OHIO'S TIME

BUDGET OF THE STATE OF OHIO FY 2024-2025

Investing in Bold Beginnings

The DeWine-Husted Administration is working to support bold beginnings in early childhood development with a clear focus on families. This is Ohio's Time to ensure that all children can live up to their God-given potential. Initiatives supported through Ohio's new budget will streamline access to important services for children and their families.

Early Childhood Development and Support

Providing opportunities for Ohio children to live up to their God-given potential is Governor DeWine's highest priority. Ohio's new operating budget continues to focus on that mission by increasing support and services for the youngest Ohioans.

Until now, the services available for Ohio children early in life have been scattered across various departments, agencies, and offices. This budget carries out Governor DeWine's goal of establishing a new cabinet agency, the **Ohio Department of Children and Youth**, which will focus exclusively on the efficient and effective delivery of services to Ohio's more than 2.5 million children and their families. By combining functions and programs from six state agencies, the department will reduce duplicative programs and bureaucracy, increase administrative efficiency, and improve the delivery of services to families. The department will place children at the core of its mission to promote positive lifelong outcomes for all of Ohio's children.

Caring for Kids

Ohio's new operating budget **continues to transform foster care in Ohio** through the implementation of more than 30 recommendations from Governor DeWine's Children's Services Transformation Advisory Council and the continued investment in county public children services agencies with an additional $60 million over the biennium. The budget also continues the increased funding for Wendy's Wonderful Kids, which helps find permanent homes for children in foster care and invests in evidence-based prevention services that move from a reactive model of protecting children to a proactive model of supporting families that prevents children from entering the children services system.

The budget also continues to provide a one-time **adoption assistance payment to adoptive parents** to help defray the cost of adoption. The program will provide grants of at least $10,000 to parents who adopt and will also offer additional incentives for adopting a child with special needs. This program replaces the previous Ohio Adoption Tax Credit and will expand access to all parents in Ohio who adopt a child.

The budget will also increase access to quality childcare by raising income eligibility for publicly funded childcare from 142% to 145% of the federal poverty level ($43,500 per year for a family of four). This will **ease the financial burden on working parents and caregivers** who struggle to find childcare or who risk losing their childcare assistance by taking a better-paying job.

Approximately 15,275 additional children from low-income families will have access to **high-quality early childhood education** thanks to $124.4 million over the biennium that is included in Ohio's new operating budget. Research shows that children who attend quality-rated preschools outperform their peers in both kindergarten readiness and literacy proficiency by third grade.

Families

Ohio's new operating budget includes a **sales tax exemption** for certain purchases that enhance children's health and safety. This exemption includes children's diapers and wipes, cribs, car seats, and strollers. It is estimated that this sales tax exemption will save Ohio's parents and caregivers an estimated $16 million in state sales tax each year.

The new operating budget also continues Ohio's commitment to **Dolly Parton's**

Imagination Library of Ohio with $8 million per fiscal year. This funding will ensure that all Ohio children under the age of 5 are eligible to receive one free book mailed to their home each month.

Children's Healthcare

Ohio's new operating budget ensures that eligible children enrolled in the Medicaid program maintain their healthcare coverage continuously from birth to age 3 without requiring a redetermination. This will ensure that more children can access regular healthcare during one of the most critical stages of development.

By investing $26.2 million in continued implementation of the Maternal and Infant Support Program (MISP), the Ohio Department of Medicaid will grow the Comprehensive Maternal Care program through partnerships with obstetrical practices that connect expectant mothers with care earlier in their pregnancies to improve birth outcomes. Additional MISP efforts in this budget will expand use of the pregnancy risk assessment and provide coverage of doula services, lactation consultants, and postpartum nurse home visits for new moms.

This budget continues support for the Mental Health and Wellness Screening protocol designed to help at-risk expectant mothers receive the services and support they need. This evidence-based protocol will be distributed to care providers with the aim of screening roughly 2,235 expectant mothers, representing 10% of the births in Ohio, in the first year of the program.

Family Stability

Supporting pregnant mothers, encouraging family connectedness, and increasing infant vitality are among the DeWine-Husted Administration's priorities that are reflected in the new operating budget's historic investment to support new families and babies. The budget will also work to encourage a healthy start for children in Ohio by providing an additional $18.9 million in the Help Me Grow program, Ohio's evidence-based home visiting program. The program serves more than 10,000 families, encouraging early prenatal care, well-baby care, and parenting education to promote the comprehensive health and development of children. Along with this additional investment, the budget provides a total of $101.5 million over the biennium to increase the number of families that receive these critical services to 15,300.

The budget also invests in secure housing for pregnant women with $2.5 million in funding to maintain the Healthy Beginnings at Home model. This investment will

be further supported over the biennium with Medicaid funding to connect pregnant women and new mothers in unstable living conditions with housing and support to reduce infant mortality and improve birth outcomes. An additional $1 million will support the MOVE to Prosper program, which helps low-income women and children secure housing while promoting career development, education, and financial coaching. In addition, $14 million will go to pregnancy centers, social service organizations, and ministries to ensure access to comprehensive counseling, mentoring, and support throughout pregnancy and up to one year following the birth of the baby.

Ohio's new operating budget encourages **community support for mothers** through a $5 million investment in community and local faith-based support programs over the biennium. This investment will address services and resource gaps for pregnant and parenting women. Community and faith-based organizations include social service agencies, nonprofit organizations, and places of worship that are critical resources for vulnerable members of our communities.

$2 million over the biennium will be dedicated to **tobacco cessation programs for pregnant mothers to help reduce smoking during pregnancy and improve birth outcomes.** Through the Moms Quit for Two and Baby and Me Tobacco Free programs, more than 1,000 Ohio women will have access to evidence-based tobacco cessation interventions to improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality.

This budget also focuses on **safe-sleep education** with a $4.2 million investment in the Cribs for Kids program. The program will provide more than 7,000 cribs and safe-sleep education to Ohio families over the biennium. The Ohio Fatherhood Commission will invest in stable, meaningful father-child relationships by funding programming for low-income fathers through $2.5 million over the biennium.

This summary was compiled by the Ohio Office of Budget and Management. More information is available at obm.ohio.gov.