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**Changes Make it Even More Difficult for Deadbeat Parents to Travel Abroad**

**Cincinnati (May 1, 2007)** Parents who owe child support could be barred from driving to Niagara Falls or cruising to an island paradise until they pay up if they are targeted under the county's Passport Denial Program.

In addition, changes in the program will increase the number of parents who can have their passports denied and the amount of time it will take to get the denied passport reinstated.

The Department of Job and Family Services' Child Support Enforcement Agency has long used its authority to deny passports as one of its tools to collect unpaid child support. Last year, the Department denied nearly 20,000 passports. Those passports are usually only released once the parent makes arrangements to pay the delinquent child support.

Now, new travel restrictions taking effect Jan. 1 will require passports for land or sea travel to places such as Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean (air travel to these destinations already requires a passport). In addition to that change, the threshold for denying a passport has dropped from \$5,000 in unpaid child support to \$2,500.

The Department expects these changes to increase the number of passports it denies.

"It's not really right that a parent who has promised to support their children is cruising to the sunny Bahamas while their child sits at home under cloudy skies because they aren't sure how they'll afford to buy school supplies this year," said Jeffrey Startzman, assistant director of the county's Child Support Enforcement Agency. "We'll do everything we can to spoil that vacation and ensure this county's children receive the support they're entitled to."

Because of the huge increase in the number of people who have applied for passports now that they are required for travel to nearby locales, the Department of State has notified states it will take much longer for those who have been denied passports to have them reinstated. An expedited process that usually takes two to three days will now take two to four weeks, and the regular process which once took two to three weeks now takes 10 to 12 weeks.

“Basically, if we deny your passport – even if you turn around and pay up the money you owe that week – you are going to have a difficult time traveling anywhere for weeks,” Startzman said. “It is much better to just step up to the plate now, contact us and make arrangements to pay off your arrearage.”

The Department’s Child Support Enforcement Agency handles about 95,000 cases right now. Last year, it collected \$155 million for families that might not otherwise have had the financial support necessary to pay for such items as food, medical care, child care, school clothes and school supplies. Many of the children who do not receive child support turn to public assistance, with taxpayers providing financial support.

In addition to denying passports, Hamilton County Child Support uses a variety of tools to collect child support, including a Most Wanted poster, freezing and seizing funds from bank accounts, intercepting tax refunds and suspending licenses.

### **About Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services**

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, adult protection, child care, tuberculosis control, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food stamp disbursement and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands of residents each year. The Department of Job and Family Services is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.