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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Geauga County Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services Gathers Stakeholders to Launch  
*Working Partners*® Drug-Free Workforce Community Initiative**

Chardon, Ohio – In an effort to address the safety and economic threat of drug abuse in the workplace, the Geauga County Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services has partnered with local stakeholders and *Working Partners*® to launch the *Working Partners*® Drug-Free Workforce Community Initiative in Geauga County. Similar community initiatives are occurring in 18 counties across Ohio.

The local program launched with the first official meeting of stakeholders held on December 14, 2016 at the Board office building. During the initial stakeholder meeting, the group learned about the objectives of the initiative: to increase workforce readiness and employability; build healthier, stronger, more productive workplaces; and to create systems to educate employees – who are parents or have influence over young people – to prevent drug use among that population. In addition, they discussed current substance abuse trends in the local community, explored community-specific assets and liabilities and reviewed the initial tasks of the initiative.

“We are excited to begin the important work of bringing employers and community leaders together to address the drug-related issues facing our community” said Beth Matthews, Associate Director of the Board. “Our initial stakeholder meeting was the first step in the process of making our workplaces safer and our workforce and community stronger.”

“I am pleased to be invited to participate as a stakeholder in this local *Working Partners*® Drug-Free Workforce Community Initiative,” said Tracy Jemison, President of Geauga Growth Partnership. “By collecting data and bringing to light the issues we face in our community, sharing best practices and working collaboratively, we have the opportunity to tackle this issue in a focused way and have a true impact.”

*OhioMHAS and Working Partners® have developed a public-private partnership to move the Working Partners® Drug-Free Workforce Community Initiative forward throughout the state. The initiative will support local employment strategies related to drug-free workplaces. OhioMHAS has provided funding for 18 local communities to work with Working Partners® to convene and coordinate stakeholders to assess specific community needs and develop local action plans to develop strong local drug-free workforces by employing a variety of best practices that meet these needs.*

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**MEDIA CONTACT: Beth Matthews, 440-285-2282 or [bmatthews@geauga.org](mailto:bmatthews@geauga.org)**