County Job and Family Service Agencies
October 18, 2016

County department of job and family service (CDJFS) agencies administer one of the largest health, human service and workforce systems in the nation, with one in four Ohioans receiving assistance from the local office at any point in time. The CDJFS is responsible for administering programs to the state’s most economically vulnerable citizens. Systems operated through the local agencies include cash assistance, food assistance, childcare, Medicaid (including long-term care, children’s health insurance and services to aged, blind and disabled), adoption, adult protective services, child protective services, foster care, refugee services, local workforce initiatives and child support programs.

Local agencies currently administer programs for three federal agencies:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Counties also receive direction and oversight from five different state entities:

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Ohio Department of Medicaid
Ohio Department of Administrative Services
Governor’s Office of Health Transformation
Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation

A CDJFS administers over one-hundred funding streams which must be balanced over five different fiscal cycles (federal fiscal year, state fiscal year, calendar year, multi-year and special program periods such as short-term grants.) Local agencies also administer over one-hundred programs which collectively serve millions of Ohioans each year.

County agencies are responsible for understanding the complex rules and systems and assist clients navigate the various JFS programs. It is the county’s primary duty to ensure clients receive the services they need and are entitled to, as well as ensure program integrity.

CDJFS’s are going through a tremendous renaissance period which is placing added burdens on the agencies, including the development and implementation of a new eligibility system (a five to seven year project), a complete overhaul of the Adult Protective Services (APS) system and the creation of the new Healthier Buckeye Initiative at the local level.
New workforce requirements included in the recently passed state budget, as well as the passage of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), will require retraining employees, forging new relationships with employers and workforce provider groups, changes in the local governance structure and intense case management for clients in the job and family service system. Implementation of the new Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) is the largest workforce and welfare reform effort attempted in the state in more than twenty years.

Counties are also implementing numerous new healthcare reforms including the expansion of the Medicaid program (which added over 500,000 Ohio residents in a single year - the fastest and largest growth of a health and human service program in the state’s history) and redesigning the manner in which aged, blind and disabled Ohio residents will access benefits and services.

State and federal mandates are placing additional emphasis on the child and adult protective service systems. Ohio currently ranks fiftieth in the United States in state funding support for abused and neglected children. Ohio communities must secure local dollars and stretch resources to ensure the health and safety of our most vulnerable children and adults, while meeting the new demands being placed on the system.

As a result of recent budget actions, Ohio’s Adult Protective Services system is experiencing a major redesign which will dramatically improve investigations and services for Ohio’s seniors. County agencies are developing increased local capacity to ensure the ability to screen and investigate reports of abuse and neglect for seniors twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. They are also working with community leaders to develop a wide-ranging system to increase their ability to provide senior services such as case management, visitation, case monitoring, care coordination and the formal development of inter-disciplinary teams. The APS system has always been a heavy weight to counties with extremely limited financial resources and these new mandates will exacerbate the problem. The current state budget includes a $30,000 allocation to each county ($2.64 million.) Local governments invest $20 million for the program and all 88 counties agree significant new investments are needed adequately serve our senior residents.

Local job and family service agencies are serving more Ohioans than at any time in our history and with significantly fewer resources than were provided at the beginning of the recession. Regardless, counties continue to meet the challenges and serve the community well. The counties constantly strive to provide a viable, safe, effective, efficient system while maintaining program integrity and operate as good shepherds of the public trust.
Ohio’s State Supervised/County Administered Job and Family Service System

The job and family service system in Ohio operates a state supervised/county administered system. This means that a state agency is responsible for ensuring compliance with state and federal programs and local agencies are responsible for the operations of the various programs.

Federal law requires that each state identify a designated state agency as the sole authority to administer federal programs and serve as the fiscal agent. Broad discretion is provided to states to determine how best to operate programs through the designated agency. A state plan must be approved which will demonstrate to the federal government how federal compliance is being met, how and where services are to be provided and make certain proper monitoring is in place to ensure program integrity.

In Ohio, the state department of job and family services is responsible for writing policy, directing programs and monitoring compliance. The state department writes and manages fiscal systems and controls the flow of funds to county agencies, provides technical assistance, maintains state computer systems necessary for the operations of the various programs and provides a state hearing process for clients to allow an independent review of problems which may occur in the operations of a program.

County agencies in Ohio are responsible for providing direct services to clients including eligibility determination. With the exception of the state Unemployment Insurance program which is administered at ODJFS, all public assistance programs, child support and child welfare programs are administered locally through the county job and family service agencies. This includes cash assistance, food assistance, childcare, Medicaid (including long-term care, children’s health insurance, services to aged, blind and disabled), adoption, licensing of certain facilities, adult protective services, child protective services, foster care, refugee services, local workforce initiatives and child support (which includes location of non-custodial parents and the establishment of paternity, as well as the establishment and enforcement of support orders).

Many states operate systems similar to Ohio which allows tremendous flexibility and enhances service delivery directly to clients where they live. This is not a duplication of services, it is an administrative vehicle which is utilized throughout the country to maximize resources and services to best meet the needs of the community. In state supervised/county administered systems, the state government is responsible for the administrative arm and manages the bureaucracy, freeing up resources locally to provide direct services and provide the operational arm of the system. Ohio’s system maximizes state and local resources and enhances services to clients.