

Belmont County Department of Job and Family Services

68145 Hammond Road, St. Clairsville OH 43950
(740) 695-1075



Interim Director
Mike Schlanz

County Commissioners
J. P. Dutton
Jerry Echemann
Josh Meyer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 17, 2020

BELMONT COUNTY JFS ANNOUNCES OPERATIONAL PLANS DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

ST. CLAIRSVILLE, OH – The Belmont County Department of Job and Family Services announces it will maintain agency operations during the COVID-19 Crisis that is gripping Ohio and the United States. However, changes are in place to protect the general public and agency staff from contracting the virus. BCDJFS management continue to monitor the evolving situation and will adapt operations according to guidance from the Ohio Governor’s office and Ohio Department of Health in conjunction with the Belmont County Board of Commissioners.

“During these uncertain times, it is imperative that the vital work our staff performs every day to ensure the safety and well-being of our neighbors and relatives continues without interruption,” Interim Director Mike Schlanz said. “Being able to continue eligibility determination in our public assistance unit, process child support payments, protect children and elderly and provide workforce services to the public is critical right now. We must do so with the safety of our staff in mind so the following changes are being implemented to achieve that goal.”

Effective immediately, the BCDJFS office located at 68145 Hammond Road in St. Clairsville (Fox-Shannon office) will be closed to the public. The office will maintain normal office hours of Monday-Friday 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM. Individuals may still drop verifications off at the agency and pick-up applications for public assistance benefits (Medicaid, Ohio Works First, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/SNAP). Any verifications being left will be copied by agency staff and returned along with a receipt via US Mail. A secure drop box will be installed early next week to ease this inconvenience. Individuals are encouraged to do as much business as possible through electronic means during this crisis. Applications may be filed on-line, changes may be reported, interim reports and renewals may all be done by logging onto <https://Benefits.Ohio.Gov>. Applications for all programs can also be printed off the agency website at <https://BelmontCDJFS.com>. You can also find directions on how to create an online account on the agency website. You may also call 1-844-640-6446 to apply, renew or report changes. The Belmont County JFS can be reached during normal business hours at 740-695-1075 or 1-800-494-1616.

Child support payments are still being accepted at the Fox-Shannon location during normal business hours. Individuals will not be permitted into the building but will use the existing intercom system to explain they are present to pay their child support. A child support staff member will come to the lobby to accept the payment and issue a receipt. Beginning next week, individuals will submit their payment in the secure drop box and receipts will be mailed. Obligors paying child support should print their name and social security number on a piece of paper to submit with their payment. Envelopes will be provided for the drop box. CSEA staff will maintain the current agency policy for answering phone calls at 740-695-1075 or 1-800-494-1616.

The resource room at the Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ) Center located at 302 Walnut Street in Martins Ferry

will be open for public access during the crisis. The hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM. The public using the resource room will have no personal interaction with agency staff while using the computers in the resource room. Questions for the OMJ Center may be directed to 740-633-5627 or 1-877-516-5627. The OMJ center is not the unemployment office. We will provide general information on unemployment benefits. BCDJFS staff are not able to assist applicants with completing applications for unemployment benefits. Individuals are strongly encouraged to file for unemployment benefits online 24/7 at <http://unemployment.ohio.gov>. You may also file by telephone at 1-877-644-6562 or by TTY (for hearing impaired individuals) at 1-888-642-8203.

Children Services and Adult Protective Services staff will still be answering and investigating complaint calls. Staff will be available to answer the complaint line during the agency's normal business hours. Staff will maintain the after hours and weekends on-call availability. The general public will not be permitted into the children services unit. Children services staff and supervisors are monitoring the evolving situation daily to determine the need of continuing parent-child visits. Changes to already scheduled visitations will be communicated to biological parents, kinship households and foster families should a change in visitation schedules be necessitated by the crisis.

“Residents should expect some delay in returning phone calls due to an anticipated increase in phone calls and voice mail messages while public access to our buildings is restricted,” Schlanz added. “Our staff is working diligently to maintain our level of service while this national emergency evolves. We will follow all directives from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services when it comes to the work we perform under the emergency guidelines they may or have already implemented. These operational changes are fluid and may change per directives from the Governor’s office, Ohio Department of Health or ODJFS. We ask for the public’s patience as we are navigating the same uncertainty they are.”

Updates to operational changes will be made as necessary and communicated on the BCDJFS web site at <http://BelmontCDJFS.com>. Changes will also be made on the main phone greeting by calling 740-695-1075 or 1-800-494-1616.

-30-

News Editors: For more information, please contact Mike Schlanz at 740-695-1075 extension 1418.