

NEWS RELEASE

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Burns Named Association Outstanding Director of the Year

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Summit County Department of Job and Family Services Director Terri Burns has been recognized as the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association (OJFSDA) **2025 Outstanding Director of the Year.**

Each December, the Association recognizes a county Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) director who, through dedicated efforts throughout the span of their career, exemplifies the professional qualities and achievements of an outstanding Director. Director Burns received numerous nominations from her peers and was officially announced as the 2025 recipient during OJFSDA's membership meeting on Friday, December 12, 2025.

Burns began her tenure in the JFS system as an Assistant Director of Fiscal Operations for the Portage County Department of Job and Family Services. After 9 years in that role, she joined Summit County JFS in 2014 as Assistant Director of Fiscal Operations. She became Director of the department just four years later in 2018. Prior to the JFS system, Director Burns spent over a decade in fiscal operations for Northeast Ohio Medical University.

As Director, Burns is responsible for administering the County's public assistance, related employment and training, and adult protective services programs. These programs need sound fiscal stewardship to be successful, and Burns has emerged as a statewide leader in this area. She chairs the OJFSDA Fiscal Committee and has grown the committee to its largest membership. She has developed training modules and tools that have improved fiscal management and stewardship of JFS programs, and has emerged as the "go-to" for fiscal advice system-wide.

"I am deeply honored and humbled by this recognition. This achievement, however, is not mine alone. It reflects the dedication, support, and collaboration of many people, especially the Summit County staff," said Summit County JFS Director Terri Burns. "Leadership is essential during these challenging times, and I am honored to serve alongside the many dedicated JFS directors across the state."

“As Director of Summit County JFS, Terri has demonstrated exceptional leadership, deep fiscal expertise, and an unwavering commitment to both her staff and the residents of our community”, said County Executive Ilene Shapiro. “In every respect, Terri exemplifies what it means to be an outstanding public servant. I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition.”

“Terri has earned the respect and admiration of her peers across the state because of her willingness to lead numerous collaborative efforts to improve the JFS system,” said OJFSDA President Jeff Felton. “She is constantly called upon by her peers at the state and county level for advice on fiscal matters, and she is one of foremost experts in the state at navigating the complexities of federal funding streams for multiple human service programs,” he added.

“Terri Burns’ leadership style and tireless efforts to improve the job and family service system have served the state and counties extremely well during her career,” said Jon Honeck, Executive Director for the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors’ Association.

“For the past two decades she has been an unquestioned champion to protect the most vulnerable in our society, improve services for those in need, address poverty by developing work and training opportunities for unemployed and underemployed Ohioans, and to make the government assistance programs in her charge more efficient. She is a tireless advocate for the clients in Summit County and her staff. At the same time, she has contributed statewide to the fiscal health of the JFS system by creating and designing training opportunities for fiscal staff across the state in all 88 counties. Terri is a dedicated, selfless public servant and it is an honor to recognize her as the OJFSDA 2025 Outstanding Director of the Year.”

The Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association is a not-for-profit statewide organization established in 1946. OJFSDA represents Ohio's 88 County Departments of Job and Family Services Directors on the local, state, and national level. OJFSDA communicates key issues and solutions regarding the delivery of social services to Ohio policymakers, legislators, and other decision makers.

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