treatments, and other routine medical services. Clients can receive passes for Lorain County Transit. A total of 565 clients are using this service.

Information and Referral

The Information and Referral Unit (I & R) sees individuals who have needs that are not met by public assistance programs. If the need can't be resolved with agency resources, they work with other social service agencies in the county to help coordinate assistance.

Prevention – Retention – Contingency (PRC)

LCDJFS operate a PRC funded program that provides benefits and services to Lorain County families who qualify to help overcome immediate barriers and stay self-supporting. The purpose of the program emphasizes the need for individuals to participate in employment and training activities, prevent loss of employment due to lack of transportation, or helps meet an emergent need which, if not met, threatens a family's safety, health, or well-being. In 2023, the program assisted 240 families with \$605,583.34 in services.

Two contracted services were funded using PRC-TANF dollars. Contracted agreements with Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio, El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Inc. of Lorain, and Tower Educational Consulting Group covered the cost of educational summer camp for 255 youth ages 6-15. The summer camps focused on activities to avoid summer learning loss with an emphasis on career exploration as well as field trips to parks, museums, and other recreational activities. Additionally, we contracted with Big Brothers Big Sisters, Horizon Education Centers, and Tower Educational to cover the cost of Mentoring & Tutoring for 105 TANF-eligible youth.

TANF funding is also used to support the TANF Summer Youth Employment Program which offers the opportunity for individuals 14-18 years of age enrolled in secondary school with educational, employment and training supports for youth to gain valuable work experience while earning a paycheck. The summer programs operated by Ohio Means Jobs of Lorain County enrolled 27 youth during the 2023 summer program.

Joining Forces

Joining Forces operates in collaboration with the Lorain County Joint Vocational School. Two full-time social service workers provide supportive services for 9th – 12th graders, including classroom presentations focused on social skills and character education. The social service workers work individually with students who are at risk because of developmental, academic, or behavioral problems, acting as a liaison between the school, family, and community-based agencies. The goal of Joining Forces is to help students succeed at JVS, and to help parents support their child's efforts. Joining Forces staff received 4,408 student referrals.

Pregnancy Related Services

All Medicaid eligible pregnant women are eligible to receive Pregnancy Related Services from their medical providers and LCDJFS. These services include counseling, care coordination, and transportation.

Healthchek

The Healthchek unit administers a federally mandated preventive health care program for children who are covered by Medicaid Services. This unit strives to promote wellness and preventive health care by encouraging regular medical checkups for children and adolescents from birth to their twenty-first birthday.

Adult Protective Services

Lorain County Job & Family Services is mandated to investigate reports of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation of individuals sixty and older. Investigators arrange a wide variety of social services directed toward eliminating or reducing the endangerment faced by at-risk older adults. This includes going to Probate Court when needed. Emergencies are investigated within 24 hours, and all other reports within three working days. There are currently only five investigators for all of Lorain County. The unit investigated 652 allegations in 2022. This was another large increase from the prior year along with seeing more complex cases.