



Governor's Office of Health Transformation

John R. Kasich, Governor

Greg Moody, Director

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Eric Poklar, Director of Government Affairs and Communications

614-752-1554 | eric.poklar@governor.ohio.gov

Ohio Takes Next Steps to Improve Background Checks for Home-Health Workers

System will protect seniors and people with disabilities, save providers' time and money

COLUMBUS – The Governor's Office of Health Transformation (OHT) today announced that Ohio has been awarded a \$2.1 million federal grant to improve criminal background checks for direct-care workers in home- and community-based settings (HCBS). The administration will match the funds from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) with \$700,000 in state resources.

Ohio will use the funds to extend use of the Ohio Attorney General's Retained Applicant Fingerprint Database Information Exchange (RAPBACK) system to individuals who are working as direct-care providers. The electronic system will make post-hiring background checks timelier and less burdensome, saving time and money for taxpayers and home-health provider agencies and improving safety for individuals who receive Medicaid services in their own home or other community-based setting.

"Governor Kasich has championed the cause of providing Ohioans with more choice and better quality in long-term care," said OHT Director Greg Moody. "It is important that seniors and people with disabilities can trust the service providers that come into their homes, and this program will ensure that home-based services are of the highest quality."

In 2012, OHT led an initiative among Ohio Medicaid and the Departments of Aging, Developmental Disabilities and Health, along with the Ohio Attorney General's Office and a number of health-care advocates, to identify new ways to enhance and streamline criminal background checks for HCBS providers. As a result of their work, the state has implemented improved, uniform standards—including a new requirement that direct-care workers obtain post-hiring background checks at least every five years—for more than 100,000 direct-care workers in Ohio, primarily in Medicaid- and Medicare-funded settings.

The RAPBACK system monitors and reports post-hiring convictions in real time, allowing offenders with disqualifying convictions to be removed from their jobs immediately. The three-year demonstration for home-care workers who are required to obtain background checks will begin July 1 and will also include:

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77 South High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-752-3471
www.healthtransformation.ohio.gov
Twitter @OHTohio

- Implementation of recently enacted statutory requirements for uniformity and consistency in background checks;
- training and technical support for appropriate use of RAPBACK technology;
- the creation of a web-based avenue to access national and state registries; and
- an ongoing dialogue and partnership between key state agencies, providers and stakeholder groups regarding additional ways to ensure consumer safety.

“In partnership with our sister state agencies, the Attorney General’s Office and other stakeholders, Ohio has come a long way in the past year to protect individuals who receive Medicaid services in their homes,” said Ohio Medicaid Director John McCarthy. “With the RAPBACK system, Ohio has a reliable way to quickly identify people who have been convicted of crimes and prohibit them from providing care to seniors and people with disabilities. The system will also relieve provider agencies and their employees from much of the burden that has previously been associated with background checks, saving them time and money and allowing providers to focus on their core mission of serving Ohioans.”

“We are pleased to be working with Governor Kasich to expand this program,” said Attorney General Mike DeWine. “Now, the Attorney General’s Office will be able to immediately notify employers of many home-care workers of an arrest or a conviction. This is extremely important as we work with the Governor’s Office of Health Transformation to help ensure the safety of individuals receiving home and community-based services.”

Coordination and oversight of the project will be led by OHT and Ohio Medicaid. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office will be responsible for building and monitoring the increased RAPBACK capacity, and the Departments of Aging, Developmental Disabilities, Health and Mental Health will assist in implementing the new background check policies.

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