

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Summit County Receives National Achievement Award for Innovative Job and Family Services Outreach Program

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO— Summit County has received a 2026 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the Summit County Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) Outreach Services program. The national award recognizes innovative county government programs that strengthen services for residents and improve quality of life in local communities. Summit County was recognized for reimagining how public services are delivered by bringing assistance directly into neighborhoods and trusted community locations throughout the county.

The JFS Outreach Services program was created to make it easier for individuals and families to access benefits, receive case management assistance, and get answers to questions about available services without the barriers often associated with traditional service delivery. By meeting residents where they are, outreach staff provide in-person guidance with applications, case updates, and program navigation at public libraries, schools, hospitals, housing sites, and community partner organizations throughout Summit County.

"At Summit County, we are committed to ensuring residents can access services in ways that work for them," said Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro. "This recognition reflects our ongoing efforts to remove barriers, strengthen community partnerships, and connect residents with the resources they need."

The program was developed in response to challenges many residents face when accessing services, including transportation limitations, lack of reliable internet access, long phone wait times, and difficulty navigating benefit programs. Rather than requiring residents to come to a county office, trained caseworkers bring services directly into the community, providing face-to-face assistance in locations residents already know and trust.

Since launching in 2023, the program has expanded significantly. In 2025 alone, outreach staff assisted 13,566 residents at community locations throughout Summit County. Outreach services provided through the county's public library system assisted

approximately 774 residents in 2025, while partnerships with healthcare organizations helped more than 2,600 residents access critical supports.

"Outreach Services demonstrates the value of meeting people where they are," said Terri Burns, Director of Summit County Department of Job and Family Services. "By bringing our staff into the community, we can provide personalized assistance, help residents navigate complex systems, and ensure they receive timely access to the benefits and services they need."

The program partners with organizations across the county, including public libraries, schools, hospitals, housing providers, and nonprofit agencies. These collaborations strengthen the community safety net by connecting residents to multiple resources in one location while improving access to food assistance, healthcare coverage, and financial support.

The NACo Achievement Awards honor innovative, effective county government programs nationwide. Summit County's award-winning Outreach Services program demonstrates how local governments can improve customer service, expand access to essential benefits, and strengthen trust between residents and public services through collaboration and community-centered solutions. A current schedule of outreach locations, dates, and times is available through the Summit County Department of Job and Family Services Outreach Services webpage at summitdjfs.org/outreach/about-outreach.

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