



Department of
Developmental Disabilities

Division of Legislative Affairs & Communications

John R. Kasich, Governor
John L. Martin, Director

News Release

Contact: Vicki Rich, Communication
Office: (614) 644-0263/ Cell: (614) 309-7952
Vicki.rich@dodd.ohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 19, 2012

DODD Announces Priority Autism Programs Underway

*Health Transformation Innovation Funds to Support Outcomes for Individuals with
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*

Columbus – The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) today announced that work has begun on several projects supported by \$1.3 million dollars recently awarded by the Health Transformation Innovation Fund. The funds, which were initially announced at a press conference in Columbus on September 17, 2012, are supporting programs to improve outcomes for individuals with ASD. DODD announced progress on the programs this morning at a stakeholder meeting of Ohio’s Interagency Work Group on Autism.

“With these funds, we’re supporting some crucial programs for early autism diagnosis and intervention,” said DODD Director John Martin. “The really neat thing about what we can accomplish is the direct impact each of these projects has for individuals and families. These funds will help us essentially blanket the state with better access for families to obtain an accurate diagnosis of autism and provide support to individuals for living a more social and inclusive life.”

Autism is a complex neurological developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, behavior and sensory challenges. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism affects one in every 88 children in the United States and is the fastest growing developmental disability in the nation.

Health Transformation Innovation Fund grants are supporting key programs that will expand early intervention for Ohio’s youngest children with ASD, and improve employment outcomes for young adults with ASD. The programs and services are provided in collaboration with state agency partners, The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), Ohio’s County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, and leading medical and higher education professionals.

Specific programs and their goals are as follows:

- **The Autism Diagnostic Education Project (ADEP)**: ADEP trains pediatricians to correctly identify the early signs of autism, to aide in early intervention. ADEP facilitates unique partnerships between community-based primary care practices and professionals providing early intervention and early childhood services to increase opportunities for children to receive timely and comprehensive evaluations. ADEP was originally piloted through funds from Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and administered by the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. ADEP has formed these Diagnostic Partnerships in 30 counties across Ohio. The Health Transformation Funds will support the existing

(MORE)

partnerships and allow for more expansion in resource poor regions of the state.

- **Specialized Training for Early Intervention Professionals**: Funds for this program will be used to train professionals in serving infants and toddlers in a play-based approach that nurtures the critical early parent/child relationship early in the child's development. The training is part of the Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters (P.L.A.Y.) Project, and will bring a new level of specialized expertise within the County Boards of Developmental Disabilities' early intervention programs. These trained professionals will be better equipped to assist and empower families, encourage and nurture the child's social interaction, and ultimately increase the likelihood of the child enjoying a successful and inclusive life. Nearly 100 intervention specialists across 34 counties have received training and follow-up coaching. Funding will be used to reach at least 80 percent of the state over the next three years.
- **The Governor's Employment First Executive Order** challenges Ohio to increase the likelihood that youth with developmental disabilities successfully exit high school directly to community integrated employment. State funds will be used to launch a training series for stakeholders to further the understanding and implementation of Employment First. These training opportunities will allow for a diverse group of professionals and families to understand the importance of the critical years, beginning at age 14, during which adolescents prepare for life beyond high school. Growing the capacity of trained professionals will result in increased awareness of the necessary components and skills development that will lead to integrated employment.

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities is responsible for overseeing a statewide system of supports and services for people with developmental disabilities. Our mission is continuous improvement of the quality of life for Ohio's citizens with developmental disabilities and their families.