

## States Engaging Human Need with Community Partners: Ohio and At-Risk Youth

During adolescence and the transition to adulthood, youth are expected to develop the social, character, and leadership skills. They are expected to gather the tools that will prepare them to succeed. However, some youth live in atypical situations that limit their access to family, community, and government supports which hinders that preparation.

Ohio Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GOFBCI) has partnered with the Ohio Department of Youth Services in an initiative aimed at helping youth and families involved with the juvenile justice system.

The Mentoring Vulnerable Youth grant seeks to reduce the likelihood that at-risk youth will later become incarcerated or have an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. GOFBCI has awarded this grant to twelve organizations committed to empowering youth to succeed through mentoring programs that include other wrap-around services.

Hungry children are another vulnerable population GOFBCI targets to receive its resources. GOFBCI's Feed Ohio grant funds enable food program sponsors to establish new sites in communities by assisting with the start-up and program costs. Along with providing meals to these children, each site will provide enrichment activities to feed their minds as well. The Summer Food programs will operate from June to August and the Feed Ohio grant awards will add a total of 49 sites located in 30 cities in 23 counties. GOFBCI plans to offer the Feed Ohio program support grant opportunity annually.

Finally, GOFBCI has assisted in the reestablishment of the Ohio Fatherhood Commission. With regional grants awarded during the summer of 2008, organizations will be in place to promote strong, healthy relationships between fathers and their children. GOFBCI will partner with faith-based and community organizations working in collaboration throughout Ohio to ensure fathers have the resources they need to play a positive role in the lives of their children.

The second program is the [African American Healthy Marriage Initiative](#) which is a five year demonstration project from the Administration for Children and Families. This initiative recruits couples to participate in an eight hour marriage education course to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to sustain a healthy marriage. The initiative is a strategy for achieving child well-being, recognizing that children do best when raised by both parents in a committed, healthy marriage. The Ohio project operates in Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo.