

## Expanding Critical Children's Health Access in Ohio's Schools

**PROBLEM:** Ohio children's mental health is in crisis. Ohio's Medicaid in Schools Program (MSP) currently blends state and federal dollars to pay for physical and mental health services in schools for Medicaid-eligible students - but it is limited to only those students with an individualized education plan (IEP).

The pandemic exacerbated children's need for health services further straining already limited access:

- Ohio is ranked 31st in child well-being and from 2016 to 2020 children experiencing anxiety or depression jumped from 9.2% to 13.1%.
- Ohio lacks a uniform system of adolescent behavioral health care, leading to significant barriers to care.

**SOLUTION:** Utilize federal funds to increase school-based access to mental health services without additional state general revenue spending.

- Schools are a trusted community centerpiece where students and families already regularly engage - and they are often on the forefront of identifying and addressing children's mental health needs.
- Schools can foster a sense of safety and promote improved academic and behavioral outcomes. Increased services in schools promotes overall well-being for children.

**APPROACH:** Utilize the budget to direct the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to seek permission from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to reimburse schools for health services provided to any Medicaid-eligible student.

- CMS has been actively encouraging states to seek approval for reimbursement for school-based mental health services to Medicaid-eligible students under current rules and regulations.
- 17 states (including Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan) already receive reimbursement for services provided to Medicaid-eligible children without IEPs, with an additional nine states in process.

**ODM has committed to pursuing permission, but currently does not have a timeline. We propose inserting language in HB 33 whereby "The General Assembly directs the Ohio Department of Medicaid to seek permission from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by December 31, 2023 to expand the Medicaid in Schools Program to allow Medicaid payments for any covered services for Medicaid-eligible beneficiaries when delivered by Medicaid-qualified providers in schools."**

**BENEFITS:** Increased access for school-based children's health without additional general revenue spending.

- No state general revenue required to generate additional federal reimbursement. Many schools provide mental health services without reimbursement. CMS will cover ~2/3 of these existing costs, allowing for a significant expansion of services.
- Holistic approach to children's needs by ensuring mental health supports are connected to learning.
- Creates sustainable funding source - building long term funding is critical to sustaining efforts to improve children's mental health.