HPIO gathers latest COVID-19 research to inform Ohio response

Within days of the first cases of COVID-19 being reported in Ohio, the Health Policy Institute began work to inform state policymakers on the pandemic.

The Institute launched a COVID-19 resource page to serve as a “one-stop shop” for leaders and the public to access the latest information from reliable state and federal sources.

In the following days, HPIO offered assistance to the Ohio Department of Health. The agency asked HPIO to track relevant research and analysis that could inform state decision making during the quickly evolving crisis.

HPIO policy staff rapidly organized a process to review the latest research literature and created a database to log findings. The log is updated daily and a summary document of the most relevant studies is submitted to ODH staff three days a week.

Since the project began on March 25, HPIO staff have reviewed, summarized and tracked more than 325 articles.

In addition, HPIO produces a regular COVID-19 Research Update with simplified summaries of top research findings. The updates are posted to HPIO’s resource page and e-mailed to the Institute’s list of more than 5,000 contacts, including legislators and legislative aides.

HPIO examining home visiting services in Ohio

The Ohio Department of Health contracted with HPIO through the first half of 2020 to gather new and additional data and information to inform the federally-required Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Needs Assessment update.

HPIO is compiling and analyzing the most-recently available data and information on the quality and capacity of home visiting services in the state. As part of this process, HPIO created an online survey to collect information from home visiting providers about opportunities to expand and improve home visiting service capacity in Ohio.

In partnership with ODH, HPIO hosted two interactive webinars in April 2020 to share preliminary results of the survey with home visiting providers and gather additional feedback on the survey results.

Findings are used to identify high-risk communities, home visiting service gaps and opportunities for improving early childhood home visiting services throughout the state.

ODH previously contracted with HPIO to develop the state’s MIECHV Needs Assessment update last year. The final MIECHV needs assessment must be submitted to the federal government by October 2020 as a requirement of federal funding.
Sen. John Eklund, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, provided updates on policy changes to reform the criminal justice system in Ohio during an HPIO webinar on April 14.

HPIO hosted the webinar to detail its recently released “Ohio Addiction Policy Scorecard: Law Enforcement and the Criminal Justice System,” the third in a series of HPIO analyses of Ohio’s policy response to the addiction crisis that outline areas where the state could be more effective.

Sen. Eklund (R-Chardon) highlighted Senate Bill 3, which he said is a drug sentencing reform measure that would reduce the number of low-level drug convictions charged as felonies, but wouldn’t reduce convictions of distributors of illegal drugs.

The webinar also included HPIO Vice President Amy Bush Stevens and Policy Analyst Hailey Akah, who co-authored HPIO’s addition policy inventory and scorecards, and provided an update on the impact of COVID-19 on prisons and jails.

The law enforcement scorecard reviews state-level policy changes related to law enforcement and the criminal justice system enacted in Ohio from 2013 to 2018.