

Portage JFS Open Lines

Portage County Department of Job & Family Services, Anita D. Herington, Ph.D., Director

SACWIS brings change, best information on children to PCSA

“SACWIS will give us all the information on cases around the state so that we can make more informed decisions about policies affecting children in our care and their families,” Penny Ray, Manager of Children Services said.

Children Services staff have been working long hours to prepare to implement a web-based automated case management system. The new system will assure the latest information regarding a child throughout the state will be available and accessible to all counties.

The Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) will be in operation here in March. A 90-day pilot was completed in Muskingam County and Ohio’s other 87 counties will be converting to the system with statewide implementation planned within 2007.

The state is rolling out the new computer system for child welfare case-workers to ease management of adoption, foster care and child-protection cases.

“We’re preparing our data for conversion to the new system and checking to see that everything is correct for other counties that will access it,” Kathleen Guckelberger, Administrator of Children Services, (PCSA) at Portage JFS said.

Caseworkers will be able to access the new system anywhere there is Internet access, in a timely and protected environment. New case information will be updated immediately in SACWIS. The system also will issue alerts and reminders to assist in day-to-day management.

“It is not just tracking information around the state that is important, but being able to share information about families and children who have resided in more than one county,” Rick Smith, from the Office for Children and Families ODJFS said.

“SACWIS will give us all the information on cases around the state so that we can make more informed decisions about policies affecting children in our care and their families,” said Penny Ray, Portage JFS Manager of Children Services.

Currently, the six largest counties operate their own systems with information collected through the day uploaded to a state computer each night. Other counties, like Portage, have been connecting to a 20-year-old state system with access during certain hours.

“Nineteen years ago next month, we converted to FACSIS (Family and Children Services Information System) , so this is a major conversion to a whole new system, which can be stressful,” Guckelberger said. “The staff has gone through days of training and will be ready to go.”

During American Heart Month, we urge everyone to learn more about heart health and to reduce their risk factors for serious heart conditions. By making healthy choices, we can live longer and better lives.

Happy Valentine’s Day!



Inside this issue:

New Managers Appointed	2
Holiday luncheon	2
JFS donates to community	2
CSEA seminar	3
Prescription program	3
Foster Families party	3
ODJFS in Portage	3
Retirements	4
Pregnancy tests for Healthy Start	4
Moving In, Moving Up	4

New Manager brings experience, new ideas to PA special services

Tim Beckner will begin his duties as the Manager of Public Assistance Special Services on February 26. The Supervisor of Training was appointed by Director Herington to the post where his areas of responsibility will be the Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS), Quality Assurance, Training, PRC and second floor reception in the administration building.



**Public Assistance Special Services Manager
Tim Beckner**

Mr. Beckner brings vast experience to his new position, having been an Income Maintenance Supervisor in Cuyahoga County for 10 years, working as a trainer for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services for two years and working at JFS in Trumbull County. He came to Portage as Supervisor of the Investigative Unit in 2004 before becoming the Training Supervisor.

Mr. Beckner has a B.A. from Malone College in business management.

“Since I have supervised the Investigative Unit and the Training Unit, I’d like to use my experience to build these units up to be the best they can be,” he said. “I have the experience in seeing how other counties deal with situations and units and I hope to bring the positive results to Portage County.”

Public Assistance is also adding two quality assurance positions which will review cases to control errors that may be made. The state is planning to sanction counties after this year if the error rate is too high, he noted. A goal is to make sure that Portage is never a causal county where the state declares the error rate is too high and withholds funding, he said.

“I’m anxious to get to know the new position and to see how we can improve to better serve our clients,” he said. “My goal is to improve communications between all the units.”



JFS Units donate to the community

Sixty five warm lap blankets and throws were purchased by the staffs of the Portage Workforce Connection and other divisions in JFS and presented to Longmeadow Nursing Home residents. Longmeadow Administrator Jim Homma said the residents and families all were very appreciative of the blankets. Pictured from left: Mary Kay Olson, Longmeadow Social Services Director; Jim Homa, Administrator; Mary Boston, Portage Workforce Connection Supervisor and Becky Porcase, Workforce Connection Manager.

The Day Care Unit adopted a family for Christmas, purchasing gifts and donating money which were delivered to the Center of Hope. Also, the PA Family Unit collected donations of new toys from staff which were given to the children of clients coming in.



The Holiday Luncheon was a great success, with Secret Santas revealed, gifts for each employee and a drawing for gift baskets. The event was organized by the Coordination of Services Team and the Excellence Committee. Pictured at the party (from left) are Jamie Porphyry, IM Worker; Christine Herra, IM Worker; Patrick O’Keefe, Trainer; Valarie Picelle, CSEA Case Manager; Lisa Walker CSEA Case Manager and Gennifer Woodworth, IM Supervisor.

For February, the Excellence Committee will be distributing donuts for all employees on Valentine’s Day and distributing beads to celebrate Mardi Gras on Feb. 20. Also, a canned food drive competition will be held in February with the County Engineer’s Office to collect food to donate to the food pantries of the county.

CSEA holds successful legal seminar



Legal Issues involved in child support cases and the administrative process of the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) were presented by the Portage County Domestic Relations Court and CSEA staff at the recent legal seminar which was well attended by area legal professionals. Very good feedback was heard about the presentations by Judge Joseph Giulitto and Magistrates Richard Badger and Tim Ludick, and CSEA Administrator Sylvia Trashier, CSEA Attorneys Roxana Lyle and Pete Lorenz, Case Management Supervisors Kris Diezman and Jeff Mitiga, Accounting Supervisor Paula Barholt, and Administrative Hearing Officers Cyndy Hostler and Ron Evans. Pictured above are (from left): Judge Giulitto, Administrator Strasshofer and Rob Rosenberg, President of the Portage County Bar Association.

Prescription discount program is enhanced and merged

The Ohio Best Rx program administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, will be enhanced with legislation that will take effect April 4.

- The income eligibility limit will be increased from 250% of the federal poverty guidelines to 300% of poverty.
- Online and telephone submission of applications will be allowed.
- The OBRx card can be used during the Medicare Part D "doughnut hole".
- The four month waiting period for eligibility for laid-off employees will be waived.

OBRx will be merged with the Golden Buckeye Rx discount prescription drug card program July 1. The Golden Buckeye card was administered through the Ohio Department of Aging. The average savings per prescription through OBRx is 34%; through Golden Buckeye Rx it is about 25%.

ODJFS estimates that 120,000 current Golden Buckeye card holders may receive greater discounts on prescription drugs through the merged program.



Children Services Holiday Party at Twin Lanes for foster children was the best many families said they ever attended. Event Chair Cathi Rufener, Assessment Supervisor, expressed her appreciation for the money the Excellence Committee raised from JFS employees to purchase gifts for the children. "I feel truly blessed to have the opportunity to work with so many great people to be able to put together an event that means so much to our children," Cathi said.

Staff at the Foster Families Holiday Party pictured from left : Pete Snyder, Hope Wagner, Janet Hayes, Marlene Morgan, Becky Rufener, Jordan Baley, Shayna Bryant, Santa, Marilyn Markovich, Teresa Adkins, Jenna Barricks, Penny Ray, Keena Sosnoski, Shannon Weiss, Susan Alman, Angela Wooley, Jan Jacobs, Cathi Rufener, Barb Niepsuj, Amanda Morgan and Kimberly MacPhail.

ODJFS to hold summer conference in Portage

Portage County JFS will serve as a host county when the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services holds its summer conference in Aurora this year. ODJFS announced the event at the Directors meeting earlier this month.

More information will be coming soon. This will be a great opportunity to have more staff members attend programs and meet with other county staffs and ODJFS officials.



Portage County Job and Family Services

Anita D. Herlington, Ph.D., Director

Portage County Administration Building
449 S. Meridian St.
Ravenna, OH 44266
Phone: 330-298-1102
Fax: 330-298-1107

Child Support Enforcement	330-297-3791
Food Stamps, Medicaid,	
Healthy Start/Healthy Families	330-297-3750
Portage Workforce Connection	330-296-2841
Child Health Services	330-297-5437
Child & Adult Protective Services	330-296-2273
Foster Care and Adoption	330-297-3462

Editor, Charlene Badger,
Communications Officer **330-297-3806**

www.portage.co.oh.us/jfs



The County Commissioners read proclamations praising the service and dedication of Child Health Administrator Ruth Carnes, Maggie Baier, Income Maintenance Caseworker and Custodian Ken Townend at their retirement party. Pictured above, front row are County Commissioner Maureen Frederick and Maggie; back row, Commissioner Chuck Keiper, Ken, Ruth and Commissioner Chris Smeiles.

JFS Director Anita Herlington and Commissioner Keiper also praised Nora McGonagle (photo at right) on her retirement after 30 years serving Portage County children and families including 27 as Medical Assistant and Office Manager in Child Health Services. Refreshments were provided to the staff by the Recognition and Awards Committee at both events.

Pregnancy tests available for Healthy Start

Free pregnancy tests will be given on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Child Health Clinic, for women applying for the Healthy Start program.

Healthy Start is free health coverage for pregnant women and children from birth to age 19 who qualify based on limited family income. Covered services include doctor visits, hospital care, immunizations, prescriptions, vision services, dental care, mental health, substance abuse and other services. Applications can be downloaded from the Portage County Job and Family Services website at www.co.portage.oh.us/jfs.

“Clinic nurses perform the pregnancy tests which facilitates the expedited Medicaid process,” Jill Smith RN, MSN, CPNP, Clinic Pediatric Nurse explained. “The staff in Public Assistance is very good at getting the paperwork done quickly for expedited Medicaid following the pregnancy tests, so the women get a medical card within seven days,” she said.

Nurses at the clinic can also provide case management, counseling such as smoking cessation, pre-term labor signs, food stamps, educational materials on pregnancy and referrals to Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and other agencies for assistance. They do not provide obstetrical care.

“Our goal is healthy babies,” Ms. Smith emphasized.



Moving In, Moving Up

New Hires:

Denise Crouse - IM Aide 2 (Public Assistance)
 Mandy Berardinelli - IM Worker 3 (Public Assistance)
 Holly Rhodes - IM Worker 3 (Public Assistance)
 Shannell Blanton - Social Service Worker 3 (Assessment - Children Services)
 Dee Heintl - Social Service Worker 3 (Intake - Children Services)
 David Ralph - Social Service Worker 3 (Assessment - Children Services)
 Cheryl Caddiell - Custodial Worker
 Jenny Hall - Clerical Spec. 3 (Child Support)

Promotion:

Sharon Larkin - from Clerical Specialist 2 to Clerical Specialist 3 (Child Support)