

Ohio addiction policy fact sheet

4 Children, youth and families

On the horizon: Changes and concerns

Important policy decisions in recent years have set the stage for structural changes designed to improve child outcomes and help families struggling with addiction. This fact sheet summarizes upcoming policy changes and initiatives, as well as looming concerns that could threaten progress.

New changes

- State and local partners are continuing to implement the federal Family First law in phases, building to full implementation by 2023 (see box).
- The Office of Children Services Transformation released the **final recommendations** of the Children Services Transformation Advisory Council in Nov. 2020. State leaders will coordinate implementation of the 37 recommendations.
- The Ohio Children's Trust Fund has received a federal grant to support the Prevention Mindset initiative, which brings cross-sector partners together to shift child welfare practices to focus more on upstream prevention.
- State agencies are leading new collaborative efforts to improve Ohio's Plans of Safe Care implementation in Ohio, including the Practice and Policy Academy and the Opioid Use Disorder, Maternal Outcomes, and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Initiative (OMNI) Learning Community.
- The Ohio Department of Medicaid plans to launch **OhioRISE** in 2021. Other aspects of Medicaid managed care procurement and pending Medicaid policy changes may positively affect access to quality care for families.
- Gov. DeWine signed House Bill 8 in October 2020, with the law going into effect in January 2021. The law will increase flexibility for foster family training.

Concerns

- The COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession may harm children and family well-being in many ways, such as disrupted access to services (behavioral health treatment, home visiting, child care, etc.), K-12 learning loss and increased education inequities, reduced reporting of child abuse and neglect, increased family violence and increased poverty.
- Preliminary data for some Ohio communities indicate that overdose death rates have increased in 2020. This may signal a troubling rise in the number of Ohioans struggling with addiction, which may result in increases in child maltreatment.

Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First)

Signed into law in 2018, Family First includes major reforms designed to prevent child maltreatment and keep children safely with their families. The goal is to keep children with their parents or kin in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible, signaling a shift away from foster care and congregate care facilities.

To specifically address challenges of parental addiction, the law provides federal reimbursement for evidence-based mental health and substance abuse prevention services for children at risk for foster care placement.

It also provides reimbursement for children in residential family-based substance abuse treatment with a parent.

States have options for how some components of the law are implemented. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services formed a Leadership Advisory Committee to develop a **Family First Implementation Roadmap** for Ohio and to guide implementation in four areas:

- **Prevention:** Ohio's Phase 1 Prevention Plan includes four programs from a federal clearinghouse of evidence-based programs and services (Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy, as well as Ohio START).
- **Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP):** To reduce inappropriate use of congregate/group care, states must define QRTP requirements. Ohio will be phasing in new QRTP requirements between 2020 and 2024, including requirements for trauma-informed treatment models, staff registration/licensing and level of care assessments.
- **Kinship Navigator:** States can receive federal reimbursement for half of state expenditures on a kinship navigator program. Ohio has developed the **Ohio Kinship and Adoptive Navigator Program (OhioKAN)**.
- **Model licensing standards:** Ohio has chosen to align with the National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards.

Figure 1. Significant state-level child welfare policy changes in Ohio, 2016-2020



This fact sheet is an excerpt from the HPIO publication

Ohio addiction policy scorecard: Children, youth and families

View the complete report at

www.hpio.net/ohio-addiction-policy-scorecard-children-youth-and-families

