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**Nearly 135,000 Receive Holiday Food Aid from Hamilton County**

**Cincinnati (Nov. 23, 2010)** Nearly 135,000 Hamilton County residents will receive food assistance from Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services this holiday season, allowing them a brief respite from tough economic times.

A record number of recipients receive monthly debit cards from the agency, allowing them to buy groceries for their families. The families qualify for the aid based on their low incomes.

“Many of these families lost jobs or were forced to take lower-paying jobs because of our economy,” said Moira Weir, director of the Job and Family Services Department. “About a third of the people who have come to us for help over the past two years had not been here before, or at least not in the previous five years. These are hard-working people who were suddenly faced with not being able to feed their children.

“We are an agency that helps and this is something we do 365 days a year, but it is especially poignant that we can be a rock for this community to lean on during the holidays. We want everyone to know we are here and, if you qualify, you too can receive help.”

Recipients can earn up to 130 percent of the federal poverty level and still qualify for assistance. That is nearly \$29,000 for a family of four.

“Most of our food assistance recipients are working families,” Weir said. “But they are sometimes forced to make a decision about paying the electric bill or putting food on the table. We help them stretch their paychecks a little further. We are glad we can help put a holiday dinner on the table.”

To apply for assistance, Hamilton County residents can visit <http://ODJFSBenefits.ohio.gov> and fill out an online application. After an individual fills out the online application, the paperwork is automatically forwarded to a county caseworker for review. The process is quick, easy and secure. Users who have difficulty with the application can call Hamilton County Job and Family Services at 946-1000 for assistance.

**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 assistance 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.