



# wnewsj.com

Sign up for email alerts of breaking news by clicking on "Email Updates" below.

Wilmington News Journal • 47 S. South St. • Wilmington, Ohio • 45177

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

## State launches first advocacy program for families of youth

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

COLUMBUS — A new family advocacy program has begun to help families of youth committed to the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) navigate through the juvenile justice system.

A statewide organization, the Urban Minority Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Outreach Programs (UMADAOP), was selected to work as the liaison between service providers, DHS and the families.

"This program is a first of its kind and gives families a voice and an advocate to guide them through their child's release from DHS and make sure the entire family unit has access to needed services," said Tom Stickrath, Director of DHS. "Our system can be tough to understand. Even though resources exist for families, they might not be easy to identify.

A representative from UMADAOP will initiate contact with the youth and their family thirty days prior to the youth's release from a DHS facility. Through UMADAOP, the families will be connected to a comprehensive array of services including employment, education, health care, violence prevention and family counseling. Working with the Ohio Benefit Bank, UMADAOP will also help families check eligibility for work support benefits such as health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies and food stamps.

"As we help the youth in DHS reconnect with their families, our goal is to break down the barriers and confusion that might stop a family from receiving help," said Michael Langford, Executive Director of UMADAOP Cincinnati. "We will be there to answer questions, offer options, and make sure that those who want help receive it.

UMADAOP was selected among numerous applicants in part because of the organization's national recognition in creating and providing services that target socially and economically disadvantaged high-risk youth. The advocacy program is funded by a \$1 million Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant through the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GOFBCI), and an additional \$100 thousand from DHS to help youth who are not TANF eligible.

DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio. DHS 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. DHS operates eight correctional and rehabilitation facilities and provides parole services from six regional sites. UMADAOP offices located in Cincinnati, Akron, Dayton, Cleveland, Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Lorain, Toledo, Warren and Youngstown are closely aligned with the DHS regional offices.

Content © 2009 News Journal  
Software © 1998-2009 1up! Software, All Rights Reserved