



**NEWS RELEASE – October 5, 2005**

**CONTACT:** Laurie Petrie, HCJFS Communications, 946-2188 or [petril@jfs.hamilton-co.org](mailto:petril@jfs.hamilton-co.org)

## **Sheriff's round up captures child support dodgers**

Hamilton County Sheriff's deputies arrested 28 people Tuesday as part of the Annual Statewide Sheriff's Round Up of parents who are not supporting their children.

Those arrested had warrants for failing to appear in Juvenile or Domestic Relations courts on charges that they are not paying their ordered child support. They are the parents of 50 children and collectively owe \$630,885.58 in child support. The 28 arrests cleared 46 warrants because some of those caught had warrants for multiple child support cases and other offenses.

"Sheriff Leis is committed to finding and arresting those people who are trying to skip out on their obligation to their children," said Maj. Dale Menkhaus, who led the sweep. "For the round-up, though, we made a special effort by assigning several two-person teams of deputies to the project."

The Sheriff's website, [www.hcso.org](http://www.hcso.org), lists the names and last known addresses of more than 3,000 "deadbeats" – people who have failed to appear in court on child support charges. Some have made child support payments in the past, but all have arrearages (past-due support). Some arrearages amount to tens of thousands of dollars. Some charges are felonies. Felony non-support is failure to make a child support payment for at least 104 consecutive weeks.

The annual Round Up is a collaborative effort among the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, county child support enforcement agencies (including the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services), local sheriff's offices and the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association. Thirty-nine counties are participating this year. Since its beginning in 1997, the annual Round Up has resulted in arrests of 1,988 people throughout Ohio. The number of arrests statewide for Oct. 4 is still being counted.

Sheriff's deputies search for child support offenders every day, but the Round-Up significantly boosted the number of arrests. This is the first time Hamilton County has participated in the Round-Up. From Sept. 26 through Oct. 3, there were 47 arrests, compared with the 28 for Oct. 4. So far this year, there have been 3,298 arrests, compared with 3,852 in 2004 and 3,381 in 2003.

"It is wrong – legally and morally – for parents to deprive their children of financial support," said Rick Roberts, director of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS). "Some do everything they can to avoid paying, including hiding from the law. We appreciate the extra help from the Sheriff's Office for this round-up. The threat of jail forces some to pay, but also sends a message that we are very serious about this."

Tuesday's arrests included 23 men and five women. One of those arrested, Rodney Harris, was on his porch as officers approached. Harris recognized one of them, ran into the house, locked the door and refused to surrender. Officers entered through a cardboard-covered window and

arrested Harris as he tried to flee up the stairs. During the arrest of another man, Kenneth White, deputies found a loaded 9 mm magazine in his pocket and a pistol in a bedroom. Because he had previous felony convictions for drug trafficking, White was not allowed to own a gun and was charged with having a weapon under disability. Three of those arrested turned themselves in after officers left notices at their homes. Seven of those arrested were also wanted on other charges including traffic violations, theft, probation violation and domestic violence.

HCJFS has recently created and distributed a "Most Wanted" poster with names and photos of eight parents who collectively owe \$308,000 in unpaid child support. The agency also partners with WCPO and the Sheriff's Office to broadcast photos of people with child support warrants. Anyone with information on the whereabouts of someone with a warrant on child support charges can call the Sheriff's Fugitive Warrants Line, 946-5350. Tipsters can remain anonymous.

The maximum sentence in a criminal non-support case can be up to 18 months in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

##

### **About Child Support in Hamilton County**

**The purpose of the child support program** is to provide children with an opportunity for a better life. By working with both parents to establish and enforce child support orders, Child Support Services helps children receive financial and medical support that has been ordered for them.

**Ohio's child support program touches the lives** of more children than any other public program except education.

**Child support is required by law.** Formed in 1988, the child support program is a federal, state and local partnership. It is empowered by the Social Security Act to locate parents, determine paternity, establish support obligations and collect child support.

**In Hamilton County,** Child Support Services is a division of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS).

**The local child support system** includes HCJFS, juvenile and domestic relations courts, the county prosecutor's office and the county sheriff.

**It is difficult to collect child support.** In Federal Fiscal Year 2004, Hamilton County collected about 64 percent of the child support that was owed by parents with current orders. That means more than 35 percent of the money currently owed to children went unpaid. More than 90 percent of child support cases have late or missing payments at some time during the year. That means cases accumulate arrearages, or overdue support. Some parents make payments on the arrearages; many do not. The website of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office includes a list of more than 3,000 so-called "deadbeats," – persons wanted for failure to pay child support. In addition, many cases do not even have court orders because the father has not been legally identified.

**In 2004,  
Hamilton County  
Child Support Services...**

**Collected \$154.9 million**

**Handled a monthly average of 94,671 cases**

**Collected \$1.4 million through drivers' license suspensions (121% increase over 2003)**

## **Services, eligibility and applications**

### **Eligibility:**

Open to all Hamilton County residents

Child support orders usually issued with a divorce

If you had a child out-of-wedlock, call the child support agency to: 1) establish paternity; 2) help you get an order for support

### **Applying:**

In person at: HCJFS, 222 E. Central Parkway, first floor

Walk-ins are seen Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

You must show a picture ID or birth certificate

### **Services:**

- Establishment of paternity
- Location of absent parents
- Establishment of child support orders
- Modification of child support orders
- Enforcement of existing orders
- Collection and disbursement of payments (state)
- Education, outreach and referrals to other services

## **Methods of collecting child support**

Administrative and law enforcement tools include:

- Wage withholding
- Interception of tax refunds
- Seizure of bank accounts
- License suspensions
- Credit Bureau reporting
- Interception of financial awards (e.g. bonuses)
- Contempt of court
- Criminal non-support

## Trends and Highlights

**Child Support is big:** About one in three Hamilton County residents is involved in a child support case.

**Enforcement tools with teeth:** Non-traditional enforcement tools such as driver's license suspension and bank account seizures are effective. In 2004, HCJFS ordered the suspension of 8,355 driver's licenses, a 62% increase over 2003. Nearly 3,000 licenses were reinstated and \$1.4 million collected, a 121% increase. In 2004, HCJFS seized \$780,588 from 656 bank accounts, a 107% increase over 2003.

**Child Support Planning Committee:** This group brings together representatives from various organizations who are involved in the county child support system, including HCJFS, Juvenile Court, the Prosecutor's Office, Court of Domestic Relations, private agencies and advocacy groups. Committee members share information and work on projects to improve collections and customer service.

**Customer Service improves:** Our new call center handles 20,000 calls a month at 946-7387. Callers hear a helpful voice at the other end of the line, not an answering machine. The percentage of callers who hang up before getting help has dropped from 27 % to less than five %- on par with the highest industry standards.

## Help and contact information

### Mailing address

HCJFS  
Child Support Services  
222 E. Central Parkway  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

### Telephone, fax and e-mail

946-SETS (7387)  
Fax: (513) 946-1430  
www.hcjfs.org (click on Child Support Help)  
Customer complaints: 946-2300

### Payments

Ohio Child Support Payment Central  
PO Box 182372  
Columbus, OH 43218-2372

### Cash and credit card payments

800 Broadway - first floor  
Cincinnati, OH

### 24-hour automated information

1-800-860-2555  
<http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocs>

*Fact sheets about child support: [www.hcjfs.org](http://www.hcjfs.org). Click on Clients, then Child Support*