



Ohio Anti-Poverty Task Force

Shorter Term Recommendations

Report: September 26, 2008

1) Work through the appropriate state agencies to exercise the following options to reduce barriers to work supports and other benefits (with a particular emphasis on federally funded programs and children's healthcare):

- Expand categorical eligibility for food stamps

To be implemented October 1, 2008.

- Pursue electronic submission as well as telephone interview options to applicants for all work supports and other benefits

Electronic submission of applications for cash assistance, food stamps, and Medicaid programs through the Ohio Benefit Bank to be implemented by December, 2008.

- To the greatest extent possible, align recertification periods for all work supports to 12 months and allow telephone or electronic recertification for all work supports (also submitted through the Interagency Coordination work group)

ODJFS has begun internal conversations about aligning and extending program recertification periods.

- Explore all other options to reduce barriers and increase access within the confines of current federal guidelines (eligibility requirements, verification processes, renewal procedures, and program application)

The Governor's office will convene a small "benefits and supports" work group to address recommendations 1, 2, and 16 and to report back on its progress by October 31, 2008.

- 2) Work through the heads of the major work support programs to expand outreach by using program enrollment information (food stamps, SCHIP, LI-HEAP, etc.) to identify through 'data matching' populations currently underserved (eligible but not claiming) (may need to consider a common consent form to be used across programs); and to develop strategies to expand access to their programs and establish more integrated intake procedures such as a universal application and a bridging application connecting various state databases

The Governor's office will convene a small "benefits and supports" work group to address recommendations 1, 2, and 16 and to report back on its progress by October 31, 2008.

- 3) Work through the respective agencies to establish a single, simplified, and efficient process for low-income disabled Ohioans to access Medicaid and Social Security (SSI/SSDI) benefits. The process should eliminate duplicative steps, forms, and the number of entities involved in the current processes. The new process should reduce complexity (and associated costs) and result in improved service to clients

The state Medicaid director and the executive director of Rehabilitation Services Commission (RSC) have established a work group to address this recommendation. The initial meeting was convened on September 22, 2008.

- 4) Study the impact and feasibility of an Ohio earned income tax credit and review the learning produced by the Ohio Commission on the Earned Income Tax Credit

The Governor's office has asked OBM to analyze and report on the feasibility of implementing an Ohio EITC. The establishment of such a tax credit will be part of the upcoming 2010-11 budget conversations.

- 5) Work through the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to request that Ohio's utilities companies coordinate with the state on strategies to increase awareness of and participation in current energy assistance programs for low-income households

The Governor's staff will work with the PUCO and with the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) to assess what is being done and what more can be done to inform and educate the public.

- 6) In response to rising food and fuel costs, request of Congress emergency assistance for Ohio foodbanks, an increase in the monthly food stamp allotment, and increase funding for home energy assistance (LIHEAP)

On September 16, the Governor and Lt. Governor submitted a request for emergency assistance to members of the Ohio Congressional Delegation. The request includes additional financial assistance in the form of enhanced Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP), increasing food stamp benefits as well as the LIHEAP Block grant, and extending unemployment insurance. Within weeks, a second emergency funding request will be submitted from the Governor and Ohio General Assembly leaders to the Ohio Congressional Delegation, leaders in the U.S. House and Senate, and the President calling for emergency assistance for Ohio foodbanks and an increase in food stamp benefits.

- 7) Work with the Ohio congressional delegation in support of senior meal programs, subsidized guardianship legislation (increased funding for kinship care programs), reversing recent (2005) child support enforcement funding cuts, and increased funding for Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDF)

On September 16, the Governor and Lt. Governor submitted a request for emergency assistance to members of the Ohio Congressional Delegation. The request includes the restoration of federal matching funds for state child support incentive payments. The recommendation has also been sent to staff in the Governor's Washington, D.C., office, who, in turn, will discuss these issues with the Ohio Congressional Delegation. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act passed the U.S. House and Senate in September and will likely be signed by the President. The bill addresses subsidized guardianship and other foster care and adoption issues.

- 8) Work through the Ohio Department of Commerce to identify opportunities to better educate Ohioans about tax refund anticipation loans and to investigate the feasibility and advisability of regulating fees associated with tax refund anticipation loans

The Treasurer's office has agreed to take the lead and will work with others to identify opportunities to better educate Ohioans about tax refund anticipation loans and to investigate the feasibility and advisability of regulating fees associated with tax refund anticipation loans.

- 9) Work through the Department of Transportation to identify resources for fuel supplement for public transit in Ohio's rural and urban areas to ensure services are maintained and routes are not reduced due to fuel price increases

This has been completed and details are expected within weeks.

- 10) Work through ODJFS to submit the Family Planning Medicaid Waiver that would increase eligibility for family planning services to men and women at or below 200% FPL. If approved, the federal government would provide 90% with only 10% needed in non-federal sources

The state Medicaid director will convene stakeholders next week to begin working on this waiver.

- 11) Encourage the formation of a statewide emergency hunger relief campaign (much like the local Harvest for Hunger or Operation Feed campaigns in Cleveland and Columbus, respectively) led by community and corporate foundations to raise funds for Ohio's foodbanks – and look for ways to include support for energy relief for struggling Ohioans

The Governor issued a press release on September 19, 2008 encouraging Ohioans to make an "Emergency Relief" donation through the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. A meeting is also being convened of individuals from community and corporate foundations in early October 2008 to discuss other partnership efforts.

- 12) Explore the feasibility of establishing a liaison within the Administration focused on encouraging anti-poverty, public-private collaborations

The Governor's office will report on the feasibility of establishing a liaison within the Administration focused on encouraging anti-poverty, public-private collaborations.

- 13) Use local and private resources to expand the Ohio Benefit Bank by adding a foreclosure prevention platform. Incorporate use of the Benefit Bank in the foreclosure prevention and intervention efforts currently managed by the Ohio Department of Commerce, Ohio Department of Development, and Ohio Housing Finance Agency in collaboration with local housing counseling agencies

The OBB and GOFBCI offices are working to add a foreclosure prevention platform to the Benefit Bank.

- 14) Investigate and promote Green Collar Jobs programs throughout Ohio that will train and place unemployed individuals in living wage jobs

In progress at the Governor's office, including a speech the Governor recently delivered to the Blue and Green Alliance. Will also be addressed in the longer term recommendations.

- 15) Work through the appropriate agencies to investigate the use of a Self-Sufficiency Index to provide a benchmark for anti-poverty efforts

The Governor's office will begin discussions with agency staff and will work with OBM on a special analysis section of the next budget having identified the intended outcome of anti-poverty related investments as self-sufficiency.

- 16) Conduct an inventory of major state agency administered programs that target low-income populations to determine their current performance measures and eligibility guidelines as a context for establishing longer term state anti-poverty targets

The Governor's office will convene a small "benefits and supports" work group to address recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 16 and to report back on its progress by October 31, 2008.

- 17) Make use of the expertise of the Benchmarks and Measures work group to establish performance measures for various shorter term recommendations

The Governor's office is aware of this and may make use of this expertise.

- 18) Consider including in future executive budget proposals an analysis on poverty, including the Governor's definition of poverty, an inventory of state programs designed to combat poverty, and some general performance measure targets around reducing poverty

The Governor's office will assist OBM in adding this to the special analysis section of the next budget.

- 19) Work through the Ohio Board of Regents to engage colleges and universities on establishing a match to the AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps*VISTA education award

The Governor's office will connect with the Board of Regents regarding the recommendation to engage colleges and universities on establishing a match to the AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps*VISTA education award.

- 20) Continue to support initiatives to raise awareness of the issue of poverty in Ohio and engage the public in identifying and implementing methods for addressing poverty in communities throughout Ohio

In progress through the Ohio Anti-Poverty Task Force and other efforts.

- 21) Encourage state and county employees dealing with poverty issues to attend a simulation and Bridges Out of Poverty training

The Governor's office is investigating the feasibility of this recommendation.

- 22) Work with the Corporation for National and Community Service in Ohio to increase the number of support Circles initiatives in the state as part of this effort

Discussions between GOFBCI and the Corporation for National and Community Service are in progress.