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News Release

State budget cuts are forcing Athens County Job and Family Services to eliminate 25 positions, 18 of those through layoffs.

In the proposed state budget, Athens County Job and Family Services stands to lose \$1.2 million in state and federal funding. The agency is also projected to lose an additional \$670,000 in federal stimulus funds.

“Our staff members struggle every day to meet the overwhelming demands of an increasing caseload of families in need,” Director Jack Frech said. “Cutting services to poor people to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy represents the worst of what’s left of our social conscience.”

The elimination of 25 positions means the number of staff members will decrease from 112 to 87. Since 2009, the agency has dropped from 144 to 87 staff members through layoffs and attrition, a total loss of 57 positions.

The latest round of layoffs eliminates the positions of seven caseworkers, three social program coordinators, three investigators, three aides, one administrative assistant and one accountant. In addition, the agency has lost through attrition the positions of three supervisors, two account clerks, one social program coordinator and one aide.

The loss of funding and staff members will affect the agency’s programs and services in several ways, including the following:

- The number of child support hearings will be cut in half from 1,100 per year to 550. This will result in delays in the enforcement and modifications of child support.
- The enrollment for the Hocking College retention program has been frozen.
- Clients will no longer receive assistance with their Social Security disability applications. The agency helps an average of 195 people per year with the application process.
- Clients who are applying for assistance or requesting changes in their cases will likely face more delays in having their cases processed. This at a time when applications for assistance continue to rise.

- Most summer employment programs for youth and adults have been suspended.
- Funding the agency previously provided for the Athens County Food Pantry has been eliminated. This funding varied from year to year and often came from extra funds at the end of the budget year.

All of these changes are in addition to the numerous reductions of programs and services, and in some cases, the elimination of programs that Athens County Job and Family Services has endured since 2009 due to state budget cuts. These cuts have included the elimination of programs to help families pay for car repairs or work uniforms, a teen pregnancy prevention program, a dental program and a program that provided free computers and computer training to families. In addition, programs such as the Workforce Investment Act job training program, a program that provided emergency funds for utility bills and food expenses, and the tax assistance center program have all been scaled back due to budget cuts in the last two years.

“We will continue our fight to restore these cuts and to provide adequate assistance for our most vulnerable citizens,” Frech said.