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Ohio Department of Youth Services Offers Free Bus Rides to Reunite Families

Seats Available departing Akron and Cleveland for June 16 Father's Day Weekend Trip

Columbus, Ohio — Fifty percent of the youth in the custody of the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) do not receive family visits during the average 12-month stay. Free bus trips are now part of the agency's Family Engagement Initiative aimed at involving family in their youth's rehabilitation and reentry into the community.

On Saturday, June 16, 2012, buses will depart Dayton and Cincinnati for families visiting youth at Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. Buses will depart Akron and Cleveland for families visiting youth at Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility. There is still room on the Cleveland and Akron bus so call and reserve your seat today!

To schedule a facility visit, a family must first call the youth's social worker to be put on the approved visitation list at their youth's facility. Then families should call their youth's parole officer to reserve a bus seat. The number of visitors per youth is based on the facility security and youth's phase status. Visitors are subject to search, must dress and act appropriately, and must have a valid picture identification to enter the facility.

This project is designed to serve those families who cannot obtain transportation on their own. Trips are funded by a federal grant from the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services for the DYS Family Engagement Initiative called *CLOSE to Home (Connecting Loved Ones Sooner than Expected Project)*.

The first bus trip on Mother's Day weekend was a success for families. Lakefront Lines transported 24 family members from Cleveland and Akron, Ohio to Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility in Delaware, Ohio, and Omega Transporters LLC transported seven family members from Columbus, Ohio to Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility in Massillon, Ohio. Several parents expressed their appreciation in personal notes with the following comments:

"It really lifted my spirits to be able to see my boy. Please keep the transportation to and from facilities..."

"This visit meant the reunion of a family at a time in which it was needed. It's hard, at times, to keep visits when you stay so far away from the correctional facility."

“I have not seen [him] in 2 months. I have no transportation to be able to see him. The day before Mother’s Day was the best present God could have gave me.”

“My son was so happy to see me and his brother...I know this gave him hope.”

One parent, who has not seen her daughter in four years, was so appreciative of the service that she repeatedly thanked the DYS regional administrator.

DYS plans to host bus trips every month for the remainder of 2012. More information is available on the DYS website at www.DYS.ohio.gov on the family tab. Some future dates include:

Date	From	To
Saturday, June 16	Dayton, Cincinnati	Cuyahoga Hills JCF
	Akron, Cleveland	Circleville JCF
Saturday July 14	Toledo and Elyria	Indian River JCF
	Columbus	Cuyahoga Hills JCF
Saturday, July 21	Cleveland	Indian River JCF
	Dayton and Cincinnati	Circleville JCF
Saturday, August 11	To be determined	To be determined

DYS is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio and is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. DYS operates four correctional and rehabilitation facilities and provides parole services from five regional sites.

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