Overview: Transforming Children Services
2022-23 State Budget Priorities

It is a pivotal time for Ohio’s children services system. Federal and state policy changes that go into effect in the next biennial budget are aimed at transforming the system. However, transforming a system that greatly needs it without new resources will only bring failure. Ohio must get this right, which means we need to align new policy requirements with new local resources in order to ensure that kids can remain safely with their families, that children can be placed in the most appropriate setting, and that the most effective services can be provided to reduce trauma in children’s lives. Public Children Services Association of Ohio is joining with the County Commissioners Association of Ohio to request $50 million per year for counties so that they can support kin caregivers, maximize Family First opportunities, and offset increased placement costs.

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, permanent family. In 2020, nearly 16,500 Ohio children lived in foster care on any given day, up from 12,500 children in 2013—a 32% increase. Being removed from home and entering foster care is a traumatic experience for children, with consequences that can last a lifetime.

Protecting children from abuse and neglect and stabilizing families is challenging work. It is further complicated by the continued growth of the addiction epidemic and a global pandemic that requires Ohio’s public children services agencies (PCSAs) to juggle new guidelines for in-person visits, exposures and quarantines to carry out their mission.

The growing number of children in foster care, the increase in placement costs, and the lack of appropriate services and placements have created an ongoing crisis in our system. Gov. DeWine recognized this, and so the Executive Budget proposal maintained the current level of county investment, as does the House version.

Despite the challenges facing PCSAs, Ohio is at a pivotal time. The federal Family First Prevention Services Act will be implemented by October 2021. Family First recognizes that most families can provide safe care in their home with the right services and supports, preventing children from coming into foster care and requiring the most family-like setting for those who do. In cases where residential care remains the best option, new eligibility and quality standards will increase county costs while reducing availability. This transformative opportunity requires ongoing leadership, resources and commitment at the state and local levels.

In addition, Ohio has launched a new Kinship Support Program whereby the state provides time-limited payments to kin as the caregiver pursues foster parent licensure. Once licensed, the program shifts responsibility to county agencies to provide higher foster care payments and related administrative oversight. State estimates of county costs are $25 million per year based on the number of kinship caregivers currently in this category. However, no new funds are included in HB 110 for these county costs.

Budget Requests

- State Child Protection Allocation (SCPA): Maintain $110 million per year (ALI 600523) + increase by $50 million per year (request for local-level transformation)
- Maintain other children services investments from SFY20-21
- Support new investments in HB 110 (ALI 600523, 600450) for state-level transformation

Links to Budget Priorities
- Overview
- Funding Gaps
- Children Services By the Numbers
- Family First Act
- Kinship
- State Child Protection Allocation

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Based on Am. Sub. HB 110 as passed by Ohio House of Representatives April 21, 2021