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Legal Aid Society of Cleveland Clients Contest Public Assistance Overpayments Sought by State Agency

LEGAL SERVICES E-LERT

Date of E-Lert – 12/02/11

Bibliographic Info:

Author: Peter Krouse

Source: [The Plain Dealer](#), “[State demands return of welfare overpayments from more than 10 years ago](#)”

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The Plain Dealer reports: “The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services sent out nearly 22,000 notices in early November hoping to recover excessive welfare payments that in some cases date back more than 20 years. About 14,000 of those overpayments were in the form of cash assistance, with the rest in food stamps, said department spokesman Benjamin Johnson. He couldn't provide a range of the overpayment amounts. . . . Most of the overpayments were probably the result of unintentional errors by county case workers or the applicants, Johnson said, or the result of timing. In those cases, a person's income may have gone up in a month where a welfare check had already been issued. . . . The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has helped one person who did not owe money. An elderly widow was ordered to return \$4,192 in cash assistance dating back to 1987-88, said the society's deputy director, Dave Dawson. The woman had documentation to prove she repaid the state 17 years ago. . . . A second Legal Aid client is said to owe between \$5,000 to \$10,000 going back more than 25 years, Dawson said, but that case has not been resolved. . . . ’Twenty-five plus years -- who's going to have the documentation for this stuff?’ he said, adding that the cost to seek some claims may exceed the claims themselves.

Dawson said most of those who owe money are probably low-wage workers, possibly on Social Security, and with little ability to make the payment. He said a person receiving a notice has 30 days to protest by sending in documentation or an affidavit explaining why they can prove that they paid the money. If unsuccessful, overpayments in cash assistance by the state can be taken from a person's state tax refund, he said.”

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