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Ohio Department of Youth Services Offers Free Bus Rides to Reunite Families

Seats Available departing Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati for December 15th Trip

Columbus, Ohio — About half of the youth in the custody of the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) do not receive family visits during the average 12-month stay. Free bus trips are now part of the agency's Family Engagement Initiative seeking to involve families in their youth's rehabilitation and reentry into the community.

On Saturday, December 15, 2012, buses will depart Cleveland and Columbus for families visiting youth at the Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility. Buses will depart Dayton and Cincinnati for families visiting youth at the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. Seats are still available on the buses departing Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati while a wait list is in place for Cleveland.

Bus trips began earlier in the year on Mother's Day weekend. From May through November, DYS has provided a total of 26 bus trips and served 390 family members.

"The bus rides support our mission of improving Ohio's future by habilitating youth and empowering families and communities," said Harvey Reed, Director of DYS. "Family involvement is key, and I am committed to connecting youth and their families."

To schedule a facility visit, a family must first call the youth's social worker to be put on the approved visitation list at their youth's facility. Then families should call their youth's parole officer to reserve a bus seat. The number of visitors per youth is based on the facility security and youth's phase status. Visitors are subject to search, must dress and act appropriately, and must have a valid picture identification to enter the facility.

This project is designed to serve those families who cannot obtain transportation on their own. Trips are currently funded by a Juvenile Accountability Block Grant for the DYS Family Engagement Initiative called *CLOSE to Home (Connecting Loved Ones Sooner than Expected Project)*.

DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio and is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. DYS operates four juvenile correctional facilities, provides parole services from five regional sites and funds and supports over 610 direct service programs throughout the state.

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