



Investing in Bold Beginnings

Early Childhood Development and Support

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

Until now, the services provided to Ohio kids early in life have been scattered across departments, agencies, and offices. This budget establishes a new cabinet agency, the **Ohio Department of Children and Youth**, which will focus 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 Ohio youth.

Caring for Kids

Through the implementation of more than 30 recommendations from the Children's Services Transformation Advisory Council, and the continued investment in state child protection funds of an additional \$60 million over the biennium, the budget **continues to transform foster care in Ohio**. It also continues the increased funding in Wendy's Wonderful Kids, a child-focused recruitment model, to help find permanent homes for children in foster care, and invests in evidence-based prevention services in an effort to move from a reactive model of protecting children to a proactive model of supporting families to prevent children from entering the children services system.

The budget also provides a one-time **adoption assistance payment to adoptive parents** to help defray the cost of adoption. The program provides grants of at least \$10,000 to parents who adopt, with additional incentives for those who are fostering to adopt and 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 160% of the federal poverty level (\$48,000 per year for a family of four). This will ease the financial burden on working parents and caregivers who struggle to find childcare or face the choice of taking a better-paying job and risk losing their childcare assistance. The budget also supplies an additional \$92.2 million over the biennium to provide 11,525 more children from low-income families with high-quality early childhood education. Research shows that children who participate in the program outperform their peers in both kindergarten readiness and literacy proficiency by third grade.



Families

Governor DeWine's budget **exempts from sales tax purchases of products that enhance children's health and safety**. This exemption includes children's diapers and wipes, cribs, car seats, and strollers and will save Ohio's parents and caregivers an estimated \$16 million in state sales tax each year.

As part of this budget, Ohio families will save over \$130 million each year from a new income tax exemption allowing them to invest in personal savings and future family expenses. Taxpayers with dependent children will receive a **\$2,500 income tax exemption per child**. This is in addition to existing exemptions for filers and their dependents, so a family with four children will receive an \$10,000 tax exemption for household income.

The executive budget also continues Ohio's commitment to **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio** with \$8 million per fiscal year to ensure that all kids in Ohio are eligible to receive one book per month, mailed to their home at no cost, until their 5th birthday.

Children's Healthcare

The Governor's budget plan expands Medicaid sponsored **health care coverage to new and expectant mothers and children** up to 300% of the federal poverty level (\$90,000 per year for a family of four)— this includes coverage for up to one year after the birth of their babies. This ensures that middle-income families can access necessary treatment and preventative health care services, such as well-baby visits, without experiencing the financial stress that can accompany major medical care.

By investing \$43.3 million in continued implementation of the **Maternal and Infant Support Program (MISP)**, the Ohio Department of Medicaid will continue to grow the **Comprehensive Maternal Care** program through partnerships with obstetrical practices connecting expectant mothers with care earlier in their pregnancies and improving 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.

By supporting a \$1.1 million partnership with the Alliance for Innovation in Maternal Health (AIM), Governor DeWine's budget will implement a set of standard **best practices in birthing hospitals** to improving birth outcomes for new moms and babies. AIM is a national, data-driven maternal safety and quality improvement initiative, with a proven implementation record that reduces adverse maternal outcomes. The partnership will support further implementation of best practices in Ohio's delivery hospitals, including the introduction of best practices for treating substance use disorder during pregnancy. Ultimately, the partnership hopes to implement substance use disorder guidelines in 85% of participating hospitals in the state. Additionally, 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 priorities reflected in the historic investment to support new families and babies and to encourage a healthy start for children in Ohio throughout Governor DeWine's budget. The executive budget supports an additional \$36.7 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 and well-baby care, as well as parenting education to promote the comprehensive health and development of children. Along with this additional investment, the budget provides a total of \$119.4 million over the biennium in this program to increase the numbers of families that receive these critical services to 17,950.

The budget also invests in **secure housing for pregnant women** with \$15 million in funding to expand 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. In addition, the budget devotes \$14 million to **pregnancy centers, social service organizations, and ministries**. This program ensures access to comprehensive counseling, mentoring, and support throughout pregnancy and up to one year following the birth of the baby. In addition, this budget encourages community support through investment in community and local faith-based support programs with \$5 million over the biennium to address services and resource gaps for pregnant and parenting women in 10 counties that report significantly elevated rates of infant mortality, with opportunities for other counties to receive funding as well. 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.

The Governor's budget authorizes more than \$1.5 million in **tobacco cessation programs for pregnant mothers** to help reduce smoking during pregnancy and improve birth outcomes. The Moms Quit for Two program provides grants to private, nonprofit, and government entities that deliver evidence-based tobacco cessation interventions to women who reside in communities that have the highest incidence of infant mortality, while the Baby and Me Tobacco Free Program will support 500 pregnant women with tobacco cessation services.

Continuing crucial support for mothers in need, this budget includes expanded **nutrition assistance coordination** across major federal programs by cross-enrolling women receiving services through the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These federal programs help improve maternal health and reduce infant mortality by providing nutritious foods.

This budget also expands safe-sleep education with a \$6 million investment in the **Cribs for Kids** program that provided more than 7,000 cribs and safe-sleep education to Ohio families over the FY 2022-2023 biennium. Specifically, this budget will provide an additional \$1.5 million over the biennium, increasing the number of cribs distributed and families educated on safe-sleep practices to almost 15,000 across the state.

By increasing our investment by \$3 million each year in **stable, meaningful father-child relationships**, the Ohio Fatherhood Commission will expand programming for low-income fathers to enhance the well-being of Ohio's children.

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