

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, dedicated employees have kept crucial services operating for the citizens of Clermont County.

Employees like the screeners in Children's Protective Services don masks, disinfect their workspaces, frequently wash their hands and practice social distancing to ensure service delivery continues.

This month, learn about extraordinary efforts in the Department of Job and Family Services, Developmental Disabilities, the County Engineer's Office and Water Resources.



Screeners ensure children are safe

By Tina Pocock

DJFS -- Children's Protective Services

Screeners (Catherine Ruff, Shelly Cornett and Rebecca Moore) are the backbone of the agency. While the majority of our staff are working remotely at this time, our screeners are reporting into the office each day. They are following social distancing protocols to protect themselves and their coworkers while working hard at their jobs to ensure that the children of our community are safe.

The screeners continue to receive calls of abuse, neglect and dependency during the current pandemic. They are an essential step in safety. Once a report is received, the screeners make sure that it is recorded and provided timely to their supervisor for a screening decision. Once a decision is made on the report they received, the case can then be assigned to an Investigator to further make efforts to ensure the safety of the children. The screeners understand the value and the importance of their role.

While the number of calls is currently down, screeners are working hard to remind the community of the importance of reporting whenever abuse or neglect is suspected. Without the screeners, we would not be able to serve the community as effectively as we do. Each day they continue to enter the building so that they can serve the families and children of Clermont County in the most effective way possible. We are so very thankful for our screeners!

Public Assistance helps people through rough times

By Shonya Agin

DJFS -- Public Assistance Services

I have the pleasure of supervising the staff in the Job and Family Services Public Assistance Division.

During this COVID19 pandemic the stories I have heard and the acts of kindness that I have observed made it clear to me why they are considered essential employees.

For the young mothers who were pregnant and needed Medicaid approved so they could receive prenatal care; and the joyous reports of the newborns.

For the working families that found themselves unemployed were embarrassed and ashamed for having to apply for public assistance.

For the families that called who were afraid of losing their home or apartment and needed help paying their mortgage, rent, utilities or other services.

For the Nursing Homes and family members that applied for individuals to receive skilled nursing home care services; and the reports of their loved one passing in the nursing home and not being able to be by their side to comfort them.

For the parents who called and reported the loss of child support and needed additional benefits to supplement their monthly income.

For the individuals that were struggling with a mental health illness and needed prescriptions; weekly dialysis or cancer treatments.

The Public Assistance workers approved their Medicaid and/or issued SNAP and TANF benefits so they could have access to medical care, purchase food for their families, and were able to pay their rent and/or utility bills. The consumers shared their fears, anger, frustration, embarrassment, and shame. The staff felt their emotional pain and consoled them and let them know they weren't in this alone. Staff never looked for glory, praise, or recognition. Instead they volunteered to work overtime to ensure the citizens of Clermont County received the services they so desperately needed during this state of emergency. I wanted to thank them for the great job they have done and the services they have provided to the community.

OhioMeansJobs offers helping hand to newly unemployed

By Ted Groman

DJFS -- OhioMeansJobs

OhioMeansJobs Clermont has taken steps to adjust our services and staff have taken some extraordinary steps to ensure that services are available to the public. Here is a summary about Nikki Stanley and her on-site work at OMJ the past several weeks:

Nikki took in hundreds of unemployment calls the last couple of weeks of March and helped customers who were coming to the center looking for hands-on assistance in applying for Unemployment Insurance. Once phone and foot traffic slowed down, thanks to a new recording on our phone system and signage throughout the building, she converted two of our workshops to a digital platform: resume writing and interview preparation. We held a live watch party on Facebook on April 14 for the resume writing workshop. An event was posted to Facebook soon for an Interview Preparation Workshop watch party on April 21. Our goal is to have Nikki look into the other workshops and convert them into a digital platform as well, making them more accessible.



Clermont DD staff prepare boxes from IPM and United Way for delivery to families and individuals. Pictured in front, left to right: Suzanne Diesel, Community Relations; Janie Pfankuch, Superintendent's Office. In back: Angie Stanton, Community Relations; James Taylor, Facilities/Maintenance.

People with developmental disabilities help their community

By Lisa Davis

Clermont DD

At the Clermont County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Clermont DD), onsite programs (Early Intervention, School Age and Adult Services) have been held on virtual platforms since March. This includes adapted e-learning for students and virtual home visits/therapy sessions for babies and toddlers. Adult Services individuals have been at home with family or in residential settings. Social workers from Clermont DD (which are known in the DD field as Service and Support Administrators) as well as support staff from the Adult Services Program are keeping in weekly contact with each individual, family, and group home to ensure they have necessary supplies during this stay-at-home period.

Essential workers have been onsite at Clermont DD each day, making sure the agency needs are met. Superintendent Dan Ottke is running the agency with a "business as usual" attitude, adapting to the new ways of virtual business. Department directors are in the office each day to handle day-to-day operations; this includes Community Support Services, Early Intervention, School Age, and Behavioral Services. The Facilities/Maintenance Supervisor manages emergency supplies, working with providers and families who may be running low on essential items needed for those in their care. Additionally, the Clermont DD Community Relations Department has been working with United Way, InterParish Ministries (IPM), and several other agencies to identify those who need necessary groceries and have no way to shop for themselves. Clermont DD now serves as a food hub and works weekly to distribute the food provided by IPM.

Staff employed by Clermont DD are not the only essential workers. Many individuals from Clermont DD's Community Employment Services Department have found themselves in essential jobs as well. In fact, 53 percent of the individuals served by Community Employment Services are currently working their regular shifts at Kroger, Walmart, Tractor Supply, Pine Brook Retirement Community, Dualite, and Round Bottom Recycling. The five individuals working at Deimling/Jeliho Plastics in Amelia are making hand sanitizer bottles that will soon be on the shelves of a store near you. The individuals serving as Patient Ambassadors at Mercy Hospital Anderson work their shifts alongside doctors, nurses, and other dedicated medical staff. And the list goes on and on.

Sometimes, there is a misconception that people with developmental disabilities are "taken care of" in one way or another...during the COVID-19 crisis, we are seeing that some of those people who have developmental disabilities are taking care of their community.



Water Resources works behind the scenes

Lyle Bloom

Water Resources

Although often taken for granted, amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the need for safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater treatment is more important now than ever. The dedicated team at the Clermont County Water Resources Department continues to work behind the scenes to make sure our customers

have just that. Team members continue to safely and efficiently operate and maintain the County's eight (8) wastewater treatment plants, three (3) drinking water plants, 107 lift stations, over 800 miles of water main and over 700 miles of sewer lines.



Engineer's Office makes adjustments to keep roads safe

*By Jeremy Evans
County Engineer*

We have continued to work on maintaining and improving our Clermont County roads throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, although we've had to adapt some of our routines and procedures due to the social distancing requirements.

In addition to more frequent sanitizing/disinfecting, our most notable changes include limiting vehicle occupancy to one person per vehicle, utilizing equipment to perform tasks that two or more people might have previously accomplished jointly (i.e. heavy equipment to lift brush/debris instead of by hand), and have been re-prioritizing tasks to identify work that can most easily be accomplished while maintaining those safe social distancing requirements.

Since the COVID-19 changes, we have continued to work on cleaning and maintaining ditches, trimming trees and roadside vegetation, patching potholes, replacing culverts, and repairing and replacing bridges. We've also spent considerable time cleaning up debris from the tornado outbreak that hit

Clermont County during the night of April 8. The pictures below show some of this storm cleanup, pothole patching, culvert work on Lindale Nicholasville Road, and a bridge replacement on Lindale Mt. Holly Road.

