

The earliest years of a child's life are crucial for healthy brain development and lifelong mental wellness. Yet in Ohio, too many infants and toddlers face barriers to accessing timely, culturally responsive mental health services.

Our Youngest Children are experiencing profound trauma in their early years.

Victims of Maltreatment

Ohio is ranked in the bottom half of states and D.C. for infant Maltreatment.¹



Over 3,000 children under the age of one were victims of maltreatment in 2022.²

Infants are Most at Risk

Compared to older children Ohio's infants under one are three times more likely to be victims of Maltreatment.³



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

14.3% of Ohio children, ages 0-5, have experienced two or more ACEs.⁴

Black Children are

1.4X

more likely to experience 2 or more ACEs

Unsafe Environments

One in three Black people lived in Cincinnati (Hamilton County), Cleveland (Cuyahoga County), or Columbus (Franklin County).⁵ Each of those counties are considered "high risk" for lead exposure.

Over **1/2**

of Children who tested positive for lead were Black

In an analysis in Cincinnati, of all the children who tested positive for lead exposure, 53% were Black.⁶



"I live in a County where services are not available"

-Parent from Gallia County

Ohio PN-3 Coalition: FY 2026-2027 Budget Priorities

Investing in Our Youngest Children, Supporting Families, and Advancing Equity

As the Ohio General Assembly considers the biennial state budget, the Ohio PN-3 Coalition urges policymakers to restore and expand critical investments for infants, toddlers, and their families. These priorities reflect the needs of children during the most formative years of life, and the urgent call to support the professionals and systems who care for them.

We are asking the Ohio Legislature to reinstate the Governor's proposed funding levels by doing the following:

1. Strengthen Access to Child Care for Families

- Restore publicly funded child care eligibility to 160% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) with continued eligibility up to 300% FPL.
- Fully fund the Child Care Choice Voucher Program at \$75M in FY26 and \$150M in FY27.

2. Expand Economic Security for Families

- Restore the refundable Child Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 per child under age 7, available to families earning up to \$94,000.

3. Improve Maternal and Infant Health

- Restore \$22.5M in Home Visiting investments and \$7.5M annually for infant vitality programming.
- Reinstate multi-year continuous Medicaid eligibility for children 0–3 to ensure uninterrupted care during critical years.

4. Expand Access to Doula Services

- Expand Medicaid-covered doula services statewide, not just in six counties, to reach families in urban and high-need areas.

5. Create Safe Environments for Children

- Restore full funding for lead abatement and the Lead-Safe Home Fund.
- Protect H2Ohio investments in water infrastructure that prevent lead exposure in vulnerable communities.

1. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2024). Child Maltreatment 2022.
2. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2024). Child Maltreatment 2022.
3. Ohio Data, from U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. (2022). Child maltreatment 2022 (Report).
4. Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey (2023)
5. City of Cincinnati Health Department. (2023). 2022 lead annual report.