



OVERVIEW

Key policy changes proposed by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) in this budget will streamline services, reduce barriers, and improve efficiencies. These changes support DCY's three primary goals and align with the budget request to better support Ohio children and families.

IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE DUPLICATION

Children and Youth Advisory Council:

Streamlines stakeholder groups now under DCY and renames the Early Childhood Advisory Council to the Children and Youth Advisory Council merging three separate councils into one overall governing group.

Biennial Summit on Home Visiting:

Expands and funds professional development opportunities for professionals across all DCY program areas, which current language only supports home visiting professionals.

Ohio Professional Registry (OPR):

Allows DCY, as lead agency of several new programs, to contract with the third-party entity for the registry information system (OPR).

Programs/Services for Individuals with Autism and Low-Incidence Disabilities:

Adds DCY to existing Department of Education and Workforce language allowing primary consideration to be given to the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence for services.

PREVENTION

Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF):

- Permits council chairs who are eligible for a second term to be reappointed and aligns term limits for all members.
- Allows regional prevention council coordination services to be brought in-house when they cannot be contracted out.
- Gives OCTF the ability to decide the makeup of the regional child abuse and neglect prevention council.
- Streamlines the process for Child Advocacy Centers to apply for and receive start-up costs.

Ohio Family and Children First:

Keeps Ohio families at the table when or if they are hired by a participating organization. Also allows school districts to name a designee to represent the superintendent in their absence.

Prevention Services Referrals and Help Me Grow Mandated Reporter:

Permits public children services agencies to assess and make referrals for prevention services and adds Help Me Grow home visitors as mandated reporters.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

We are proposing several policy changes to expand access to highly rated child care programs and ensure federal compliance by August 2026.

***Increasing the Federal Poverty Level (FPL):** Increases the current FPL from 145%-160% for publicly funded child care (PFCC) eligibility.

***Child Care Choice Voucher Program:** Increases eligibility for families not eligible for PFCC due to income but who are working and/or going to school from 161-200% FPL.

Early Care and Education Grant (ECE): Establishes ECE in permanent law to better align the continuum of early care and education.

In Home Aide Continuous Certification: Creates alignment for continuous certification processes across all provider types.

Federal Requirements for Homeless Child Care: Allows families who are homeless the ability to receive PFCC for a continuous 12 months as required for federal compliance.

Publicly Funded Child Care Market Rate & Cost of Living Adjustments: Allows DCY to regularly update the payment rates or cost of care, based on market rate surveys, as required for federal compliance.

Federal Requirements for PFCC payments: Caps co-payments at 7% of the family's income, pays providers prospectively based on enrollment, not attendance, as required for federal compliance.

CHILDREN SERVICES

***Child Advocacy Centers (CAC):** Shifts the CACs from the Department of Public Safety to DCY to support children who have been sexually abused.

Social Security and Survivor Benefits for Foster Youth: Preserves the social security and survivor benefits of a child placed in foster care after the effective date.

Children Services Rate Cards: Authorizes DCY to issue a request for proposal to create statewide rate cards for the placement and care of children for foster care maintenance payments.

***Regional Wellness Campuses:** Creates regional child wellness campuses, adding capacity for treatment for youth in crisis and avoid spending the night in an unauthorized placement setting.

Foster Care Suspensions: Authorizes DCY to immediately suspend a congregate care provider or foster care provider from operating if a child dies or is at risk of serious harm.

Remove Kinship Support Payments from State Hearings: Removes the Kinship Support Program (KSP) from the State Hearing process, which is not required.

Reduce Red Tape for Foster Care Adoptions: Promotes permanency by streamlining the adoption home study process for certified foster parents seeking to adopt a foster child placed in their home.

Ohio Adoption Grant Program: Provides clarification for eligibility, requires grantees to live in Ohio at the time the adoption is finalized, outlines consequences for falsification, requires all documents to be confidential and makes the grant available only as funding allows.