



Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus

*Learning, connecting, and problem-solving
together. Our children are counting on us.*

*Concentrated Care and Investment to Improve Behavioral Health Care for
Appalachian Children*

August 22, 2022

Opening Remarks: Rep. Monique Smith



*Ohio Legislative
Children's Caucus
Co-Chair*

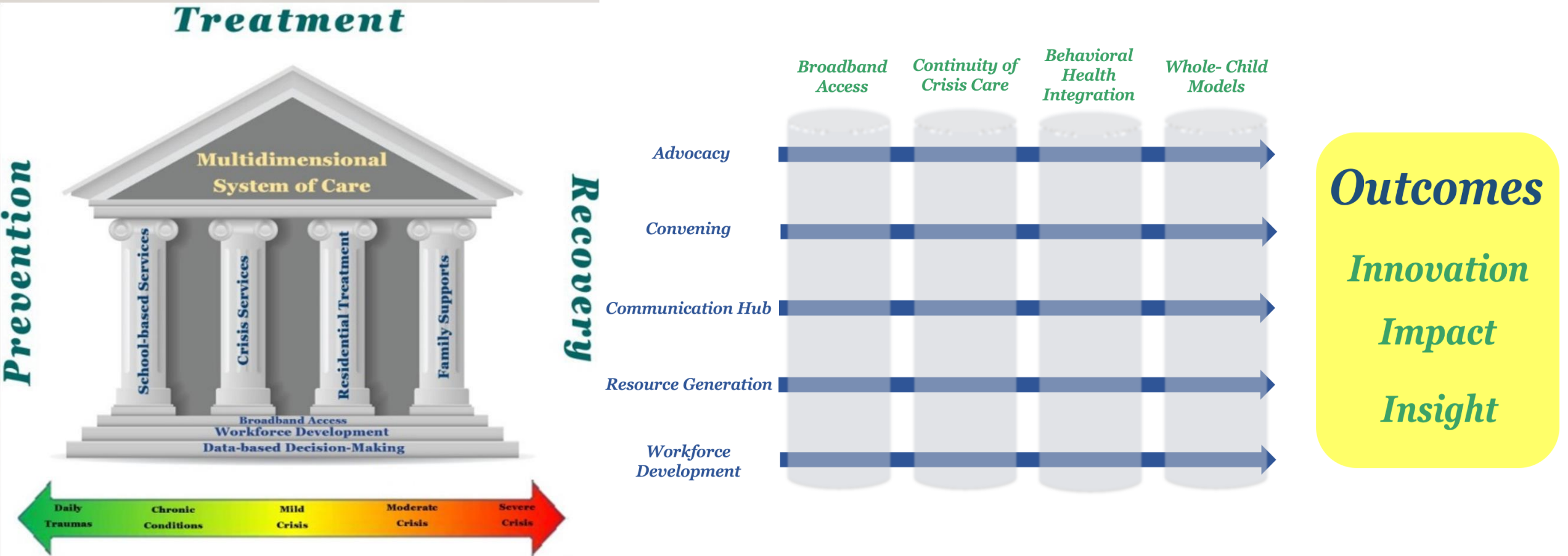
Concentrated Support & Investment to Improve Behavioral Health Care for Appalachian Children

Randy Leite, Executive Director, Appalachian Children Coalition

Stephanie Starcher, Superintendent, Fort Frye Local School District

Robin Harris, Executive Director, Gallia, Jackson & Meigs ADAMH Board

Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of our region's children. Through collective advocacy and strategic investments, we aim for a future where every child has access to the care that they require at home, in school, and in their communities.



Appalachian Ohio's Unique Challenges and Opportunities

Robin Harris, Executive Director, Gallia, Jackson & Meigs ADAMH Board

Heightened Exposure to Poverty

- **In the State of Ohio, the top twelve counties with the highest rates of child poverty are located in Appalachia. Child poverty increased in every Appalachian county from 2000 to 2013, and nearly one in three Appalachian children under the age of six live below the poverty level.**
- **68% of families have an income that is less than \$75,000**
- **59% of children receive free and reduced lunch as compared with the state average of 16% and the national average of 13%**
- **59% of Appalachian children are enrolled in Medicaid; 10% more than rest of Ohio**
- **18 of Ohio's Appalachian counties have been designated as economically distressed or at-risk by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Only two are designated as economically competitive.**

Lack of Access to Services

- **Approximately 42% of the region's population is rural, compared with 20% of the national population.**
- **Anywhere from 1/4 to 1/3 of children do not have access to broadband Internet.**
- **Behavioral Health provider-to- resident ratios are greater than state and national averages (2,249 residents to 1 behavioral health clinician of any type as compared to 700 to 1 for Ohio and 390 to1 for the U.S.)**
- **Ohio has six children's hospitals, but none are located in Appalachia.**
- **All but four Appalachian counties (Clermont, Jefferson, Mahoning, and Trumbull) were designated as Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas in 2015.**
- **Only one crisis stabilization facility exists in the Appalachian region. As a result, Appalachian children are being sent up to 200 miles away from their families and communities for care.**
- **During the COVID pandemic, the number of licensed childcare providers dropped more than 60% from pre-pandemic levels**
- **Transportation is a challenge with 14% of families reporting that they have no vehicle as compared to the state average of 8%**

Problematic Child Well-being Outcomes

- **The infant mortality rate in Ohio's Appalachian Region is 21% higher than the national average.**
- **Suicide and youth suicide rates are up to 21% higher than the rest of the State of Ohio.**
- **Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) is on the rise: 9 of the top 10 counties in Ohio are in Appalachia. Babies born in this region are almost twice as likely as the average Ohio newborn to be diagnosed with NAS.**
- **The incidence of low birth weight in Appalachian counties is 8.7 percent of all newborns.**
- **The teen birth rate in the Appalachian Region is 10 percent higher than the national rate.**

The Reality for Appalachian Children in Crisis

Stephanie Starcher, Superintendent, Fort Frye Local School District

Opportunities for Impact

Randy Leite, Executive Director, Appalachian Children Coalition



Prioritized Areas of Regional Investment in Child Behavioral Health Improvements

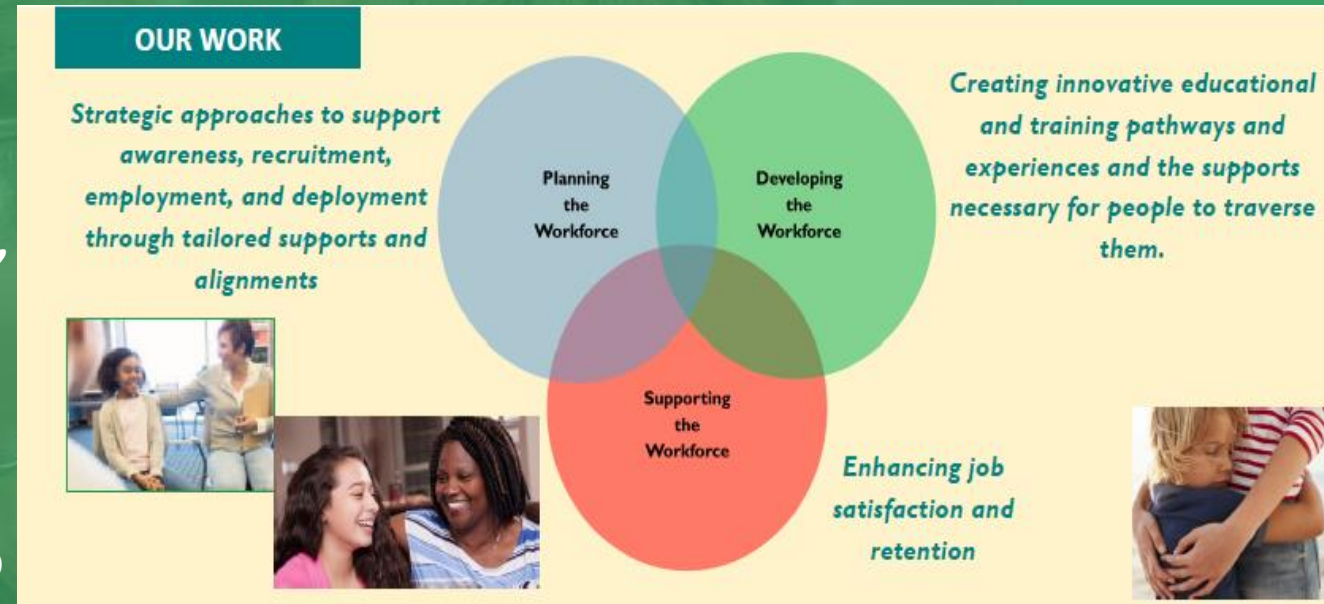
These recommendations reflect:

- More than 100 conversations with partners, affiliates, providers, social service agencies, community leaders, government officials, and families.
- Exploration of data from multiple public and private sources
- County health assessments in more than a third of Appalachian counties
- Explorations of best practice models in place in other regions of the country
- Involvement of willing partners
- Shovel-ready and sustainable proposals
- Consistency with State of Ohio initiatives

Prioritized Areas of Regional Investment in Child Behavioral Health Improvements

Workforce Development

- Expand the Appalachian Behavioral Health Workforce Hub, a “one-stop” for behavioral health employing organizations, current and potential workforce members, and education and training providers (www.acchub.org)
- Create a training collaborative for community health workers, patient navigators, chemical dependency counseling assistants, child development assistants, and other paraprofessionals with free training provided to up to 700 individuals
- Provide funding for multiple institutions to collaborate on new, more streamlined curricular pathways to careers in behavioral health
- Establish a career impact bond fund to provide no-interest, repayable up-front loans to cover educational costs for those seeking behavioral health careers



Key Partners:

- **7 Provider Organizations**
- **40 affiliated organizations**
- **12 higher education institutions**
- **Building Bridges 2 Careers**

Prioritized Areas of Regional Investment in Child Behavioral Health Improvements

Child/School Health

- Establish up to 15 school-based health clinics connected to a network of other schools through telehealth capacity
- Develop and implement a primary care/behavioral health integration model to be utilized in primary care practices and school health clinics
- Expand school-based oral care services
- Offer home-based case management services
- Offer programs to enhance health, financial, and legal literacy among parents and guardians
- Develop out-of-school programs to support emotional well-being and offset COVID-related deficits



Key Partners:

- Partners for Kids
- Akron Children's Hospital
- Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
- KinnectOHIO
- Ohio State Legal Services Association

Prioritized Areas of Regional Investment in Child Behavioral Health Improvements

Crisis Stabilization Services

- Create a 16-bed crisis stabilization unit to serve children in 13 Eastern Ohio counties
- Provide wraparound services for children and families
- Provide enhanced recruitment, training, and support for therapeutic foster parents to offset a near total lack of such placements in the region
- Develop an Appalachian Foster Care Resource Center
- Generate 20-30 new therapeutic foster care placements in the Appalachian region
- Increase CASA programming to 10 additional Appalachian counties
- Create technical assistance resources for county courts to utilize in developing new CASA programs
- Develop a regional CASA program coordination model to reduce costs and increase effectiveness of county programs



Key Partners:

- 5 ADAMH Boards
- Akron Children's Hospital
- Hopewell Health
- Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
- Ohio CASA Association
- County Courts
- County Children's Services Agencies

Prioritized Areas of Regional Investment in Child Behavioral Health Improvements

Assessment, Evaluation Data Support

- Establish the Center on the Appalachian Child to gather and distribute data on Appalachian child health issues
- Conduct child behavioral health needs assessments in all 32 Appalachian counties
- Develop a freely-accessible, searchable, regularly-updated database of child health indicators to support decision-making regarding programs and investments in the region
- Provide program evaluation and community assessment support to schools, ADAMH boards, and other local entities



Key Partners:

- Ohio University
- 9 area ADAMH boards
- Partners for Kids

For more information, contact:

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Questions & Answers

*Moderated by Hannah Ross,
Legislative Aide for Rep. Smith*

*For legislators and legislative staff,
please feel free to unmute
yourselves to ask questions or
share feedback.*

*For all other participants, please
use the chat or Q&A feature, and
we will do our best to answer in
the time allotted.*



*Thank you for joining
today's webinar!*

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Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus
webinars and meetings, please
contact:

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