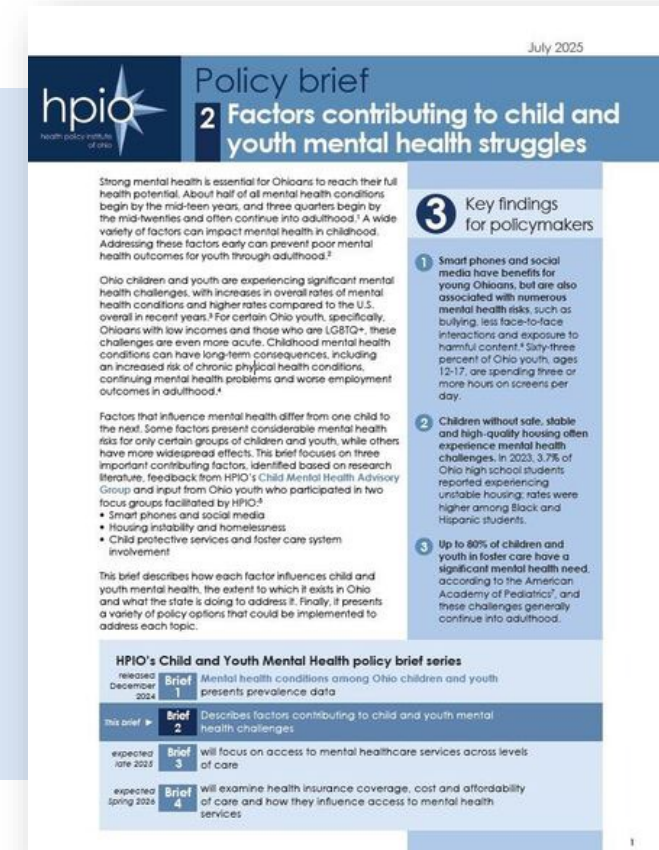




Addressing factors contributing to child and youth mental health challenges



July 31, 2025



VISION

Ohio is a model of health, well-being and economic vitality

MISSION

To advance evidence-informed policies that improve health, achieve equity, and lead to sustainable healthcare spending in Ohio.



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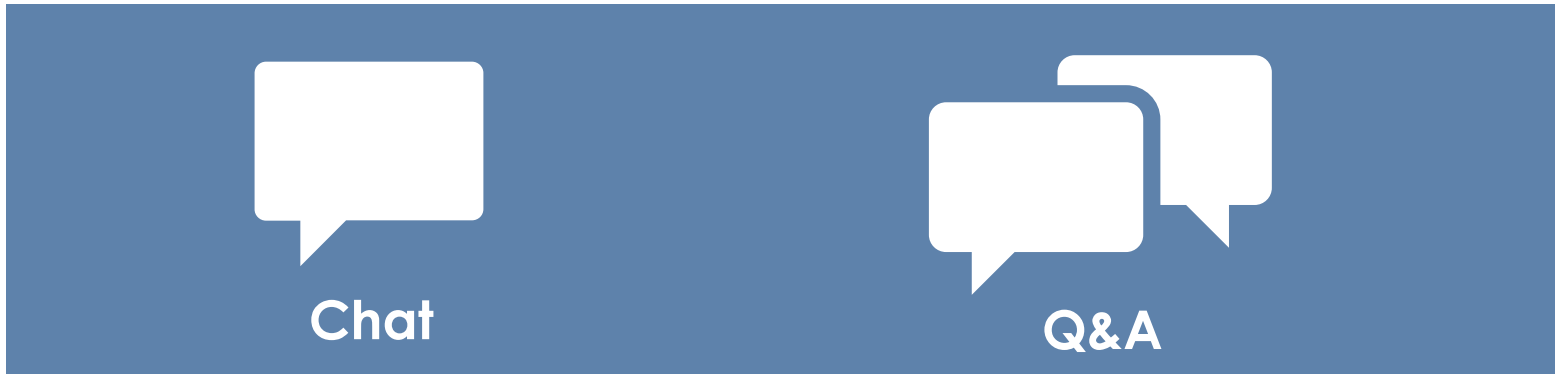
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www.healthpolicyohio.org/events

Child and youth mental health



HPIO's Child and Youth Mental Health policy brief series

released
December
2024

**Brief
1**

Mental health conditions among Ohio children and youth
presents prevalence data

This brief ►

**Brief
2**

Describes factors contributing to child and youth mental health challenges

expected
late 2025

**Brief
3**

will focus on access to mental healthcare services across levels of care

expected
Spring 2026

**Brief
4**

will examine health insurance coverage, cost and affordability of care and how they influence access to mental health services

Contributing factors to child and youth mental health



Smart phones
and social media



Housing instability
and homelessness



Child protective
services and
foster care system
involvement

Today's speakers



Becky Carroll, MPA

Director, Policy Research & Analysis
Health Policy Institute of Ohio



Lindsay Green, M.Ed.

Educational Connection Specialist
Beavercreek, Ohio



Dave Henwood

Child and Youth Permanency
Manager, Protective Services
Fairfield County Job and Family
Services



Andrea Pollock

Program Director, Next Step and
Chagrin Falls Park Community
Center
Axess Family Services



Data Brief

Mental health conditions among Ohio children and youth

December 2024

Youth is a time characterized by changes and new experiences. Many children go through difficult times, test boundaries with their behavior and feel anxious in some situations. Mental health conditions can interfere with a child's ability to bounce back from these obstacles. Children, adolescents and young adults are at particularly high risk of mental health challenges due to brain development and physical, emotional and social changes that happen during that time of life.¹

In recent years, rates of mental health conditions have increased among Ohio children and youth.² Understanding this data, and engaging children, youth and their parents and caregivers, can lay the foundation for action and policy change.

Childhood mental health conditions are associated with an increased risk of chronic physical health conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease), continuing mental health problems and worse employment outcomes in adulthood.⁴ Additionally, parents of children with mental health conditions often miss work to support their child.³

3 Key findings for policymakers

- Many Ohio children and youth are experiencing mental health challenges, especially those belonging to certain groups, such as Ohioans with low incomes and those who identify as LGBTQ+.
- Ohio has higher rates of many mental health conditions compared to the U.S. overall, and these rates are worsening over time.
- About half of all mental health conditions begin by the mid-teen years and three-quarters begin by the mid-twenties and often continue into adulthood.⁴

Figure 1. Poor mental health, Ohio students, by grade, 2023

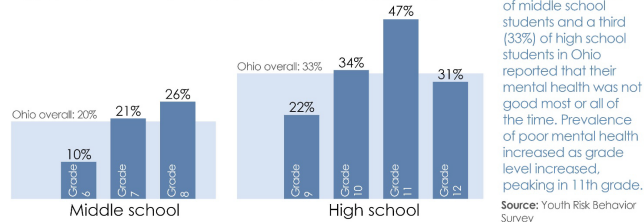


Figure 2. Poor mental health, Ohio students, grades 9-12, by sex, 2023



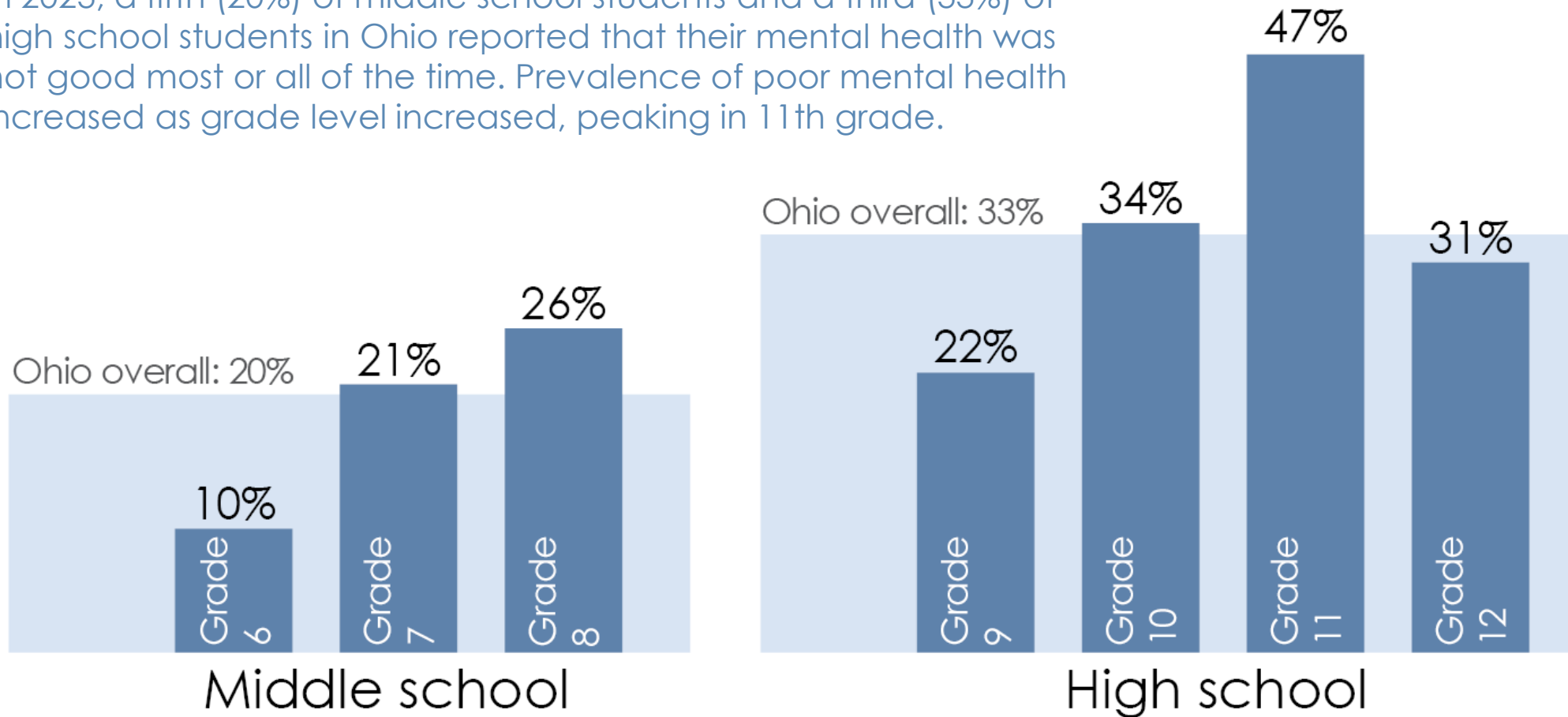
Mental health conditions among Ohio children and youth

First brief in the series

Poor mental health

Ohio students, by grade, 2023

In 2023, a fifth (20%) of middle school students and a third (33%) of high school students in Ohio reported that their mental health was not good most or all of the time. Prevalence of poor mental health increased as grade level increased, peaking in 11th grade.

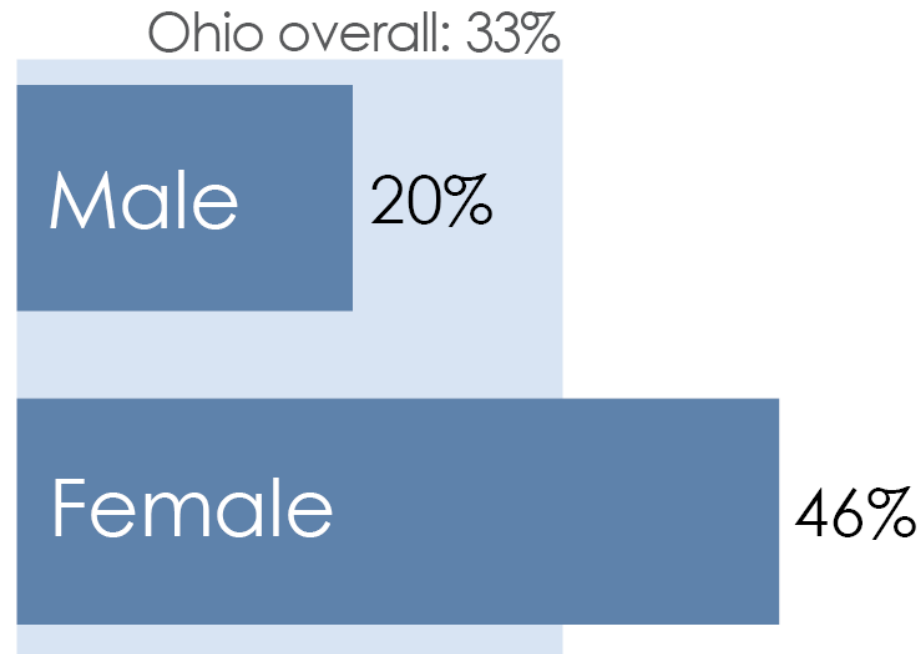


Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Poor mental health

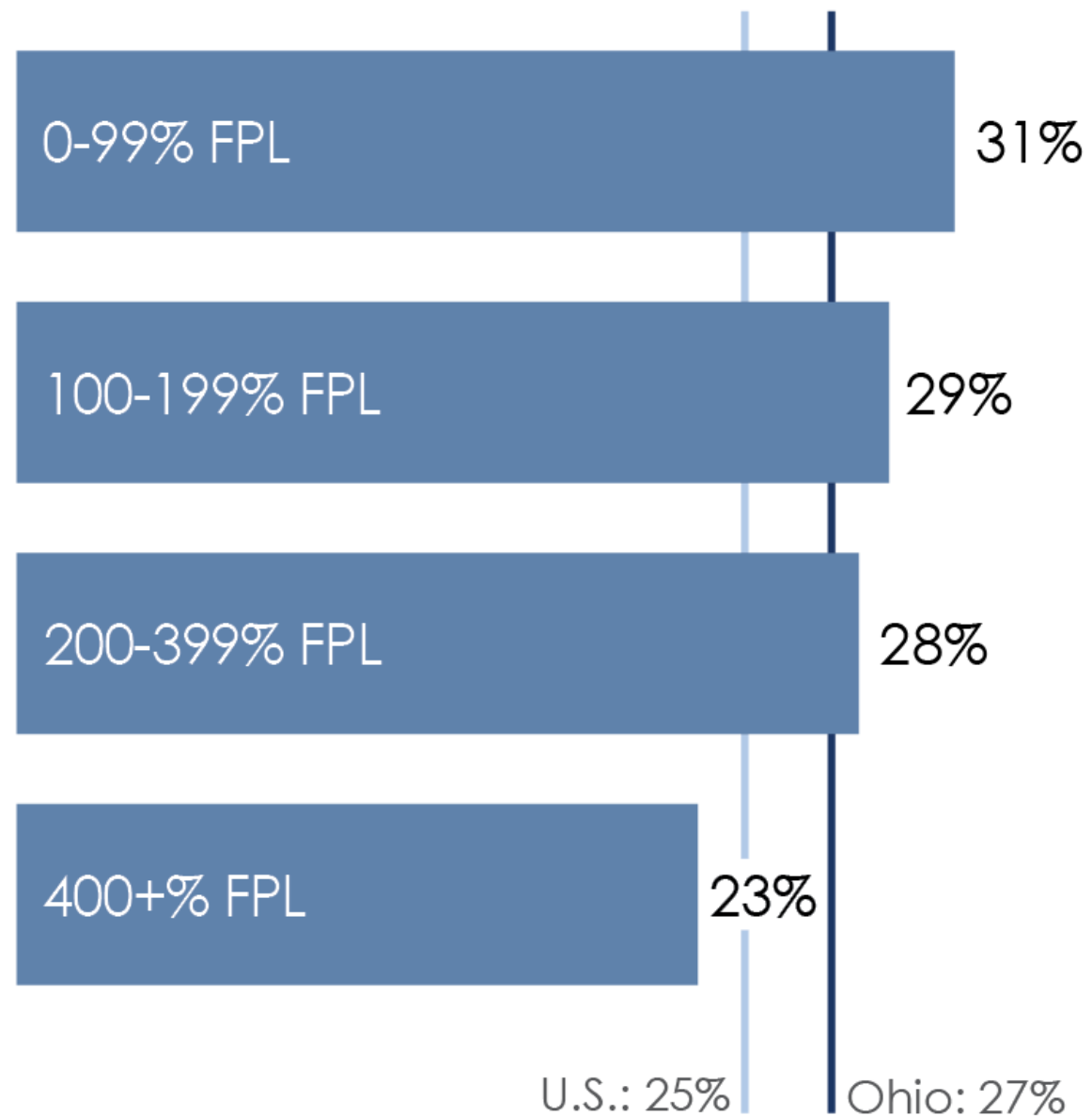
Ohio students, grades 9-12, by sex, 2023

Poor mental health was more than two times higher for female high school students than male high school students in 2023.



Mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral challenges

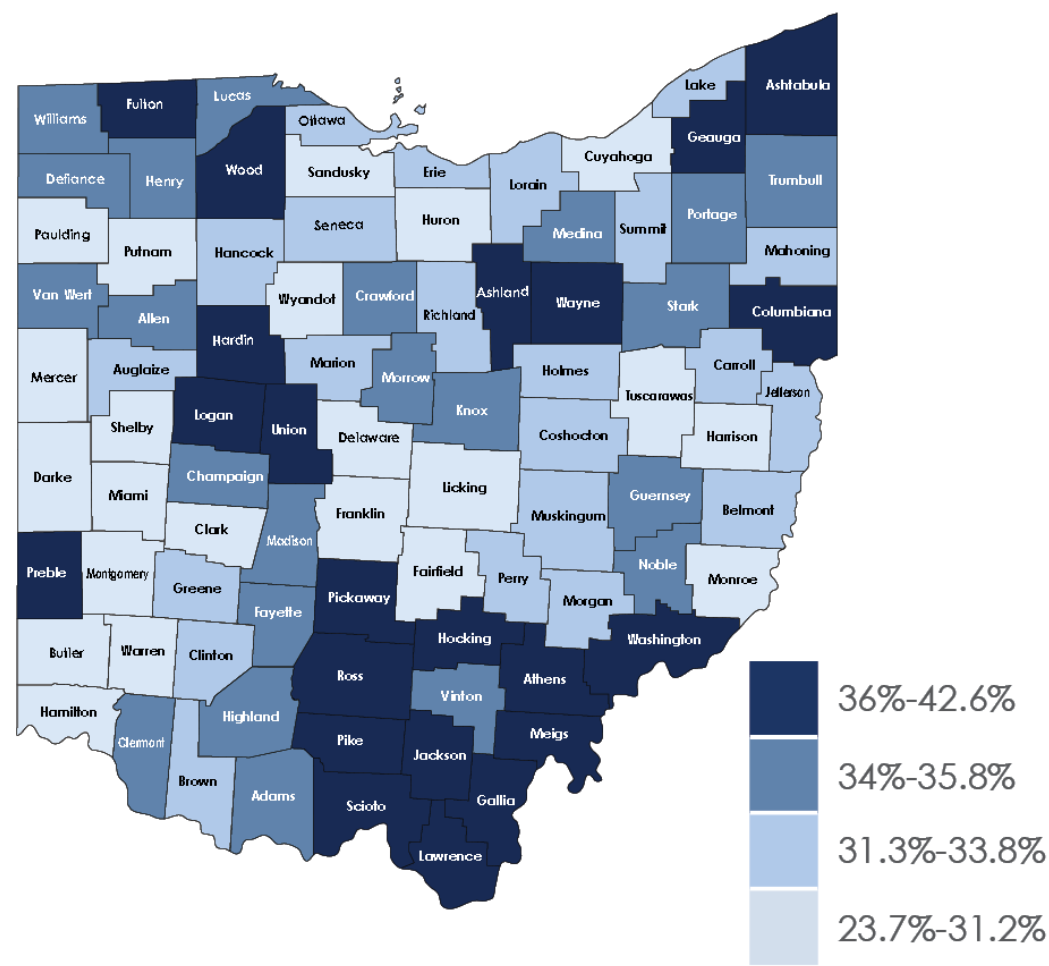
Ohio children, ages 3-17, by income,
2021-2022



Source: National Survey of Children's Health

Behavioral health conditions among Ohio Medicaid-enrolled students

Grades K-12, by county, 2022-2023 school year



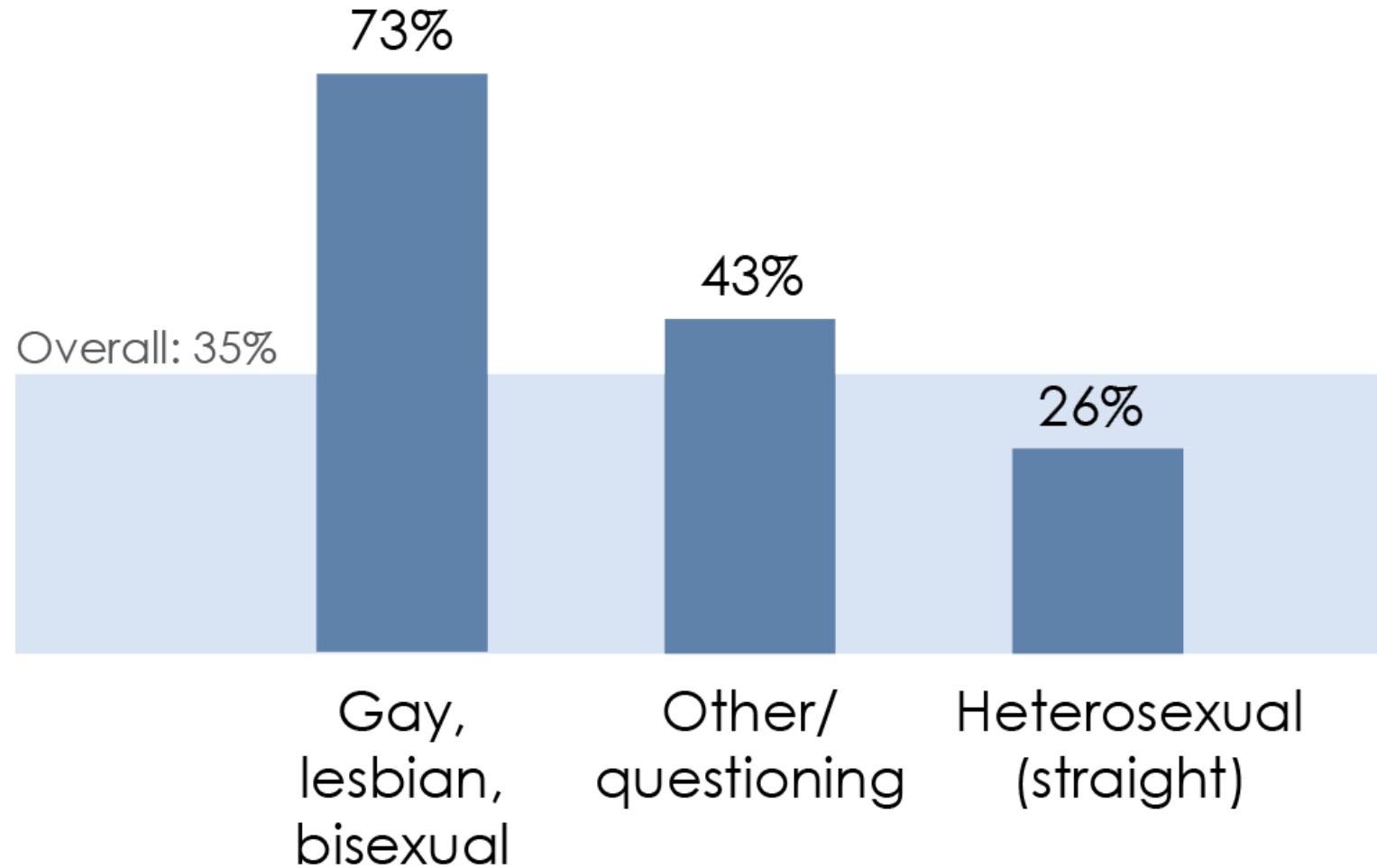
Medicaid-enrolled students in Southeast Ohio counties were more likely to have a behavioral health condition diagnosed than those in all other regions. Lawrence County had the highest proportion of students with a behavioral health condition diagnosis (43%), while Putnam County had the lowest (24%).

Source: Ohio Healthy Student Profiles

Felt sad or hopeless

Ohio students, grades 9-12, by sexual identity, 2023

High school students who are gay, lesbian or bisexual reported feeling sad or hopeless at a rate almost 3 times higher than students who are heterosexual. These students were also more than twice as likely to report poor mental health than their straight peers.

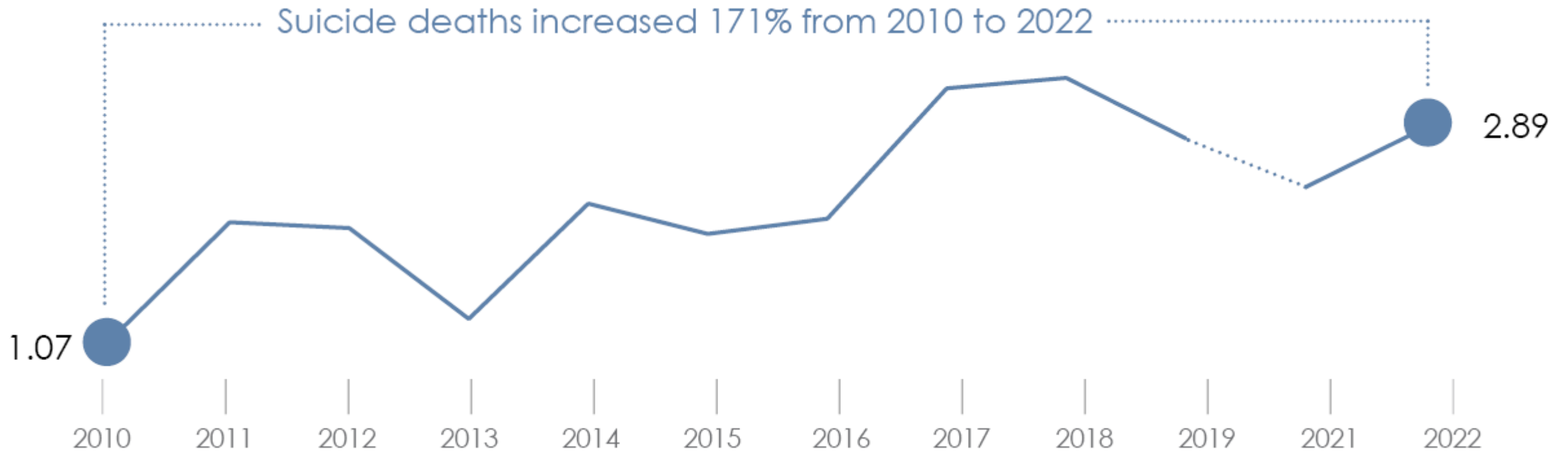


Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Suicide mortality rates

Ohio children, ages 0-17, 2010-2022

Number of children, ages 0-17, who have died by suicide, per 100,000 population



Source: Ohio Department of Health, Mortality data files and the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 1- and 5-year estimates



Policy brief

2 Factors contributing to child and youth mental health struggles

Strong mental health is essential for Ohioans to reach their full health potential. About half of all mental health conditions begin by the mid-teen years, and three quarters begin by the mid-twenties and often continue into adulthood.² A wide variety of factors can impact mental health in childhood. Addressing these factors early can prevent poor mental health outcomes for youth through adulthood.⁴

Ohio children and youth are experiencing significant mental health challenges, with increases in overall rates of mental health conditions and higher rates compared to the U.S. overall in recent years.⁵ For certain Ohio youth, specifically, Ohioans with low incomes and those who are LGBTQ+, these challenges are even more acute. Childhood mental health conditions can have long-term consequences, including an increased risk of chronic physical health conditions, continuing mental health problems and worse employment outcomes in adulthood.⁴

Factors that influence mental health differ from one child to the next. Some factors present considerable mental health risks for only certain groups of children and youth, while others have more widespread effects. This brief focuses on three important contributing factors, identified based on research literature, feedback from HPIO's [Child Mental Health Advisory Group](#) and input from Ohio youth who participated in two focus groups facilitated by HPIO:⁷

- Smart phones and social media
- Housing instability and homelessness
- Child protective services and foster care system involvement

This brief describes how each factor influences child and youth mental health, the extent to which it exists in Ohio and what the state is doing to address it. Finally, it presents a variety of policy options that could be implemented to address each topic.

3 Key findings for policymakers

- 1 **Smart phones and social media have benefits for young Ohioans, but are also associated with numerous mental health risks**, such as bullying, less face-to-face interactions and exposure to harmful content.¹ Sixty-three percent of Ohio youth, ages 12-17, are spending three or more hours on screens per day.
- 2 **Children without safe, stable and high-quality housing often experience mental health challenges**. In 2023, 3.7% of Ohio high school students reported experiencing unstable housing; rates were higher among Black and Hispanic students.
- 3 **Up to 80% of children and youth in foster care have a significant mental health need**, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics³, and these challenges generally continue into adulthood.

HPIO's Child and Youth Mental Health policy brief series

released December 2024	Brief 1	Mental health conditions among Ohio children and youth presents prevalence data
This brief ▶	Brief 2	Describes factors contributing to child and youth mental health challenges
expected late 2025	Brief 3	will focus on access to mental healthcare services across levels of care
expected Spring 2026	Brief 4	will examine health insurance coverage, cost and affordability of care and how they influence access to mental health services

Factors contributing to child and youth mental health struggles

Second brief in the series

What we heard from youth and families

- School pressure/pressure to succeed/pressure from parents
- Smart phones and social media
- Community violence/gun violence
- Bullying
- Poverty
- Housing
- Substance use
- Trauma
- Stigma

Thank you to youth and families who participated in our focus groups from:

- Ohio Youth Led Prevention Network
- Boys and Girls Club of Dayton
- Nationwide Children's Hospital Family Advisory Council

“I struggled with perfection and living up to what my parents expected of me. So many times in high school, you think you need to be valedictorian. You have to get an A on this class. You have to be a three letterman athlete. You have to succeed in this and this and this....”

- Youth focus group participant

Contributing factors to child and youth mental health



Smart phones
and social media



Housing instability
and homelessness



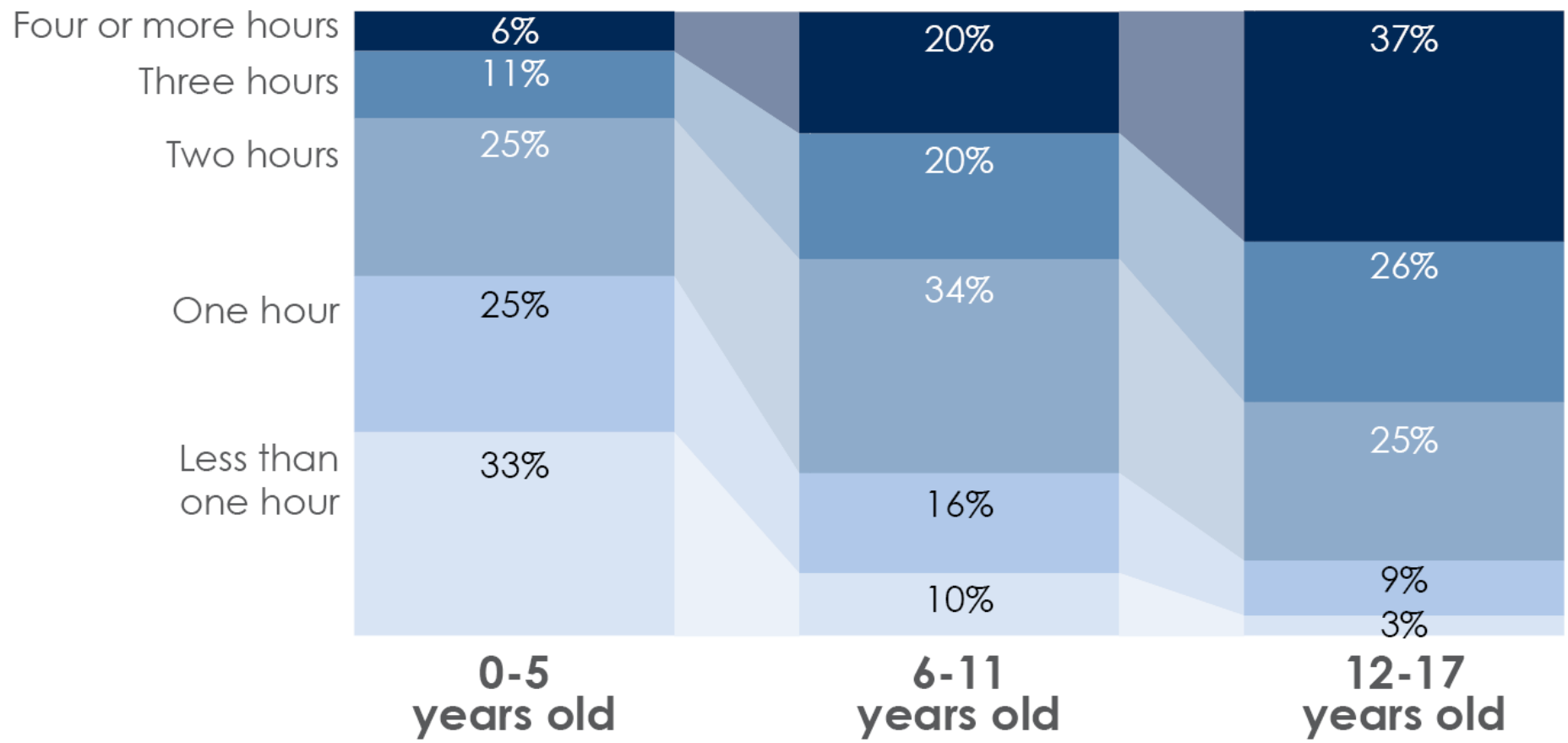
Child protective
services and
foster care system
involvement

Smart phones and social media



Hours of daily screen time

Number of hours of screen time per day among Ohio children, not including schoolwork, by age, 2022-2023



Note: Parents were asked how much time, on most weekdays, the child usually spends in front of a tv, computer, cellphone or other electronic device, watching programs, playing games, accessing the Internet or using social media, not including schoolwork

Source: National Survey of Children's Health

Potential benefits and risks of social media

Benefits

- Connection
- Interest-driven learning
- Creative expression and identity development
- Civic engagement
- Distraction

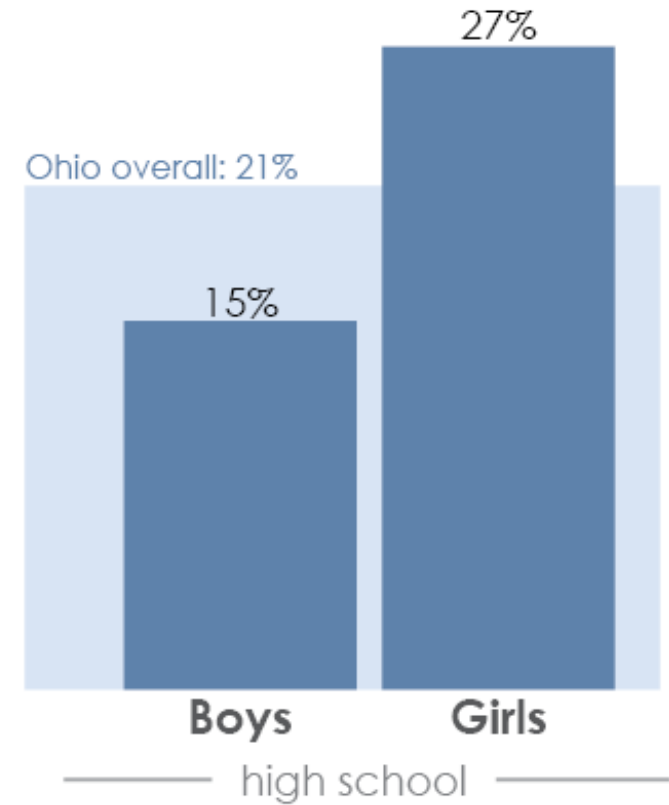
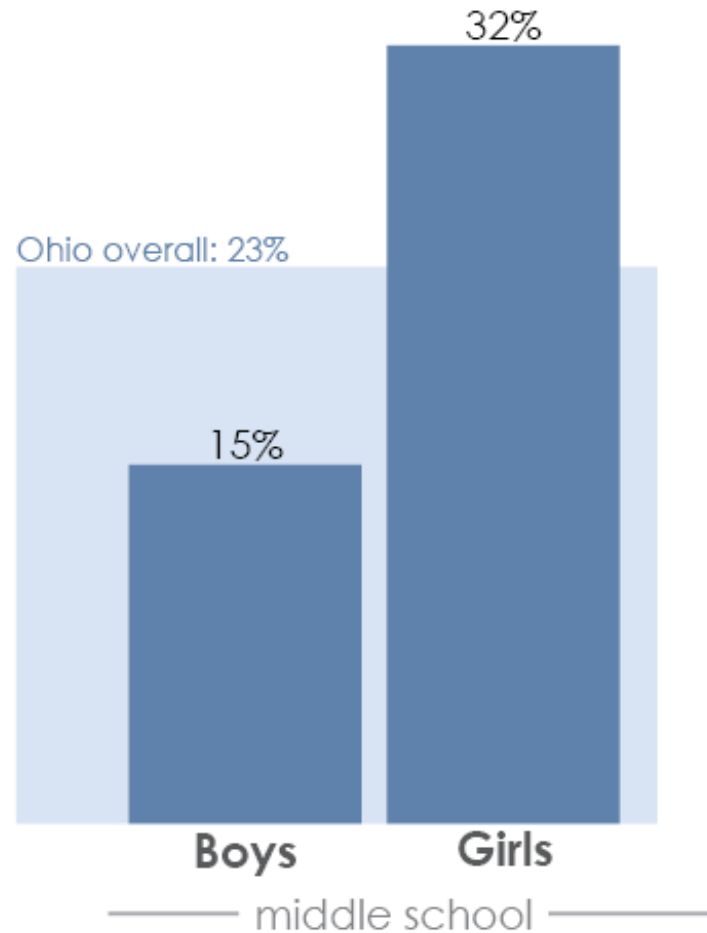
Risks

- Social comparison and competition
- Bullying and harassment
- Fewer peer interactions
- Less sleep and physical activity
- Harmful content and unwanted contact
- Reduced ability to pay attention



Electronic bullying

Percent of Ohio students electronically bullied in the last year, by age and sex, 2023



Note: Electronically bullied includes being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook or other social media

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey

“Nobody seems really happy at my school. We don't do spirit wear. We don't do like a bunch of stuff that makes us want to come together. I feel like a lot of people are, like, checked out.... It's like you can see that they just can't connect with people anymore and I don't know if it's the phones. I don't know if they're going through something. But a lot of kids at school just aren't connecting.”

- Youth focus group participants

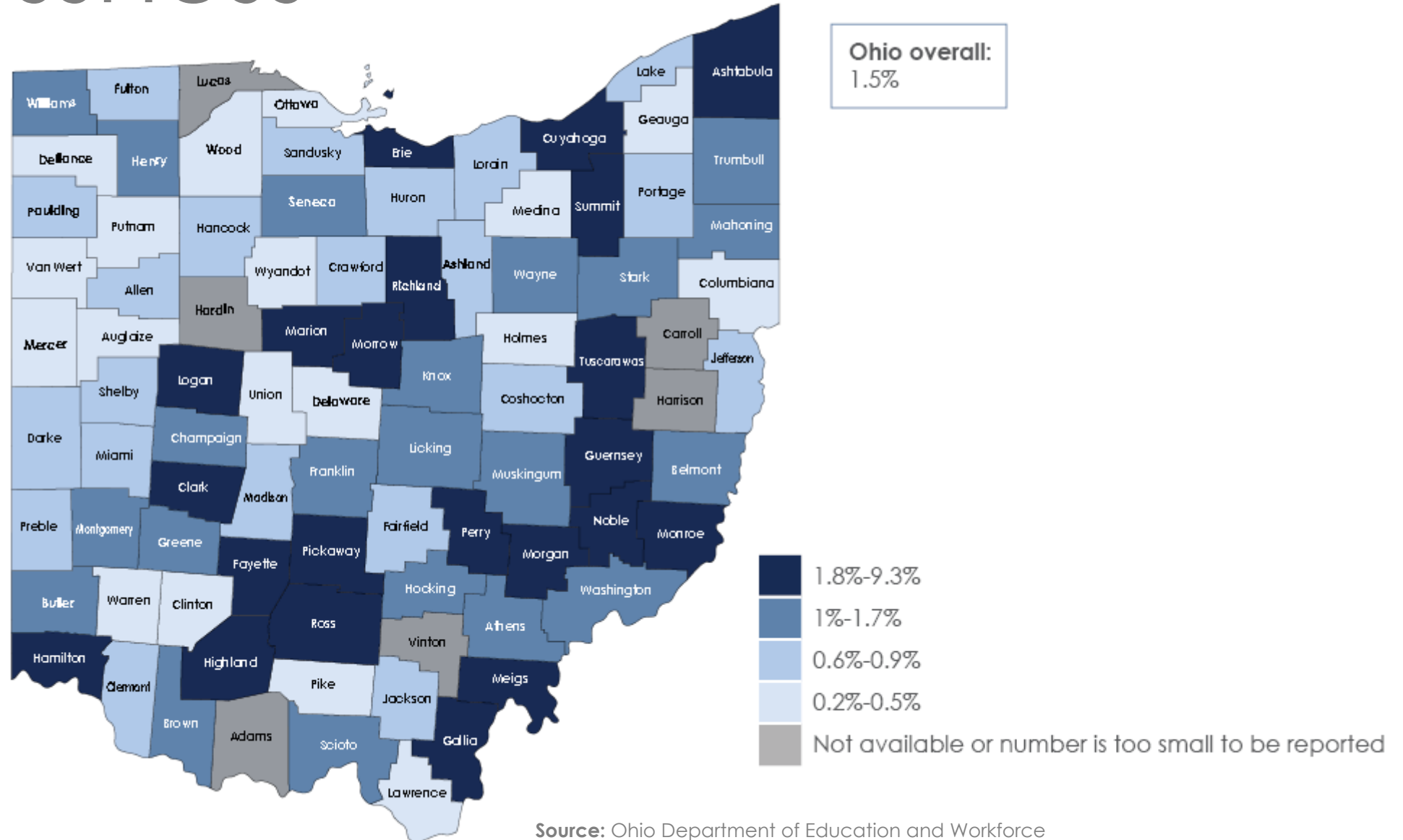
Housing



Photo credit: Statehouse News Bureau story on lead poisoning prevention in Toledo

Homelessness

Percent of students who were homeless, 2023-2024 school year

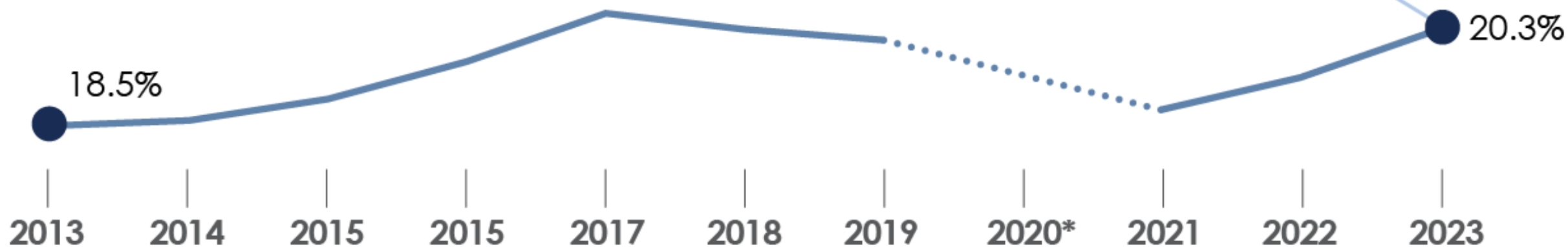


Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce

Blood lead testing

Percent of Ohio children, ages 0-5, who received a screening blood level test

In 2023, a higher percentage of children enrolled in Medicaid (28.5%) received a blood level test than the state overall.



* Data not available for 2020

Source: Ohio Department of Health, Healthy Housing and Lead Poisoning Surveillance System and American Community Survey PUMS estimates, Ohio Department of Medicaid, Advanced Data Analytics Tool by IBM Consulting

Impacts of childhood adversity persist

Birth

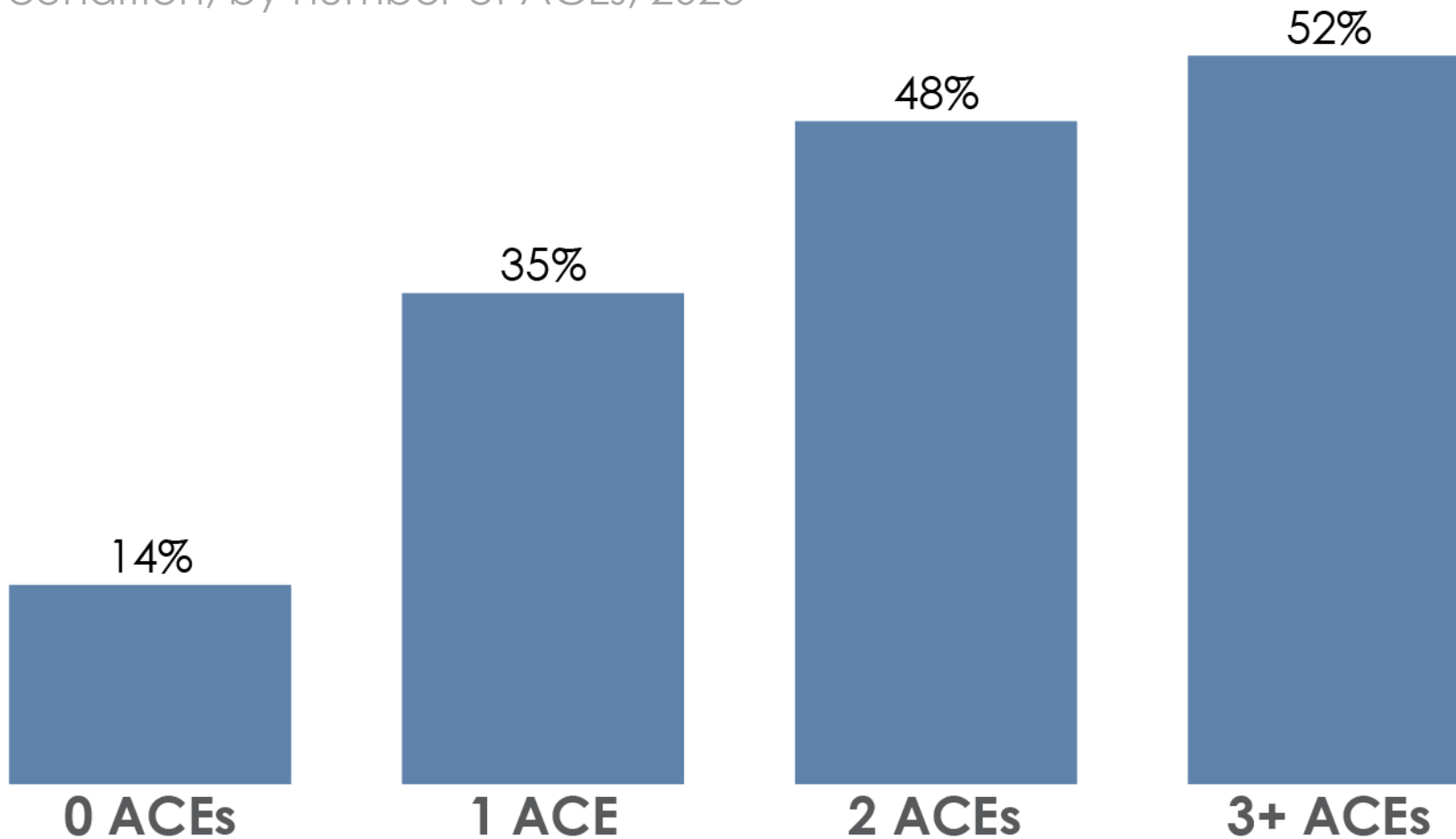
Adulthood

Adverse childhood experiences



Mental health conditions and ACEs

Percent of Ohio children, ages 3-17, with at least one mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral condition, by number of ACEs, 2023



Of Ohio children with three or more ACEs, 52% had at least one mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral condition, compared to only 14% of Ohio children with no ACEs.

Source: HPIO Analysis of National Survey of Children's Health

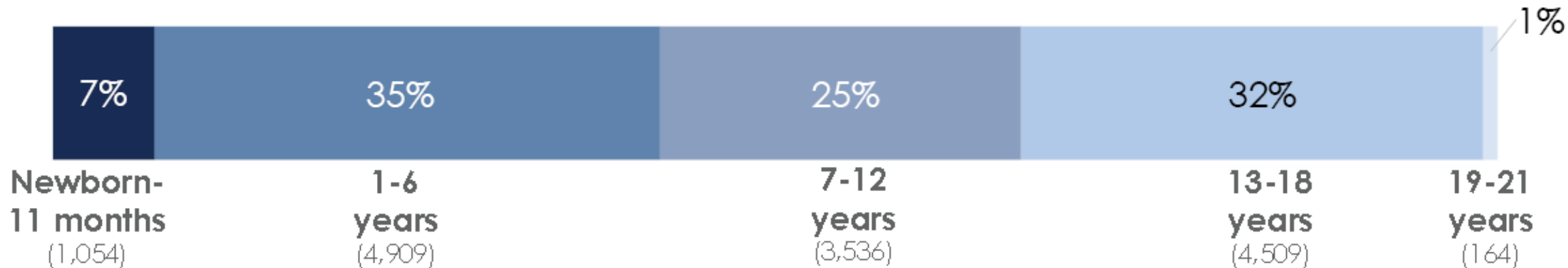
Children services involvement and foster care



Ohio children in children services custody

by age, October 2024

There were 23,707 Ohio children in children services custody at some point during state fiscal year 2024. The largest percentage were young children ages 1-6.



Note: Children in custody can include children who are in placements such as family foster care, kinship care, independent living, congregate care (congregate care includes placements such as residential centers, shelter care facilities, group homes, hospitals, nursing homes, and detention facilities), and other settings.

Source: Ohio Department of Jobs & Family Services Point in Time Count of Children in Care Dashboard, data as of October 2024

Questions?





Lindsay Green, M.Ed.

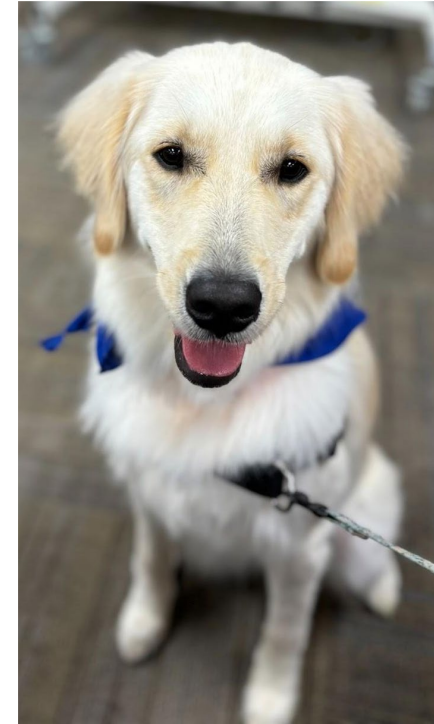
Educational Connection Specialist
Beavercreek, Ohio



Introduction



Lindsay Green, M.Ed.



Do-si-do Green,
Therapy Golden Retriever

Importance of Connection

- Buy-in from every adult who interacts with children
- Administrators set the tone for the school
- Teachers, Support Staff, Caregivers, Cor Members, etc. should all be included and trained on the importance of their roles in children's development



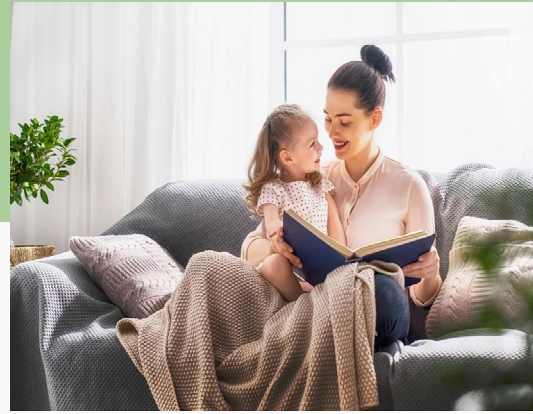
Four Elements of Connection



Eye Contact



Touch




Presence





Playfulness

Online Sessions for Caregivers

- Viking Village twice monthly
- Helps parents feel connected to school
- Opportunity to ask questions and get to know each other


**Bauer Primary Adults,
Join us for a Virtual Session:**



**Bauer's
Viking Village:**
Raising Resilient Children

Monday, March 24th 5:30pm-6:00pm
or
Tuesday, March 25th Noon-12:30pm

*Choose whichever time works best for you!




Our MARCH topic:
SCREEN TIME:

- How much is too much?
- How to keep kids off technology without entertaining them!
- What to say/ do about BOREDOM.

About The Viking Village:
The Viking Village is for any adult who spends time with a Bauer Primary student. During our online sessions, we'll talk about simple ways to help your student at home. Each session is 30 minutes long. The first 15 minutes will cover the topic, and the last 15 minutes are for questions and answers. You can join with your camera on or off. You can ask questions or just listen. This is a friendly space for adults to share the joys and challenges of raising strong, resilient kids!

Click [this link](#) to join the zoom
or scan the QR code



*These topics will be covered at both sessions, choose the time that works best for you!

Other questions? E-mail Mrs. Green lgreen@miamisburg.k12.oh.us

Ideas for Caregivers

- Information sent home both virtually and on paper
- Includes information about the importance and how to spend more time off screens



We all spend a lot of time on phones, tablets, and TVs. Sometimes, it's nice to take a break from screens and spend more time with the people we love. When we put our devices away, we can talk, laugh, and play together. We can try new things, be creative, and make happy memories that last a long time. This summer, use this bucket list to unplug and have fun with your family. Let's make it a summer full of smiles, adventures, and time together!

☐ Draw outside with chalk

MIAMISBURG SPECIFIC:

☐ Visit a local park

☐ 5/16-18: SpringFest

☐ Toss water balloons

☐ 6/1: Little Mermen @Riverfront Park

☐ Write a letter and mail it

☐ 6/7: Volunteer for Love our City Day

☐ Paint rocks

☐ 6/20: Wild Robot @Riverfront Park

☐ Watch the sunset

☐ 7/8: Park Popsicles @Mary Francis

☐ Play a board game

☐ 7/18: Touch a Truck @Riverfront Park

☐ Bake something together

☐ 8/5: Back to School Bash

☐ Visit the library

☐ Scan the QR code for local activities:

☐ Play hide and seek



☐ Fly a kite

☐ Have a family dance party

☐ Go stargazing



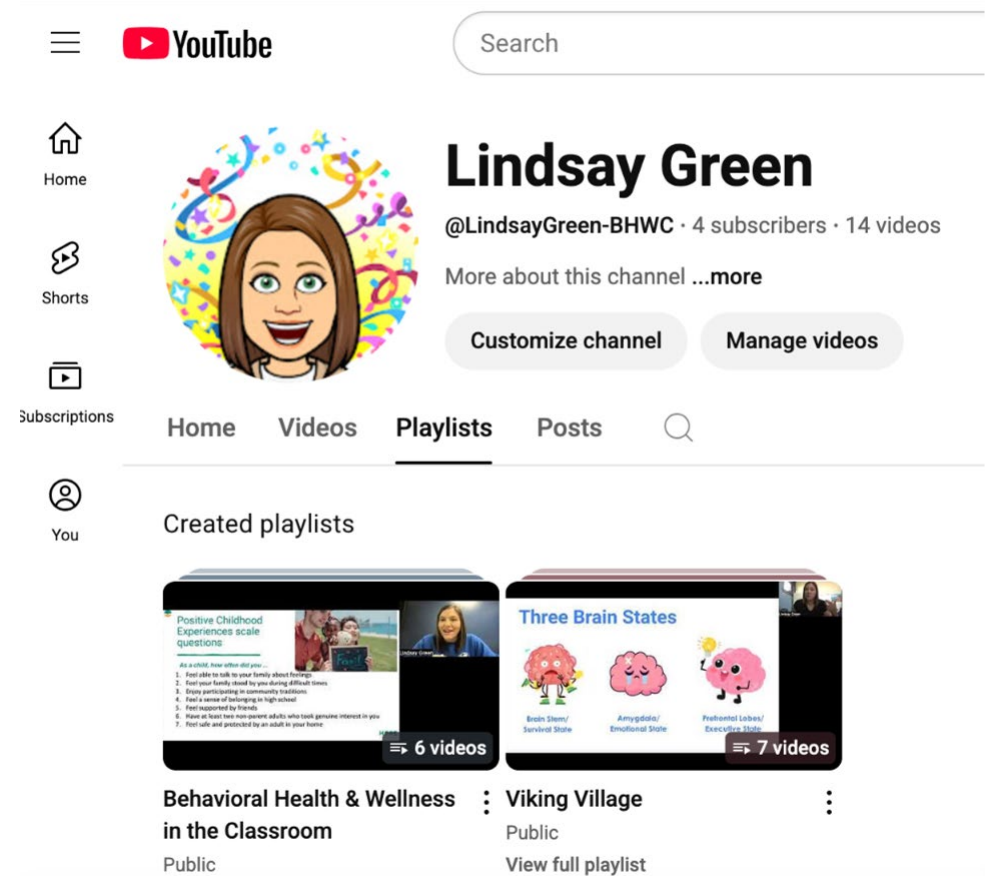
Monthly Newsletters for Educators

- Information Sharing on the importance of connection
- Classroom Strategies for relational health



YouTube Channel

- For Parents and Educators
- If caregivers missed a Viking Village, the information was shared on the YouTube
- Educators can earn professional development credit



Community Involvement

- **What to do instead of being on a screen?**
- Student Council, Foosball Club, After-School Club, etc.
- Local volunteers and community organizations part of these initiatives



THANK YOU!

Stay in touch!



Lindsay Green

Educational Connection Specialist




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Andrea Pollock

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Park Community Center
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Dave Henwood

Child and Youth Permanency Manager,
Protective Services
Fairfield County Job and Family Services



CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES & FOSTER CARE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT

DAVE HENWOOD
CHILD & YOUTH PERMANENCY MANAGER
FAIRFIELD COUNTY PROTECTIVE SERVICES

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILD WELFARE IN OHIO

- 23,707 children in CPS custody at some point during fiscal 2024
- 1,002 of those youths emancipated at age 18
- 27% have spent 2+ years in custody
- 29% are age 12 or older
- Placement costs in Ohio were \$518 million dollars
- 53% of youth were in foster homes; 26% with kin; and 14% in congregate care facilities

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

- Most child welfare involvement stems from an ACEs scoring category
- 52% of Ohio youth with ACEs scoring of 3+ have at least one mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral health need
- 31% of Ohio's school age youth enrolled in Medicaid are diagnosed with ADHD, anxiety or depression

MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF CUSTODY

- More families are approaching child welfare to seek assistance with providing care for youth with significant mental health or behavioral needs which cannot be safely addressed in their homes
- Increase in adoptive families and kinship who have previously taken custody seeking this type of support
- 45% of youth in Fairfield County's permanent custody were removed from someone other than a birth parent (14 of 31 youths)

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

- OhioRISE
 - Ohio's specialized managed care program for high-need youth
 - Assist with services for multisystem youth
- Regional child wellness campuses
 - Provide access for youths in crisis to receive services while agencies identify next steps for placement

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

- Treatment Foster Home pilot
 - Partnership with neighboring counties to meet placement needs
- Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP)
 - Provide increased financial stability to kinship families taking custody
- Kinnect to Family
 - Family search and engagement practice to increase kinship identification

TREATMENT
FOSTER
CARE PILOT

FOSTER
— the —
FUTURE

A L L I A N C E



1	Sandusky, Ottawa, Wood, Seneca, Wyandot, Hancock
2	Allen, Auglaize, Hardin
3	Defiance / Paulding, Fulton, Henry, Williams
4	Huron, Erie, Crawford
5	Mahoning, Ashtabula, Trumbull
6	Portage, Medina, Columbiana
7	Guernsey, Holmes, Wayne, Coshocton
8	Belmont, Jefferson, Morgan
9	Athens, Perry, Jackson, Gallia, Meigs
10	Montgomery, Butler, Clermont
11	Fairfield, Ross, Hocking, Vinton

WHY TREATMENT FOSTER CARE?

- Provide home setting for youths addressing mental health needs
- Caregivers with additional training and experience to support the children placed in their homes
- Increased ability to maintain youths in their home communities, with linkage to known supports and providers
- On-demand access to mental health services starting at the time of placement

WHAT MORE CAN BE DONE?

- Increased access to care – more mental health providers are needed, and more providers willing to accept managed care plans
- More foster homes – an increased number of homes allows for placement in home communities
- A wider menu of mental health services – youth (particularly teens) do not do well in talk therapy, but often there is not other available services
- Support for kin – children do better when placed in familiar settings with caregivers they already know



THANK YOU

Dave Henwood

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Ways to influence policy



- Write letters, emails or make phone calls
- Provide district specific data
- Provide analysis of a bill
- Provide testimony at a legislative hearing
- Provide a one-page fact sheet
- Organize community partners to visit key policymakers
- Invite policymakers to visit your organization or speak at a meeting you host



Connect with us

Social



@healthpolicyohio



Email

- **HPIO mailing list**
(link on our homepage)
- **Ohio Health Policy News**
(healthpolicynews.org)

www.hpio.net

Save the date



THURSDAY
OCTOBER 9

Prioritizing what works

*A focus on policies with the greatest
return on investment*



Columbus State Community College

The Event Center at Mitchell Hall

250 Cleveland Avenue
Columbus, OH 43215

Registration will open this summer at:

www.hprio.net/events

Thank you

