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For Immediate Release

March 3, 2009

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BUDGET CUTS FORCE LAYOFFS

State budget cuts are forcing Athens County Job and Family Services (ACJFS) to lay off an additional 19 employees. Preliminary figures show that Athens County Job and Family Services will lose approximately \$1.3 million in state and federal funding in fiscal year 2010. The new fiscal year does not begin until July, but the layoffs and other programming changes need to be made as soon as possible to offset the drastic budget cut.

The 19 layoffs are in addition to six layoffs that were announced in February and nine vacant positions that were not filled in the last year. In total, the agency has lost 34 positions and has been forced to reduce or eliminate several programs and services. ACJFS previously had 144 employees, which means that it eliminated nearly one-fourth of its positions in one year.

The latest round of layoffs will take effect on April 3.

ACJFS is also considering reducing its hours of operations in order to save money.

“Many of the programs that we have cut or reduced are programs that have been identified by state and federal leaders as necessary and effective,” said Jack Frech, director of ACJFS. Programs that help prevent teen pregnancy, connect area residents with proper dental care, assist county residents looking for work and provide several other important services to people living in poverty have been eliminated or reduced.

These programs were effective and were helping Athens County residents. For instance, the program that provided computers and training to low-income individuals is being greatly reduced. That program has been serving Athens County residents for more than eight years, and has gotten thousands of computers to county residents who otherwise would not have been able to afford them.

Losing so many staff members will also mean that county residents will see delays in determining eligibility for different programs, and delays in processing changes in their cases. All of these cuts are happening at a time when demand for services from ACJFS is rising, especially in areas such as the food and cash assistance programs.

“We still feel very strongly that in addition to all of these cuts in services, that the families that we serve are not being given enough assistance to meet their basic human needs,” Frech said. “We call upon the president, the governor and our state and federal representatives to restore this essential funding and ensure that the basic human needs of all Americans are being met.”

For more information, contact Community Relations Coordinator Nick Claussen at 797-2523 or clausn@odjfs.state.oh.us.