

OHIO'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 | OHIO'S APPALACHIAN REGION: RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS



HEALTH CARE

Medicaid/CHIP is a lifeline for nearly 2 in 3 children living in the region.

OHIO'S RESPONSE: Ohio requested changes to Medicaid through an 1135 Emergency Waiver to provide expanded presumptive eligibility decisions to hospitals and Department of Medicaid staff. This waiver allows children and families faster access to Medicaid while their application is being approved. The waiver also suspended eligibility renewals and redeterminations, as well as terminations, which allows everyone currently on Medicaid or those who qualify for Medicaid during the public health crisis to remain enrolled through the end of the emergency. The waiver also lifted restrictions on telehealth, allowing health care professionals to provide certain services.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Expand telehealth services for some types or aspects of well-child visits and make it Medicaid reimbursable.
- 2) Increase support to community health centers for critical services to uninsured and most at-risk communities.
- 3) Streamline eligibility for multiple programs as a way to meet the growing demand for basic needs for 1.4 million Ohioans who have lost employment and their employer-sponsored health care.
- 4) Seek enhanced federal match for Medicaid and CHIP to 14 percentage points to relieve budget pressures and meet health needs of Ohioans.
- 5) Invest in last mile broadband connectivity, subscription services, and funding for equipment so that families can take advantage of telehealth, especially in areas of the state, such as our Appalachian region, that are health care professional shortage areas.



HOUSING

Over 3,000 children and their families are homeless in the region.

OHIO'S RESPONSE: Ohio has not responded appropriately to address evictions and is one of six states yet to address them on a statewide basis, leaving local communities to determine whether to halt eviction filings and hearings. The federal CARES Act instituted a temporary moratorium on some evictions and provided funding toward HUD programs, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and support to homeless shelters.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Allocate Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dollars toward rapid rehousing and homelessness prevention.
- 2) Use Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund for emergency rental assistance.
- 3) Urge the DeWine administration to create a rental assistance program to handle the influx of eviction cases while continuing to advocate for the proposed \$100M in federal funds for rental assistance.



NUTRITION

Hunger is a pervasive in the region and 1 in 3 children use SNAP to meet their basic needs.

OHIO'S RESPONSE: Ohio secured emergency allotments for SNAP households, raising monthly allotments to the maximum amount. Ohio extended certification periods and adjusted periodic reporting requirements for ongoing SNAP households, which extended certification periods are scheduled to expire in March, April, or May 2020 until September, October, and November 2020. Gov. DeWine signed an executive order allocating approximately \$5M to the Ohio Association of Food Banks so that food banks and pantries can continue to feed Ohio's children and families. Further, Ohio received approval for the Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) program, which will provide an additional \$300 to families for each child eligible for free or reduced price lunch, meaning an additional \$50M to help families of 175,000 children in the region meet their basic needs. USDA waivers have been extended to allow for non-congregate feeding for school and community programs through September 30, 2020.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Extend federal support for nutrition programs (similar to P-EBT) for families with young children who do not currently qualify for P-EBT (provision in HEROES Act).
- 2) Urge Congress to extend the P-EBT program through the school year to accommodate split schedules and children missing meals.
- 3) Urge Congress to increase SNAP benefits 15%.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

39% of Ohio is a child care desert and the economic downturn decimated capacity in Appalachia.

OHIO'S RESPONSE: Ohio implemented an emergency child care measure to provide parents who work in the health, safety, and essential service fields with child care at temporary pandemic child care centers. Gov. DeWine signed E.O. 2020-04D, which increased the number of paid absent days from 10 to 20 for providers serving children in the Publicly Funded Child Care program and provided child care programs with 21 paid days in the event that they must close doors due to the pandemic. H.B. 197 suspended staff ratio requirements and maximum group sizes at child care centers, allowed the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to continue making payments to Publicly Funded Child Care providers, and delayed the Step Up to Quality requirements for 90 days for child care centers. Ohio began phased re-opening on May 1, and it is critical that parents have equitable access to child care for their children, so they can return to work.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Provide funding and support for greater access to personal protection equipment (PPE) for teachers and staff at child care centers.
- 2) Increased funding to stabilize the system as a whole in support of Ohio's economic recovery. CDF-Ohio stands with its state and national partners in urging Congress to include \$50 billion in federal funding and supports the **Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act (CCCERA)**.



CHILD WELFARE

Nearly 24,000 children in the region are being raised by their grandparents and over 2,400 children are in county custody with over 40% ages 5 and younger.

OHIO'S RESPONSE: Before the pandemic, Ohio's child welfare system was already fractured and struggled to meet the growing demands of children and families with complex needs. Gov. DeWine announced that Ohio will provide funding to extend foster care for children set to turn 18 amid the coronavirus pandemic and to assist young adults in the Bridges transition program. No state has introduced legislation directly addressing child welfare issues during COVID-19 and more funds and guidance are needed. However, the federal stimulus package did include \$45 million for the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services (Title IV-B, Subpart 1) to provide flexibility to states to develop and expand child and family services programs to prevent child maltreatment.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Create more flexibility and opportunities for foster licensing by passing HB 8 to help recruit foster parents, and in turn, help prevent children ending up in a group home setting.
- 2) Implement a statewide system to streamline the placement process to quickly identify safe and supportive environments for children.
- 3) Provide additional support for kinship care providers, many of whom are retired and already struggling financially.
- 3) Urge Congress to pass the **Child Welfare Emergency Assistance Act**, which would provide emergency funding and investments in child welfare systems including: Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CB-CAP) grants; Kinship Navigator Programs; Title IV-B Part 2; CAPTA Title I; Court Improvement Program; Title IV-E Chafee funds; and increase FMAP to support the Title IV-E Prevention Program.



K-12 EDUCATION

Ohio's 32-county Appalachian region has 123 school districts and over 263,000 students.

OHIO'S RESPONSE: A critical issue from the spring 2020 was equity, especially in terms of schools' expanded use of distance learning for rural and urban districts. Fall 2020 brings much uncertainty as to how schools will re-open and be ready for children. Through H.B. 197, Ohio waived state testing and report cards for the 2019-2020 school year, permitted seniors to graduate if on track prior to the public health crisis, and exempted schools from food processing requirements to help serve children vulnerable to food scarcity. However, what will this look like in the fall? There are many questions and each of Ohio's 611 school districts will re-open based on locally driven plans informed by guidance from the Ohio Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Ensure additional funding is available so that schools are ready to provide safe, quality instruction for students this fall. This will require additional funding for technology, transportation, PPE, cleaning supplies and services, equipment for students and staff, and a focus on supporting students and staff with their behavioral and mental health needs. CDF-Ohio stands by its Ohio and national partners supporting provisions of the **Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act (CCCERA)**.
- 2) Allocate CARES Act equitably to districts with a focus on poverty, technology access, and other needs that must be met.
- 3) Establish a technology fund that provides hotspots and equipment to children and families with a priority on children who qualify for free and reduced priced lunch.
- 4) Investments in broadband infrastructure, such as last mile connectivity, to ensure that rural and Appalachian communities are not left behind. This is an immediate need and requires a significant investments to bridge the rural digital divide.