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**Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services
Provides Update on Case Reviews and Reforms**

Cincinnati (July 25, 2007) A review of 3,057 Hamilton County Children's Services cases found more than 97 percent had a home visit by a department caseworker within the past 45 days. The review also found no case-management concerns in cases where children had been recent victims of serious physical harm, as was found by a local judge in the case that sparked the review.

The original review, completed on Friday within 48 hours of County Commissioners requesting it, found more than 96 percent of the cases had a recent home visit. But a closer examination of the remaining 110 cases found 23 where a visit had taken place but was missed in the review.

Of the remaining 87 cases – all of which have now had a home visit where the child or children were determined to be safe -- the review found:

- Twenty eight required only a final visit to the home to close the case.
- Thirteen involved a child who had run away or a family that could not be found. In these cases, caseworkers have unsuccessfully tried to find the families/children.
- Forty-six cases where caseworkers appear to be delinquent in meeting the mandated visitation requirements.

Of the 46 cases, 33 are attributable to four workers. Three of the workers are either pending disciplinary action or already on a Corrective Action Plan. The fourth worker resigned from the agency in early July.

The remaining 13 cases are spread among seven workers and appear to be isolated incidents of missed visits.

“We’re disappointed some of our employees have failed to be professional and carry out their duties as they have been trained,” said Director Moira Weir. “But it’s important to note the overwhelming majority of our employees have followed our policies and procedures and acted with the best interests of children in mind. During this review, we saw many examples where our workers did wonderful work and made great decisions.”

JFS management will now conduct a more extensive review in the upcoming week of other important casework components, including decision making and service delivery.

Hamilton County Commissioners and County Administrator Patrick Thompson requested the review after receiving a letter from Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Melba Marsh criticizing the agency for a lack of oversight on a case before her court.

“The handling of the case before Judge Marsh was disappointing and unacceptable, and employees who fall short of their duties will face disciplinary action,” Weir said. “Even though we’ve determined this is not a widespread problem within the department, we’re intent on continuing down the path of reform Commissioners have laid out for us. We are committed to improving the service we provide, as well as becoming more accountable and accessible to the public.”

Administrator Thompson said three employees have been suspended based on the mishandling of the case before Judge Marsh.

“Pre-disciplinary hearings are taking place this week and final outcomes determined soon thereafter,” he said. “We want to take the appropriate disciplinary steps here, learn from this, put it behind us and move forward with a renewed commitment to keeping the children of Hamilton County safe.”

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.