

Stark County Job & Family Services

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Deborah Forkas, M.Ed Executive Director

Human Services · Children Services · Child Support



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May Is Public Assistance Fraud Awareness Month

Canton, OHIO – May is Public Assistance Fraud Awareness Month in Ohio. Stark County Job and Family Services is spreading the word that “Fraud Costs All of Us” and is sharing fraud information through meetings and community venues.

Executive Director Deborah Forkas reports, “Program integrity is of utmost importance when you are a steward of the public’s tax dollars. Our staff works diligently to ensure that benefits are as accurate as possible. This is critical for our agency’s financial stability, and for maintaining the public’s confidence and doing what is right for our customers in need.”

In 2015, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services disbursed about \$2.5 billion in SNAP food assistance, \$259 million in Ohio Works First cash assistance and \$573 million in child care subsidies. Individuals who mislead caseworkers or lie on an application for benefits account for a very small percentage of the funding disbursed, but the department takes even the smallest fraud cases very seriously.

Forkas notes, “Stark County has done excellent work in identifying and processing overpayment claims. The county ranks third in Ohio for establishing claims, and eighth for collecting overpaid benefits. This is notable considering Stark has the seventh largest caseload size in Ohio.”

Individuals found to be committing fraud are removed from the program, must repay any improperly obtained benefits, and may face criminal charges and jail time. Residents of Stark County may report suspected public assistance fraud by calling the fraud hotline at 330.451.8736 or going to www.jfs.ohio.gov/fraud.