

Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) Plan
Athens County Department of Job and Family Services
Revised July 1, 2011

Goal

The goal is to provide an assistance program to families while encouraging self-sufficiency and preventing dependency. The program is designed to operate with as much flexibility as possible for the eligibility worker and the family needing assistance.

Services will be designed to meet one of four purposes of TANF.

- 1) To provide assistance to needy families;
- 2) To end dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
- 3) To prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
- 4) To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

45 C.F.R. Section 260.20

Economic Need

Athens County has one of the highest rates of poverty in the state. Currently, the poverty rate is more than 30% and more than twice as high as the state rate. Therefore, we are designating the entire county as an economically distressed area for purposes of PRC eligibility.

More restrictive income guidelines may be set for individual programs as specified in the special program description.

Services directed toward purposes 3 and 4 may be delivered without regard for economic need (see OWF/PRC Guidance Letter no. 8).

Summary of Athens County PRC program policies:

Authorized services will be provided for one-time-only or short-term services and will be issued through vendor pay arrangements only.

The Poverty Level is adjusted annually by the Department of Health and Human Services and takes effect on the date posted by that department. The Monthly Federal Poverty Guideline amount is used to determine income eligibility for PRC. Unless specified otherwise, the total countable income of all members of the PRC assistance group must be equal to or less than the 100% Federal Poverty guidelines based upon family size.

Medical expenses are not eligible for PRC funding with the exception of pre-pregnancy family planning services (PL 104-193).

Family Emergency Assistance (FEA) funds will be utilized for those unavoidable financial crises or disasters that occur and which the family income cannot be expected to cover, contingent upon available funding. FEA funds will usually be authorized for necessities that ensure the safety, health and well-being of family members. Examples of necessities might include, but not limited to, housing, utilities, deposits, emergency repairs, replacement of

household items lost in a fire or flood, etc. FEA will be targeted to families whose income is at or below 100% Poverty Level.

Need is generally viewed as existing when the circumstances which precede the financial crisis appear to be unavoidable or unexpected. The appearance of contrived or planned financial emergencies will result in denial for PRC services. The PRC payment will be authorized when verified financial eligibility exists along with the determination of emergent need, as defined by the eligibility worker.

Employment/Training Assistance (E/TA) funds are not available due to budgetary restrictions.

Eligibility for PRC services

Individuals prevented from receiving PRC are listed in the attached Addendum A.

The PRC assistance group must be TANF eligible which may include, but not limited to: a household containing a child and relative caretaker (a minor under the age of eighteen years, or under the age of nineteen if the child is still enrolled in high school); a non-custodial parent cooperating with the Child Support Enforcement Agency; households containing a pregnant woman; or an agency serving TANF eligible families. A PRC assistance group is defined as those persons who reside together within a dwelling or household.

For those who are accessing the Family Emergency Assistance (FEA), the income guideline will be 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Other special projects that require income guidelines will utilize income guidelines as stated in each project description.

All income received within the household is considered “countable” for PRC purposes. Deductions from income will include: child support paid for a child outside the assistance group; drug discounts and transitional assistance received under the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act; and monetary allowances for certain children with covered birth defects paid under the Veteran’s Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000. Eligibility will be determined by totaling all income of the household members for the past 30 days. If the assistance group meets this standard, they are considered financially eligible. Written or verbal verification of income may be required.

It is expected that the family’s liquid resources (i.e.: cash on hand, savings accounts, etc.) will be utilized to meet the emergent need for the FEA program, prior to or in conjunction with PRC. Other community resources may be explored and whenever possible, utilized for the emergent need.

For services directed to purpose 3 or 4, services are provided without regard to income, notices regarding adverse action will not apply. Since Athens County has been declared as a distressed county, all Athens County residents are hereby certified as being eligible for services provided

under purposes 3 or 4.

Eligibility factors under the Athens PRC plan may be waived in unusual circumstances, as defined by the department, and approved by the agency director or designee.

Maximum benefits for FEA

The eligibility worker will make the decision of how much assistance will be authorized, up to a maximum of \$300 for FEA expenses. Benefits may be paid out for one-time assistance in subsequent emergencies during the 12 month period, providing that the maximum benefit is not exceeded. More than one vendor may be paid during an emergency, up to the maximum dollar amount.

The 12 month eligibility period begins with the application date of the authorized application for PRC services.

The maximum benefits allowable under the Athens PRC plan may be waived in unusual circumstances, as defined by the department, and approved by the agency director or designee.

Approval or denial of FEA

The county determination of eligibility will usually be made within 3 working days of the receipt of an application. In general, assistance will be approved or denied sooner than 3 days, upon receipt of necessary verification. Applicants for PRC assistance will be issued proper notice, i.e., approval/denial, in accordance with program rules.

Special Projects

The Director of Athens County Department of Job and Family Services may authorize PRC funding for use in any special projects that meet the general PRC program goals. Availability of these projects is contingent upon funding. These projects may provide services up to the limits specified by each such project without limitation or regard to the FEA maximum benefit cap specified above. Applications for special projects will be designated by the agency director or designee. A sample list of special projects is included herein.

Special Projects

School Readiness: PRC funds may be used to provide services to children to reduce out-of-wedlock births and encourage the formation of two parent families. These activities may be directed toward:

- improved academic performance
- improved attendance
- life skills and health improvement, participation in cultural enrichment or extracurricular activities
- provision of essential educational materials

Activities may also include student intervention programs as outlined by the ODE/ODJFS and scholarships for preschool programs i.e. public preschool, ELI or other early childhood education programs.

Services may be provided either directly by ACDJFS or through contracts with local schools or other human service providers. School readiness services will be provided without regard to income to any school district that qualifies for Poverty-Based Assistance, unless otherwise specified in a county procedure letter or contract for services.

Kids on Campus: Children may be enrolled in basic summer programming and any after-school projects up to the maximum designated by Kids on Campus, without regard to family income level. These programs will offer academic enrichment and work skill training for the prevention of OWF dependency, out-of-wedlock pregnancy and promote the development of stable, two parent families.

Help Me Grow (HMG): In an effort to enhance and expand services for families with young children, the Help Me Grow Program has become the umbrella for services to families with children birth to three. Help Me Grow integrates Early Start, Early Start Expansion, Early Intervention, and Healthy Mom and Baby Program (Welcome Home) into a single program so that services can be better coordinated, expanded, and enhanced. Building upon the successful program developed collaboratively in Athens County, the Help Me Grow program which is currently operated through the Athens County Family & Children First Council in cooperation with Athens County Children Services and CHEERS, and others may include a specially designated TANF funding allocation to support services for low income families with young children. This funding will allow for the expansion of the program to serve as its primary target children of teenage parents who are participating in the CDJFS-operated LEAP program. The secondary target enrollees for this expansion will include children whose family is in receipt of Ohio Works First (OWF) cash assistance, and who are under the age of three. The third target enrollees will be families with children under three years old who have an income up to 300% of the federal poverty level. Other families may be authorized for service at the discretion of the ACDJFS. Families would be required to sign a statement regarding their income or be receiving Medicaid, WIC, Food Stamps, or OWF to apply for the HMG-TANF funded services. OWF sanctioned families are eligible to receive HMG services.

PRC Disaster Assistance Program: To the extent permissible under federal law and/or Ohio

statutes and regulations, the CDJFS director may authorize TANF discretionary funding for disaster relief when a State of Emergency has been declared by the federal government, Ohio's Governor or the County Commissioners. This disaster relief will be made available to eligible families with unplanned expenses related to natural disasters. Eligibility shall be determined based upon the TANF guidelines in effect at that time including exceptions specified by law or regulations.

Child Welfare: PRC funds may be used to provide services to meet short term financial needs to help stabilize placement arrangements for children. TANF Child Welfare services may include services such as pregnancy prevention services without regard to income and the school roster will serve as the application. Eligibility will be determined by Athens County Childrens' Services with income guidelines set at or below \$4000 net monthly income.

Housing Assistance: ACDJFS may provide home repairs necessary to maintain safety and health to promote family stability and job retention. Services will be provided by contract through Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action Agency. Applications will be on a form provided by Hocking-Athens-Perry CAA and approved by ACDJFS. Eligibility will be set at 150% of the poverty level.

Mental Health/Substance Abuse/Domestic Violence Consultations: A licensed MH/SA/DV professional, through contract with Tri County Mental Health and Counseling, may provide evaluations/consultations/therapy to families served by ACDJFS. This program will help prevent out-of-wedlock births and encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families. Rosters of eligible clients will be submitted to ACDJFS monthly.

Work Incentive Investment: ACDJFS may provide assistance in tax preparation for low-income families. ACDJFS may also provide a supplemental work incentive payment to families eligible for the federal EITC.

Health Related Services/Wellness Block Grant: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, non-medical health related services to promote family stability, prevent dependency and prevent teen pregnancy. Services will include health education, transportation, homemaker services, screening, case management, scheduling, referrals, and Planet Teen. This program will help prevent out-of-wedlock births and encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families.

Employment Related Legal Services: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, legal assistance to help eliminate barriers to employment, prevent dependency and promote family stability. Services will include assistance with employment related issues such as discrimination, sexual harassment, record expungements etc. Eligibility will be set at 200% of the poverty level.

Outreach: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, information and referral services to families, without regard to income. Information and referral services will be

available for social, medical, employment, educational and financial assistance services, and be directed to all four of the TANF goals.

Workforce and Job Development Activities: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, assistance to families to:

- a) promote job preparation
- b) remove barriers to employment
- c) provide basic education and skill training
- d) assist in job search and matching
- e) provide work experience

In order to assure the availability of adequate workforce opportunities for families, the Athens County Department of Job and Family Services may provide TANF funding for workforce development services to local workforce development agencies subject to the availability of funding.

For Workforce Development Activities, eligibility will be set at 150% of the poverty level, with the exception of the Appalachia Demonstration Project which will be set at 200% of the federal poverty level. Job Development Activities may be conducted as an administrative function.

Domestic Violence: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, short-term emergency services for victims of domestic violence who are experiencing a crisis situation as defined by ACDJFS. These activities may be directed toward ensuring the safety, health and well-being of family members. Eligible families must have net monthly income at or below \$4000 per month.

Expanded Enrichment Services: Local school districts may be reimbursed for providing children with enrichment opportunities through a summer school program geared to enrich core learning in reading and/or literacy, as well as to assist students in meeting performance outcomes. This program will serve children in kindergarten through grade six who are reading below grade level or those at risk of reading below grade level. Eligibility will be set at 300% of the federal poverty level. (See Administrative Policy Letter No. 259)

Family Clothing Assistance: ACDJFS may provide clothing assistance to eligible families. Eligibility will be set at 150% of the poverty level.

Heating Assistance: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, heating assistance to eligible families. Eligibility will be set to coincide with the ODJFS/ODOD TANF/HEAP program as authorized by the Governor's EXECUTIVE ORDER 2005-23T or any subsequent changes made to the program.

Adult Literacy and Child Reading: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, literacy services to TANF-eligible families. Eligibility will be set at 200% of the federal poverty level.

Digital Divide: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, assistance to eligible families in obtaining a personal computer for home use. Computers could be made available to low-income families as a reward for successful program participation, to entities serving TANF eligible families, through a loan guarantee program or sliding scale, or for programs such as in-home education offered through local school districts loaned to families as needed. Additionally, supportive services may include:

- Computer training;
- Repair lab;
- Technical assistance;
- Internet access; and
- Any other services deemed appropriate.

Eligibility will be set at 200% of the poverty level.

Tuition Assistance: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, tuition assistance for eligible families attending postsecondary education institutions. Additional services such as fees, labs, books, counseling, and/or other educational expenses may be provided to promote participation and retention in higher education. Tuition assistance may be used to provide positive incentives for school-based performance, enhance workforce development or improve skill training. Eligibility will coincide with the participant's federal financial aid status.

TANF Supplement: In recognizing the increased cost of living for families and the inadequacy of OWF, Food Stamp, and Medicaid benefits, ACDJFS may provide a TANF supplement to families receiving OWF, Food Stamps and/or Medicaid in any given month. The OWF, Food Stamp and/or Medicaid application will serve as the application for this supplement.

Food Assistance: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, food assistance to eligible OWF, Food Stamps and/or Medicaid households. The OWF, Food Stamp and/or Medicaid application will serve as the application.

Families dealing with Courts: ACDJFS may provide services designed to assist families that are involved with the Courts. This can include, but is not limited to, court costs and/or fees, providing mediation services for issues involving child support, custody, visitation or other domestic disputes, and providing psychological assessments in placing children involved in child custody actions in that home environment, either with a parent or with relatives most likely to provide family stability. Qualified professionals will perform the mediations and examinations and assessments of the emotional and mental health, as well as other relevant factors, necessary to assist the Court to resolve domestic disputes and in determining that placement for children of broken homes that is most likely to provide a safe, stable home environment for children, and to determine the parameters of said children's visitation with the non-custodial parents. Other services to be provided include transportation assistance for families. Eligibility will be set at net monthly income below 300% of the federal poverty level.

Summer Head Start: ACDJFS may provide eligible families with developmentally appropriate educational services for preschool children. Services will be provided by contract through Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action Agency. Eligibility will be set at 200% of the poverty level. Applications will be on a form provided by Hocking-Athens-Perry CAA and approved by ACDJFS.

Family Services: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, assistance to families such as life skills, health improvement, participation in cultural enrichment, extracurricular activities, etc. Services rendered, including the application and eligibility guidelines, will be at the discretion of the agency director or designee.

ABC Initiative: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, assistance to families with multi-need children for such needs as prevention, early intervention and treatment services as outlined in the Athens County Children Services’/Family and Children First Council’s plan for the Access to Better Care (ABC) initiative.

Subsidized Employment Program (SEP): ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, subsidized employment assistance or work study opportunities to eligible individuals as an opportunity to obtain employment and provide employers an incentive to hire participants who are in need of benefits and services to overcome barriers to employment. Participating employers will receive a subsidy to offset the costs of hiring and training participants. Participant eligibility will be set at 150% of the poverty level.

Subsidized Summer Employment Program for Youth: ACDJFS may provide, by direct or contract services, subsidized employment assistance or work opportunities to eligible youth age 14-24. Participants will gain valuable work experience while earning a paycheck to help meet basic needs. Participant eligibility will be set at 200% of the poverty level.

Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program: PRC funds may be utilized to cover expenses related to services/activities directed to eligible LEAP participants. The LEAP Coordinator and/or their designee will make the decision of how much assistance will be authorized, up to a maximum of \$1000 per 12 month period. These services/activities may be directed toward:

- staying enrolled in school or other educational/training programs
- improved academic performance
- improved attendance
- life skills and health improvement, participation in cultural enrichment or extracurricular activities
- provision of essential educational materials

Allowable expenditures may include, **but are not limited to,** costs associated with (clothing needs, personal hygiene items, diapers, school related fee’s, books and supplies, drivers education expenses, car repairs, gas cards, utility expenses, rent and deposit, on-line (PC)

courses etc..) Eligibility for services/activities as outlined under this section will be determined by the LEAP Coordinator and/or their supervisor. ACDJFS shall use the agency PRC/WIA application form #100. NOTE: LEAP applicants only need to complete the top portion (name, address, telephone number and Social Security Number), questions 1 & 2 and sign/date the application. Questions 3-8 do not need to be completed.

Addendum "A"

Persons excluded from PRC eligibility by law include:

- Individuals with outstanding fraud overpayments (HB 408),

The Athens County Department of Job and Family Services will provide PRC services in a manner which is fair and impartial and does not violate State and Federal law.

Addendum “B”

All relevant County Procedure Letters

SIGNATURE PAGE

This is to certify that the Athens County Department of Job and Family Services has complied with ORC Chapter 5108 in adopting and amending this policy.

Director, Athens County
Department of Job and Family Services

Date

Date approved by Athens County Commissioners

Date

Date approved by Athens County Job and Family Services Planning Board

Date