



Ending Homelessness for Children and Families

Homelessness in Ohio has [increased 30% since 2012](#) – an increase driven largely by a growing number of children entering the homeless system. Minors now account for 29% of the more than 76,000 Ohioans who experienced homelessness during a single year.

The longer a family is homeless the longer it takes them to regain stability and provide a healthy foundation for children to thrive. The most effective and affordable way to fight homelessness is to prevent it.

Policy

Stable housing is universally acknowledged as a critical need for those trying to overcome addiction or mental illness, children aging out of foster care, people with disabilities exiting institutions, seniors facing premature nursing home placement and mothers trying to raise healthy babies. Over the years, housing providers have developed powerful strategies to divert people out of temporary shelters and into permanent homes.

Given the long-term, negative effects of housing insecurity on a child's health, education, and economic future, homeless children must be prioritized. The DeWine administration understands that safe, decent, affordable housing is the foundation for healthy children and families, stable communities, and a thriving economy.

- **Youth Homelessness:**

The Ohio Department of Health's youth homelessness program helps young people who are aging out of foster care or escaping unsafe circumstances to secure safe, decent, stable housing. The \$5.01 million appropriation in the executive budget is a decrease of around 36% from last GA due to the expiration of federal pandemic assistance funding. We urge the state to increase this line item to \$6.51 million in order to maintain the positive momentum that many communities have seen in recent years by coordinating housing assistance and age-appropriate services to move vulnerable youth out of homelessness and into permanent housing.

- **Healthy Beginnings at Home:**

Housing insecurity is one of the major factors driving Ohio's high infant mortality rate. Healthy Beginnings at Home, which provides time-limited rental assistance coordinated with healthcare and social services to extremely low-income pregnant women and new mothers in Dayton, Akron, and Cleveland, has proven that these interventions significantly improve birth and health outcomes. The state should provide a final appropriation of \$2.5 million to complete this project for the families and children who are currently enrolled.

- **Ohio Housing Trust Fund:**

The OHTF is the primary source of state funding for local homeless and affordable housing programs, generating up to \$65 million a year for homeless services, home repair and accessibility programs, and affordable housing development and preservation projects throughout the state. OHTF fee revenues normally fluctuate with the housing market, but collections recently plummeted due to home price inflation and high interest rates, at the same time, Ohio is experiencing a housing affordability crisis. In the short-term, the state should create a backstop mechanism that dedicates general revenue to the OHTF up to the current \$65 million appropriation authority in years when county recorder fee revenues fall short. In the long-term, the state must find ways to diversify and expand funding sources for the OHTF.

- **Eviction Prevention for Families:**

Evictions inflict long-term damage on families, who often lose their possessions, miss work, switch schools, and crowd in with other struggling families or resort to emergency shelters. Eviction filings make it extremely difficult for families to find housing in the future. Despite these dire consequences, tenants facing eviction can rarely afford legal representation, and eviction diversion resources are scarce. The state should fund access to legal counsel in eviction proceedings for families with children, establish procedures to seal eviction records, and provide emergency assistance to renters experiencing temporary economic hardship.

Challenge

Ohio faces a broad range of housing issues that limit opportunities for families and children to succeed. Approximately 22,000 minors enter Ohio's homeless system each year – a number that has been increasing in recent years. Children who experience homelessness are at much greater risk for long-term problems related to physical and behavioral health, academic achievement, and economic success.

Opportunity

Fortunately, homelessness is a solvable problem. Since 2020, veteran homelessness has dropped 19% in Ohio, while the overall homeless population has grown by 10%. That's because the federal HUD-VASH program ensures veterans get access to effective Housing First interventions, like supportive housing and rapid rehousing, and collaborative service coordination among multiple governmental and nonprofit agencies. Applying the same kind of strategic focus that has reduced veterans' homelessness can move thousands of households off the streets and into stable homes to build a brighter future for struggling families.

Support Child Well-Being: Budget Recommendations

- Provide an additional \$1.5 million for ODH's youth homelessness program.
- Invest \$2.5 million to complete the Healthy Beginnings at Home project.
- Safeguard the Ohio Housing Trust Fund with a GRF backstop up to \$65 million.
- Enact eviction protections and assistance for low-income families with children.

This issue brief authored by: Gina Wilt, Advocacy Director, COHHIO
Published: March 2025