



## The Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus

Ohio's Family Connects - Strengthening Families  
and Building Healthier Communities

June 16, 2025, 2:30PM



**children's  
defense fund**  
**ohio**

**Guillermo Bervejillo, Phd**

Research Manager, CDF-Ohio

OVERALL RANK

31

2025 KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> DATA BOOK

OHIO



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

27



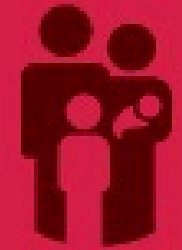
EDUCATION

15



HEALTH

33



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

35

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



## Ohio Kids Count Rankings

# Economic Well-Being

### Children in Poverty

**#35**

13% of Ohio's Children are living in poverty (income below \$30,900 for a family of two adults and two children in 2023)

### Children with Unemployed Parents

**#34**

27% of Ohio's Children are living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment





## Ohio Kids Count Rankings

# Education

**4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Reading**

**#14**

68% of 4th graders  
scored below proficient  
reading level

**8th Grade  
Math**

**#7**

68% of 8th graders scored  
below proficient math level

**High School  
Graduation**

**#25**

14% of high school  
students are not  
graduating on time



## Ohio Kids Count Rankings

# Health

### Child and Teen Deaths

# #25

Ohio's Child and teen death rate per 100,000 children ages 1 to 19 is 30.

### Childhood Obesity

# #43

35% of children and teens in Ohio, ages 10 to 17, are overweight or obese



## Ohio Kids Count Rankings

# Family and Community

### Children in Poverty

**#41**

10% of Ohio's children are living in high-poverty areas (census tracts with poverty rates  $\geq$  30%)

### Teen Births

**#32**

Ohio's teen birth rate is 10 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19.



**Jim Spurlino, CEO**

Spurlino Materials representing ReadyNationOH



# Department of Children & Youth

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Ohio Family and Children First

**Allison Payten, Chief**

Bureau of Maternal and Early Childhood  
Services and Supports



# Department of Children & Youth

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Help Me Grow

Ohio Help Me Grow offers the programs, tools, and guidance to help children and families thrive.



# Why Help Me Grow?

**Early  
experiences  
create the  
foundation  
for success.**

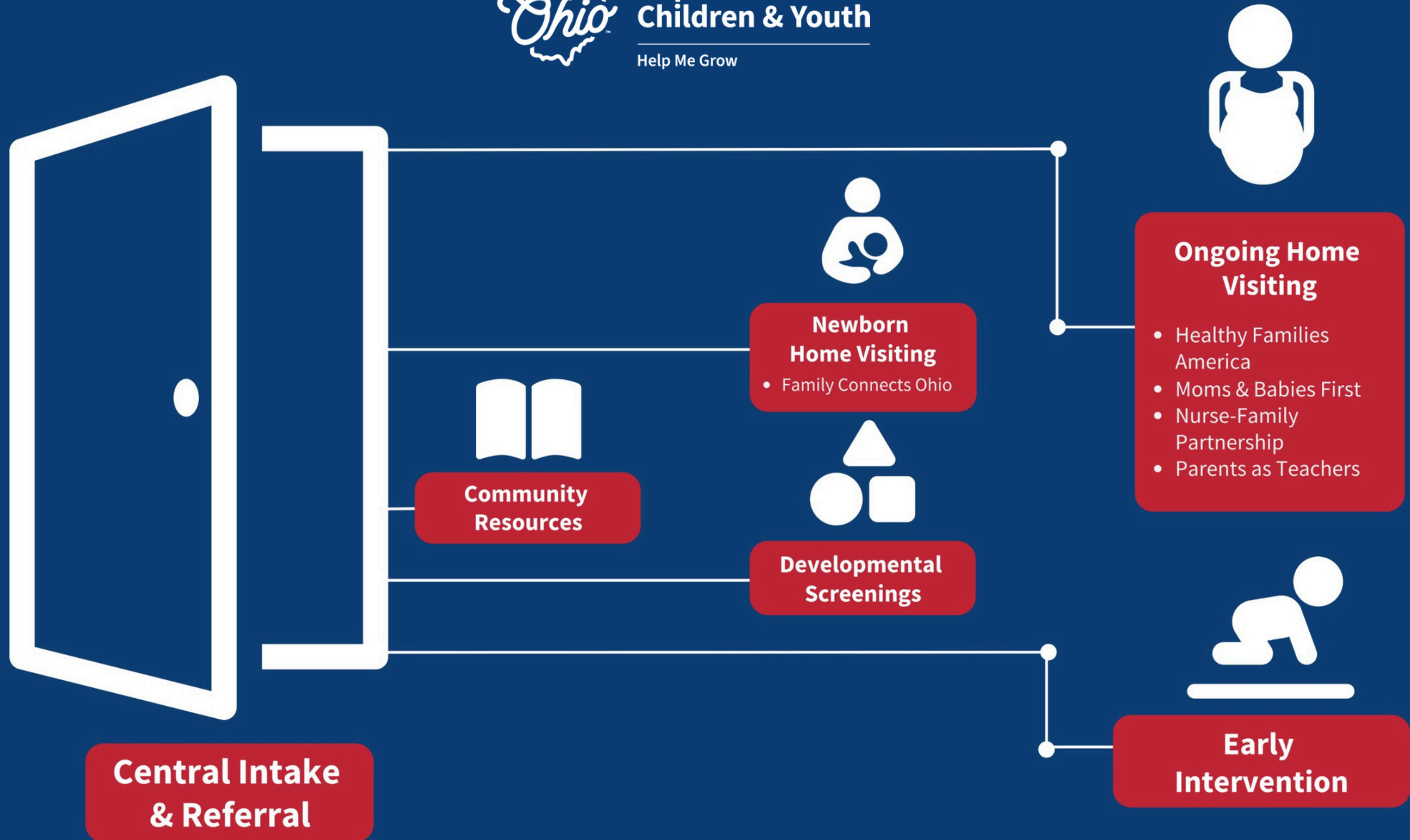






# Department of Children & Youth

Help Me Grow





# STATEWIDE REFERRAL SYSTEM

## Referral Sources

- Prenatal providers
- Physicians and other medical providers
- Public Children Services agencies
- Electronic Pregnancy Risk Assessment forms
- WIC
- 211
- Early Care and Education providers
- Non-profit agencies
- Early Intervention providers
- Home Visiting providers
- Hospital-based Child Find Specialists
- Community health workers
- Primary caregivers, family members, and friends
- Managed care providers
- Neighborhood Navigators

## Early Childhood Central Intake and Referral



## System of Support

**Early  
Intervention  
programs**

**Home Visiting  
programs  
(Newborn and ongoing)**

**Developmental  
Screenings**

**Community  
Resources**

# HOME VISITING







**HOME VISITING** is an evidence-based or promising-practice service that provides expectant parents and caregivers of eligible children with supports to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready to learn.



# WHO CAN BE REFERRED FOR HOME VISITING?

**Prenatal to age three**

- Pregnant individuals
- New parents
- Caregivers of eligible children, including foster and kinship





# MODEL HIGHLIGHTS



**Department of  
Children & Youth**

Help Me Grow Home Visiting

## Family Connects Ohio



- Universal
- Nurse home visit
- Families can be referred to HFA and PAT if eligible and interested in on-going home visiting services.

## Nurse Family Partnership



- Pregnant individuals
- First time and high risk
- Until child reaches age two
- Certified Nurse Home Visitor

## Healthy Families America



- Pregnant individuals or families with a child under age two
- Until child reaches age five
- Certified Home Visitor




## Parents as Teachers



- Pregnant individuals or families with a child under age three
- Until child reaches age five
- Certified Home Visitor

\*Model enrollment eligibility subject to change

# ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY

	Prenatal up to 28 weeks	Prenatal up to delivery	Up to three months	Up to 24 months	Up to 36 months
	First time Multiparous				
	Target enrollment Alternate and child welfare protocol				
					





## WHAT DO HOME VISITORS DO?

- Support healthy pregnancy
- Conduct screenings Educate and
- inform Facilitate parent-child
- interactions Promote parent-
- driven, family-orientated self-sufficiency
- Acknowledge and celebrate child and family successes



# WHAT DO HOME VISITORS DO?

- Collaborate with other social service providers working with the families
- Connect families to community resources
- Assist with transition planning for the children and family





# POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF HOME VISITING

- Improved maternal and child health
- Better school readiness
- Greater economic self-sufficiency
- Reduced juvenile delinquency, family violence, and crime rates
- Increased connections and referrals to other social services

*More information on positive outcomes and studies that support them can be found at [homvee.acf.hhs.gov](https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov)*

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# HOW HOME VISITING MAKES AN IMPACT

- Offers one-on-one support Gives vital
- support for a healthy pregnancy Assists
- with common parenting challenges after the baby is born
- Provides tools and strategies to manage children's behavior and discipline, and to help families cope with stress and hardship
- Connects to resources and reliable information

# WHAT FAMILIES APPRECIATE ABOUT HOME VISITING

“

These years are so intimidating, exhausting and it's nice to have **someone talk to you and say, “you're not the only one”**. It's a very real relationship.

I had no help on my own, so **it has been so helpful to have a home visitor** teaching me what to look for.

You don't get a lot of time in your doctor's office (you think you will, but you don't), **and it's nice to have someone to bounce ideas off**.

My visitor was a guru during pregnancy and turned into a therapist and everything in between. They're there to talk to. **They help beyond just the kid in the program.**

”  
“



**Get connected  
or refer to  
Help Me Grow  
services today!**



Complete a referral form online  
at **[www.helpmegrow.org](http://www.helpmegrow.org)**.  
Call **(800) 755-GROW (4769)**  
to speak with an intake specialist.  
Email a completed referral form to  
**[hmgreferrals@helpmegrow.org](mailto:hmgreferrals@helpmegrow.org)**.  
Fax completed referral forms to  
**(855) 418-3322** or **(855) 318-3322**.



**THE HEART  
OF IT ALL™**

**Ohio.org**

OHIO.ORG



**FAMILY**  
CONNECTS  
INTERNATIONAL

**Kimberly Friedman, Chief Program Officer**

Family Connects International





# RE-IMAGINING THE SYSTEM OF CARE FOR **ALL** **OHIO** FAMILIES







# INTRODUCTION

Family Connects is an evidence-based model designed to support the health of all families with newborns during this significant life transition. Trained Family Connects nurses conduct home visits to assess the **health of newborns and postpartum parents**. They provide relevant health information and refer families to community and medical services as needed. Additionally, **we follow up with every family** to ensure they successfully connect with the services available to them. At the community level, Family Connects partners use data and feedback from families to **identify needs and service gaps** within the community.







# THE FIRST WEEKS AFTER BIRTH ARE CRITICAL

- **52% of pregnancy-related maternal deaths occur within 42 days of birth.**
- **Over 80% of pregnancy-related deaths were determined to be preventable. The six most frequent causes of pregnancy-related death: mental health conditions, cardiovascular conditions, infection, hemorrhage, embolism, and hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, accounted for 82% of pregnancy-related deaths**
- **94% of families with newborns have at least one identified need for information or connection to a resource.**
- **"Serve and return" interactions right from birth are critical for building strong brain architecture, but commonly undiagnosed and untreated maternal depression can leave a lasting impact on children's development.**

## Sources:

(<https://harvardcenter.wpenginpowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/Maternal-Depression-Can-Undermine-Development.pdf>, p. 3)

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2020/nov/maternal-mortality-maternity-care-us-compared-10-countries>

<https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-mortality/php/data-research/index.html#:~:text=Among%20pregnancy-related%20deaths%20in%202020%2C%2047%25%20occurred%207%E2%80%9393365,cause%20of%20death%20was%20identified%20for%20511%20deaths.>

(<https://familyconnects.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Randomized-controlled-trial-of-Family-Connects.pdf>, p. 6)





# Family Connects was born in Durham, NC

- Developed by Partnership between: The Center for Child & Family Health, Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy, and Durham County in 2008
- Rigorous research and evaluation in Durham resulted in this proven model
- Demand from other communities across the US led to the creation of Family Connects International non-profit in 2022
- Family Connects Ohio program launched in January of 2025

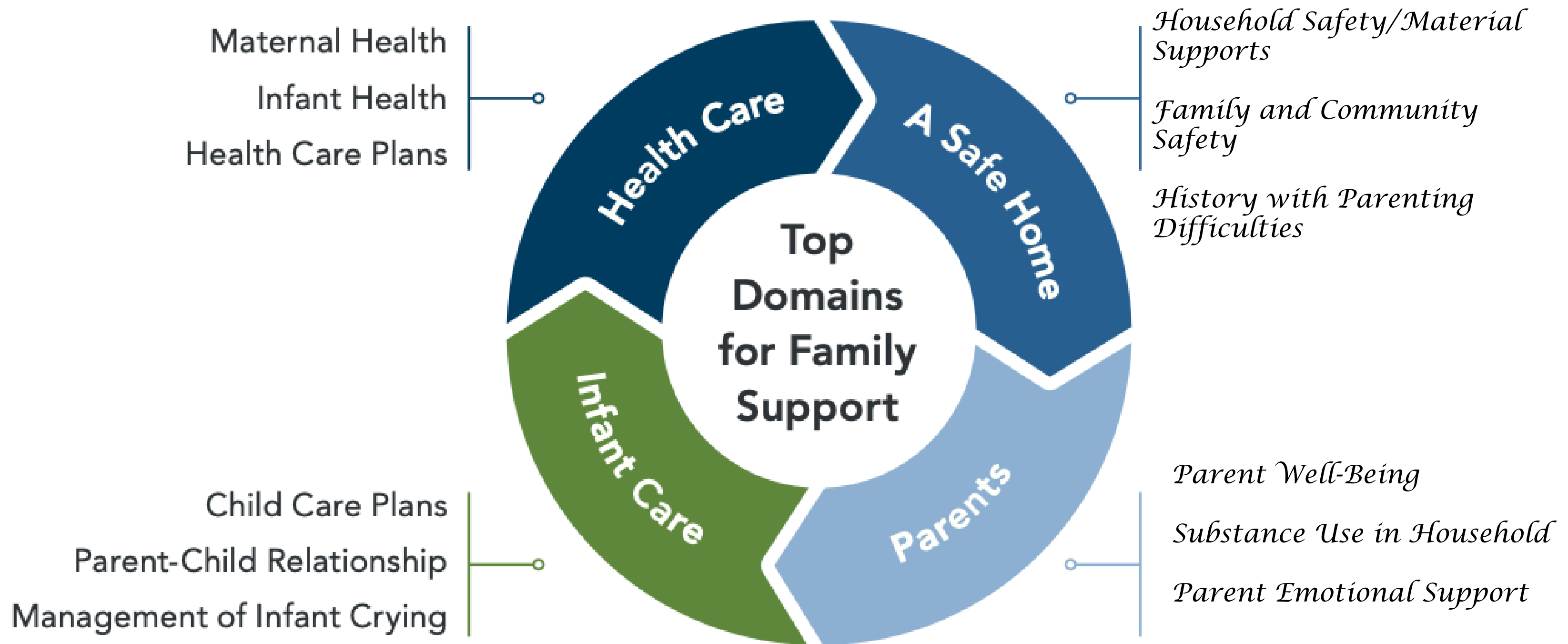




# FAMILY CONNECTS OHIO: A SYSTEMS SOLUTION

- Universal: assess all postpartum mothers, newborns and family needs
- Respond to immediate needs through brief interventions, education and support
- Respond to longer-term needs via referrals with warm hand off
- Improve agency and systems coordination to ensure seamless experience for all families, with follow-up services
- Identify gaps in community services and supports to improve resource allocation and inform policy



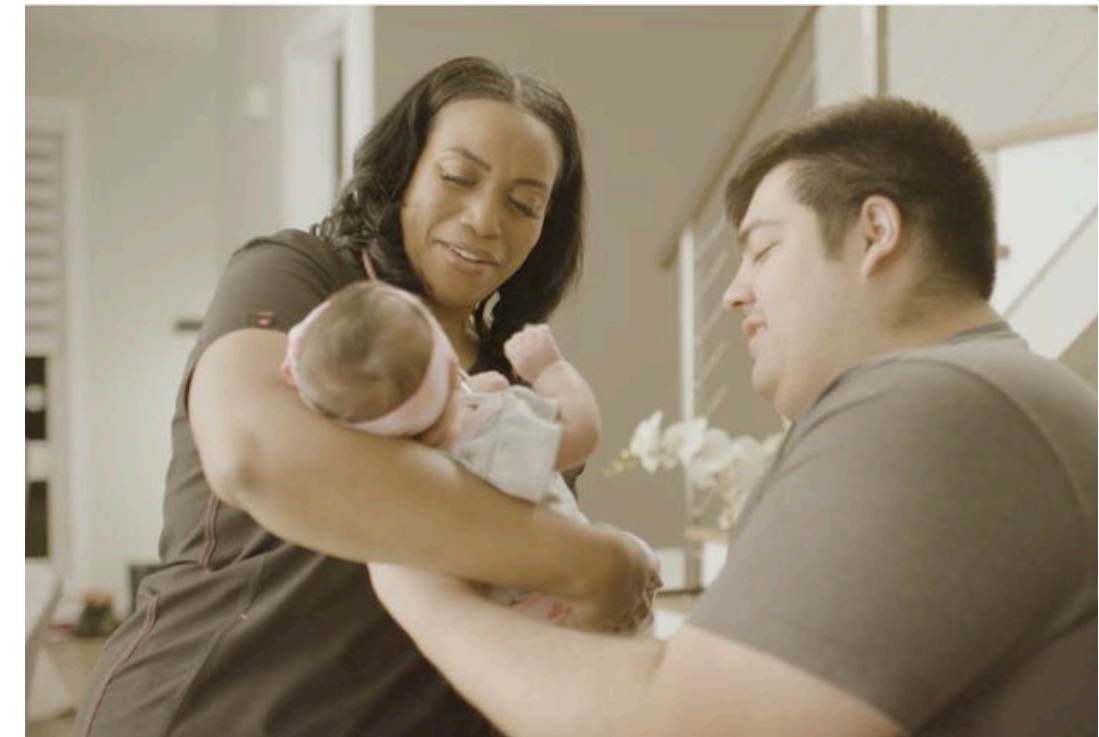


**Comprehensive Assessment  
with Proprietary Matrix Tool**

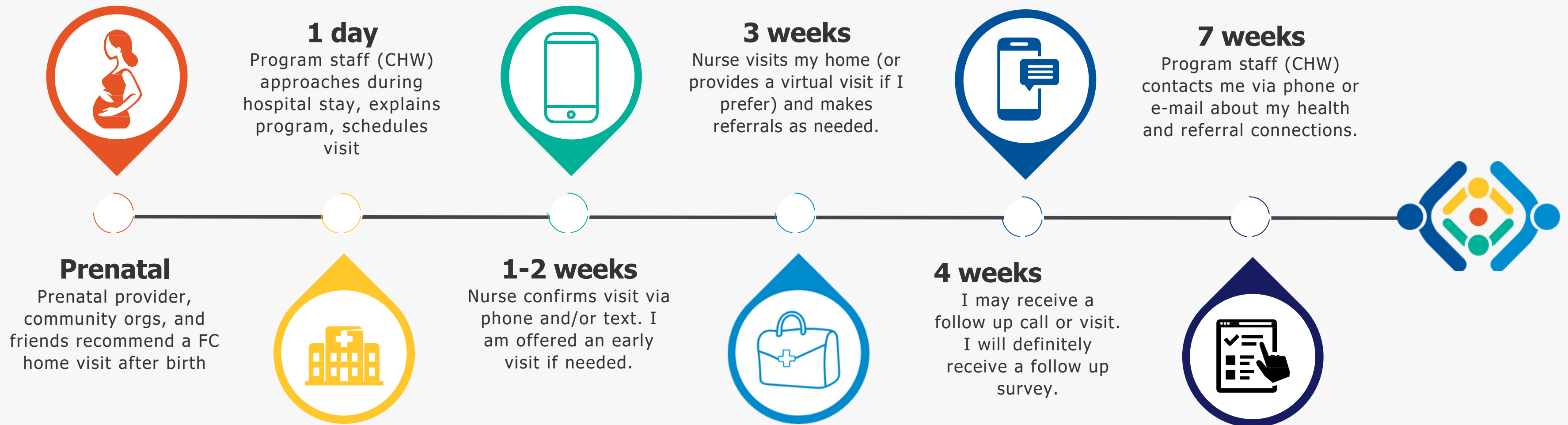


# THE NURSE HOME VISIT

- Newborn health assessment
- Postpartum assessment for the mother
- Supportive guidance about normal newborn and maternal health needs
- Specific education in response to the family's questions and concerns or those that arise from observation during the visit
- Referrals to community services based on the family's needs



# FAMILY JOURNEY





# EVIDENCE BASE

*RCT of 4,777 families in Durham, NC RCT of 923*

*families in Durham, NC*

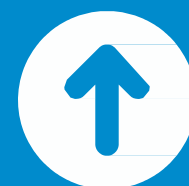
*Quasi-experimental trial of 988 families in 4  
rural eastern NC counties*

50%

*reduction in infant  
ED visits and  
hospitalizations in  
the first year of life.*

\$3

*saved for every \$1  
spent on program  
costs, based solely  
on savings  
associated with  
reduced infant ED  
and hospital  
utilization*



*positive parenting  
behaviors and  
safer home  
environments  
noted by blinded  
observers at a  
four month follow-  
up visit*

28%

*reduction in  
mothers reporting  
symptoms of  
postpartum  
anxiety.*

44%

*reduction in child  
abuse  
investigations*

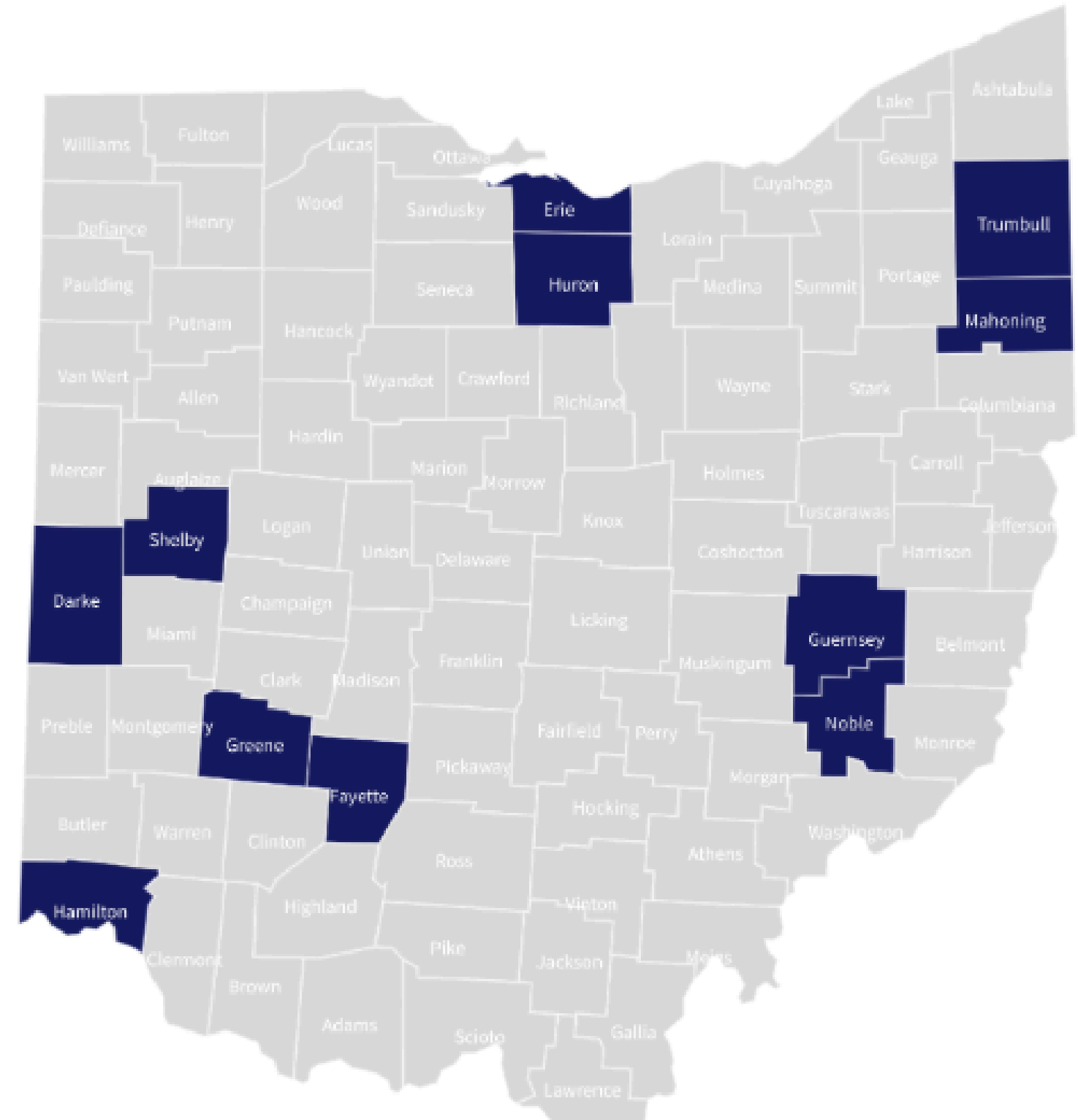




**Department of  
Children & Youth**  
Help Me Grow

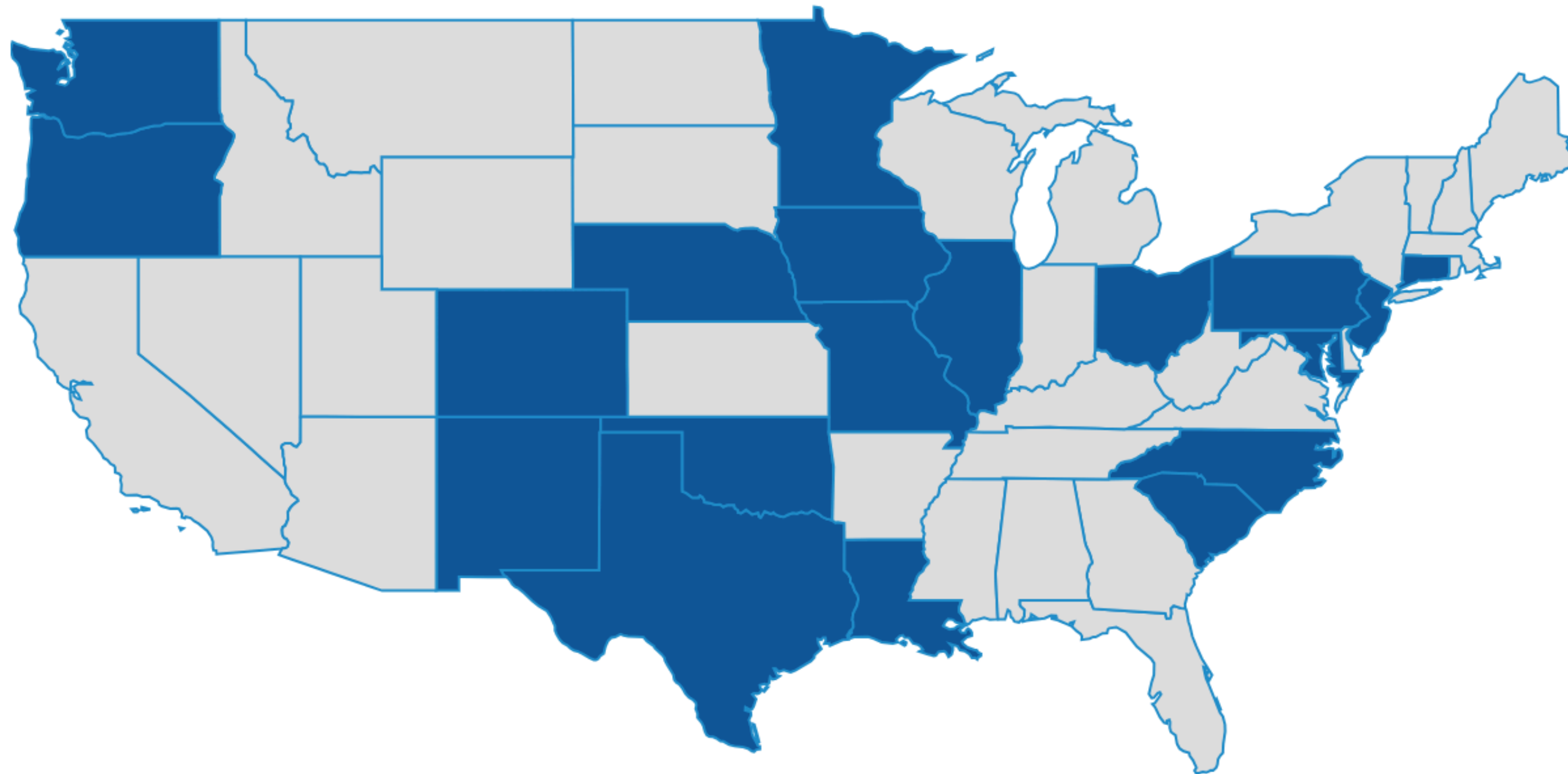
Family Connects Ohio launched with the first site starting in January of 2025. Services are now available to families in **11** counties:

- Darke County
- Erie County
- Fayette County
- Greene County
- Guernsey County
- Hamilton County
- Huron County
- Mahoning County
- Noble County
- Shelby County
- Trumbull County





# Family Connects is a National Movement



- **Family Connects is serving families in 20 states (will soon be 21 with FL in September 2025)**
- **55 communities across the country**
- **Over 115,000 Families Served since 2017**
- **Over 203,900 referrals made to Community Services**



## Family Connects Experiences

Fa

*" I'm a nurse and I didn't realize my headaches were from postpartum preeclampsia – diagnosed after the nurse checked me. "*

*"The nurse helped me understand my baby blues and was supportive with breastfeeding."*

*"This visit was helpful because I was alone with no friends."*

*"The nurse helped identify my baby's heart murmur and follow up with the doctor."*

*She gave me information I did not know, even after having multiple children."*

## Quotes from Family Connects Families



# Thank You!

3710 University Drive, Suite 310  
Durham, NC 27707

[www.familyconnects.org](http://www.familyconnects.org)

facebook.com/familyconnects

@family\_connects

[https://www.linkedin.com/company/  
family-connects-international/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/family-connects-international/)



**Contact Us**

[jade@familyconnects.org](mailto:jade@familyconnects.org)





**every child  
succeeds**

**Beth Smith, Clinical Manager**

Every Child Succeeds

**Jo Williams**

Every Child Succeeds



# Every Child Succeeds

Family Connects Ohio

Serving Hamilton County/UC Births

Beth Smith BSN, RN CLC





# Family Connects/ECS

Nurse Supervisor and four full time RN's  
 8 families per week  
 Visits up to 2 hours long  
 Tailored to needs of families while adhering  
 to model fidelity.  
 Diverse team to represent population we serve

Bilingual nurse  
 Serves primarily our Spanish speaking families  
 Estimated 30% of our catchment area  
 identify as Hispanic

## Who We Are

Are You Having a Baby at UC Medical Center?

### Family Connects Ohio

Part of the Help Me Grow system of supports

The first few days and weeks home with a newborn can be a challenging time for everyone. Let Family Connects Ohio lend a helping hand.

Help Me Grow is proud to partner with Every Child Succeeds and Family Connects International to provide an in-home visit from a nurse who will offer support, guidance, and connections to additional resources—at no cost to you.

#### Help for baby

- Baby health check
- Infant feeding and fussiness
- Bathing, diapering and swaddling
- Safe sleep

#### Help for mom

- Mom's health check
- Breastfeeding support
- Family planning advice
- Post-partum depression screening

#### Help for family

- Scheduling doctor's appointments
- Understanding child care options
- Early literacy information
- Community connections

Scan the QR code  
 to learn more and  
 enroll today!



Have more questions? Please call (513) 434-3322  
 or email [hmgreferrals@helpmegrow.org](mailto:hmgreferrals@helpmegrow.org).



Beth, BSN, RN, CLC  
 Clinical Supervisor



Camila, BSN, RN  
 Nurse Home Visitor



Jovonna, RN  
 Nurse Home Visitor



Kenetra, BSN, RN  
 Nurse Home Visitor



Sabrina, BSN, RN  
 Nurse Home Visitor



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## Clinically Significant Interventions

- Feeding Concerns
  - Weight loss
  - Breastfeeding education and troubleshooting
  - Close peds follow up
- Preeclampsia Suspected
  - Elevated BP
  - Severe features
  - Was dismissed when telling provider
- Mental Health Concerns
  - Screening completed
  - Family unaware that symptoms were concerning
  - Arranged for close follow up with provider and assisted family with finding supports





**Questions?**



The Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus

# Contact Us

Learning, Connecting, and Problem Solving Together. Our children are counting on us.



[ohiochildrenscaucus.org](https://ohiochildrenscaucus.org)



[cdfohio@childrensdefense.org](mailto:cdfohio@childrensdefense.org)