

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Summit County DJFS Awarded \$200,000 Federal Pilot Grant to Strengthen Adult Protective Services Response to Substance Use

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO— Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro’s Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS) Adult Protective Services (APS) Division, which protects vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, has been awarded \$200,000 through the 2026 Administration for Community Living (ACL) APS Opioid Innovation Project, “Safer Aging, Better Health.” Summit County was selected as one of only five pilot sites nationwide through the initiative, which provides funding and technical assistance to agencies implementing evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for individuals impacted by substance use disorders. The initiative is administered in partnership with WRMA, a subsidiary of TriMetrix, Inc. that provides consulting and technical assistance for health and human services initiatives nationwide.

“This pilot project reflects Summit County’s continued commitment to protecting vulnerable residents and strengthening access to supportive services,” said Executive Shapiro. “By enhancing collaboration between adult protective services, behavioral health providers, and community partners, we can better identify substance use concerns and connect individuals and families with the care and resources they need.”

The funding will support the implementation of Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) practices within Summit County APS. The initiative is designed to help APS professionals better identify and respond to substance use concerns impacting older adults and vulnerable populations.

“This project will strengthen our ability to identify and respond to substance use concerns that often intersect with abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation cases,” said Cathi Rufener, Deputy Director of APS at Summit County DJFS. “The funding and technical support provided through this pilot will help our APS team connect individuals and families with critical community resources and services.”

According to the grant application, Summit County APS received 2,955 referrals in 2025 involving allegations of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation, with self-neglect representing the largest category of screened-in investigations.

As part of this pilot project, all Summit County APS investigators and supervisors will receive specialized training related to substance use screening, intervention strategies, and referral coordination. The project will also strengthen collaboration between APS and community partners.

The implementation team for the project includes Cathi Rufener, Deputy Director of Summit County APS; Amy Cooper, APS Program Manager; Kathryn Brenneman, APS Supervisor; and Brian Moll, Social Program Analyst and Unite Us Coordinator.

Additional implementation support will be provided through collaboration with the Summit County Executive's Office staff, Summit County Public Health, and the County of Summit ADM Board, helping strengthen coordination between adult protective services, behavioral health, and community-based program support systems.

The pilot project is scheduled to begin in May 2026 and continue through May 2027.

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