

## **Priority Issue: Unemployment**

Ohio faces some of the greatest challenges in the country as we deal with an increasing population of unemployed workers as employers have cut back or left the region. Ohio's unemployment rate was 10.8% in January 2010. The number of workers unemployed in Ohio in January was 641,000. The number of unemployed has increased by 126,000 in the past 12 months up from 515,000. Relative to the U.S. unemployment rate for January of 9.7%, Ohio has its challenges and the news may continue to be bad for an extended period even after the national economy improves. (Source: *Ohio Department of Job and Family Services December 18, 2009 News Release*).

United Way through its member agencies provides a wide array of support for individuals and families impacted by job loss. The impacts vary, and can range from utility assistance or food bank support to supplement family needs to shelters, counseling, or training services.

### **Of particular focus in this economic downturn are the following areas of greatest concern:**

- Social services funding from the State of Ohio are being cut at the same time as critical dependencies on those programs have increased as a result of unemployment.
- Nine Ohio Counties have unemployment rates in excess of 14% being of rural populations that have limited infrastructure to cope and support.
- Classes of employees from specific industries all over the state are losing out as jobs from industries reduce in size or move out completely. Every part of the state has seen industry segments like automotive, specialty manufacturing and a host of other industries leave without good replacements to take the place and provide good jobs.
- The duration of this economic downturn for the Ohio region may outlast federal stimulus money that has helped programs for 2010. History has shown that Ohio lags other states in a recovery. Ohio could lag as much as five to ten years.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) also needs to maintain adequate funding levels to assure Ohio's unemployed and their families are provided financial and job training assistance, and to provide counsel to uncertain employers as needed. We also acknowledge while ODJFS offers programs and training to Ohio's unemployed, the need for job creation is now greater than ever as there are no jobs for the newly retrained to transition into.

### **Ohio United Way requests:**

- Legislators stress job creation and job sustainability as a priority for legislation in the coming months.
- Legislators give consideration to support social service programs that directly provide assistance for job retraining, gap relief for families out of work and for job rehabilitation.
- Demographics and dynamics on who are unemployed show both new venues and new issues. Old tools and old biases don't work.
- More incentives for business to re-employ. Need to encourage legislation with incentive for harder hit areas and for targeted classes of citizens.