



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **New director expected for Job and Family Services**

Interim Hamilton County Administrator Suzanne Burke is recommending that Rick Roberts be selected to replace her as Director of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services.

Burke, who is leaving the agency to become CEO of the Council on Aging, will present a resolution and a contract recommending Roberts to the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners at an upcoming meeting of the board.

"I am hopeful the commissioners will approve my recommendation," Burke said. "Rick would bring many excellent qualities to the position. He has broad expertise in our programs, many contacts at the state level, knowledge of best practices being used in other counties, and an open management style."

"I am confident Rick will continue the many initiatives that are underway at JFS to improve our programs and raise our profile in the community."

Job and Family Services is the largest department of Hamilton County government. It is the first stop for tens of thousands of residents who are trying to build a better life. The agency administers the government cash assistance, Food Stamp, Medicaid and Workforce Investment Act programs; enforces child support collection; and operates the 241-KIDS telephone line to protect children from abuse and neglect.

"My goal is to help us become the number one human services agency in Ohio and one of the best in the country," Roberts said. "Suzanne Burke always wanted us to be the leader and set the standard, and, if selected, I would continue that work."

Roberts has been an Assistant Director at JFS for three years. In that position, he was responsible for programs that support families moving from welfare to work, provide health insurance to the poor, and protect the elderly from abuse or neglect.

Among Roberts' top priorities is improving customer service. "We can always do better," he said, "but we have made great strides in assuring that the people who come to us are treated always with respect, professionalism and in a timely way."

Roberts said challenges include fulfilling mandates within budget constraints and carrying out complex initiatives and projects, such as the reform of the adoption process for abused and neglected children.

After graduating from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, Roberts started his career as a caseworker at Hamilton County JFS. He later worked in Butler County and then moved to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. He served at the state level for 16 years, including most recently as regional account manager. He was the main liaison between ODJFS and county human services, child support and children's services agencies. Before that, he was responsible for helping counties implement policies correctly, and providing technical assistance and training.

"I look forward to this opportunity, if selected," Roberts said. "My focus is on valuing every employee, as well as our customers and community partners, and communicating openly with them."

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