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**Hamilton County Job and Family Services Becomes First in Ohio  
to Offer Private Online Chats on Child Support Cases**

**Cincinnati (May 19, 2009)** Hamilton County residents with questions about their child support cases can now have private online chats with a caseworker to get the answers they need.

Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services now offers the private chats 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. weekdays to help those with specific questions about their child support cases. The county has traditionally offered monthly general, public chats on child support, but confidential, case-specific information could not be discussed in a public forum.

The agency is now using technology to conduct two-way chats that limit the information's visibility to just the father or mother and the caseworker. The chat is another attempt by the Department of Job and Family Services, which handles child support collection, child welfare and public assistance programs, to be more accessible and open to its consumers and the public at large.

"We have nearly 200,000 mothers and fathers who do child support business with us each year and we want to make it easier for them," said Moira Weir, director of the agency, which handles child support collection, child welfare and public assistance programs. "We are adding to the tool box when it comes to getting your questions answered and getting them answered quickly."

Weir said Hamilton County believes it is the first in the state and among few in the nation offering this service.

"We've been very aggressive with new technology and see it as not only a way to communicate important information to our consumers, but as a way to alleviate crowded lobbies and phone lines," she said.

The Department's Child Support Enforcement Agency handled 88,000 cases and collected nearly \$155 million last year for families that might not otherwise have had the money 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.

Child Support customers in search of information on their individual cases can submit questions by visiting the agency's Web site, [www.hcjfs.org](http://www.hcjfs.org), and clicking on a link in the Child Support section (under the Services area).

## **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, elderly protection, child care, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food stamp disbursement and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands each year and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.