

Enhancing Support for Multi-System Youth



Kids enrolled in Medicaid often receive services from other state and local systems. Most children are adequately served by Medicaid and other state and local agencies, but a subset of kids cannot get the care they need. These children – the ones with the most complex multi-system needs – will greatly benefit from Medicaid’s new model of care coordination and targeted service enhancements for kids.

Budget Impact

In addition to targeted service and care coordination enhancements that will help children with multi-system needs, the Ohio Department of Medicaid plans to invest \$20 million (all state GRF dollars) for multi-system youth innovation over the biennium. Ohio Medicaid will also invest \$28.1 million (\$10.4 million state GRF) to fund new services for autism spectrum disorder in SFY 2021.

Background

The Department of Medicaid is an essential partner for families, and Medicaid’s benefit package includes a wide range of services that address kids’ physical health, mental health, substance use disorder, and developmental disability needs. Ohio Medicaid also plays a key role in assuring access to care for children in the custody of local public children’s services agencies and those receiving adoption assistance, all of whom are eligible for Medicaid coverage.

Many children and youth served by Medicaid are also served by the types of state and local agencies described in the infographic above. Families, county agencies, and providers, often in conjunction with local Family and Children First Councils, regularly collaborate to create services plans, develop partnerships, and identify funding streams that support children with complex multi-system needs. Most kids and families get what they need from these arrangements, but some children and families need more intensive services and care coordination than they can get today. When needs cannot be met and/or financial demands for services become too great to manage, some families are forced to give up custody of their children to the child protection system to access care.

As the needs of multi-system children have increased, it has become clear that Medicaid's existing services and coordination efforts are no longer sufficient to help some of the kids in the program. Children with Medicaid are increasingly being placed in out-of-home and congregate care settings (psychiatric hospitals, residential treatment facilities, long-term acute hospital stays) because their multi-system needs cannot be met in their communities. On any given day, over 130 children in child protection custody are being placed in out-of-state residential treatment facilities because they cannot access the care they need in Ohio.

Policy Proposal

The Department of Medicaid proposes partnering with the Governor's Office of Children's Initiatives and other state and local agencies over the coming biennium to enhance support for multi-system youth and their families via the following strategies:

Improving Community Supports and Coordination for Children and Families

- » Ohio Medicaid is developing a new intensive behavioral health care coordination service for children with complex needs that will help prevent placements in out-of-home care and residential treatment. This type of service planning and organization of supports will help prevent voluntary custody relinquishment due to a family's inability to access coordinated community-based care.
- » The Department is working with the Medicaid managed care plans (MCPs) to develop new, targeted quality strategies specifically for children, including efforts to ensure appropriate use of psychotropic medications. The MCPs will be implementing new assessments based on social determinants of health; assessing and addressing these needs can help families in their communities.
- » Medicaid is creating a multi-system youth innovation fund targeted at existing programs' non-billable services for children with complex needs to create pathways to coverage under Medicaid.
- » Ohio Medicaid will begin new coverage of services for autism spectrum disorder, which will help keep kids and their families together in their communities, preventing out-of-home residential treatment.
- » The Department is also partnering with the Department of Job and Family Services and its Office of Child Welfare Transformation, and with the Governor's Office of Children's Initiatives to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act, which aims to prevent children from entering child welfare custody. This will include service and coordination enhancements.

Improving Treatment Options for Children with the Most Intensive and Complex Needs

- » Medicaid is exploring options to improve access to intensive services for multi-system youth within Ohio. Enhancing these services will help prevent additional children from being sent out of state while enabling us to bring children back home to be closer to their families and circles of support. These enhancements will also help prevent parental relinquishment of child custody when a family cannot access necessary services.
- » The Department is providing additional hands-on technical assistance and coordination to assist county children's services agencies with identifying and accessing appropriate residential treatment within Ohio and outside of the state. Dedicated staff at Medicaid are working to convene and assist county children's services agencies, families, the Department of Job and Family Services, and MCPs.