



Gains and Challenges in the State Budget



Now that Ohio's biennial budget for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 (FY12-13) has been enacted, Advocates for Ohio's Future and its coalition partners have identified gains and losses for vulnerable children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities. While the budget took bold new steps to improve quality and reduce costs of health care for Medicaid patients, expand home- and community-based options for seniors, and provide more equitable funding for behavioral health services, challenges remain.

Thanks to concerted efforts by grassroots supporters and more than 200 endorsing organizations, Advocates for Ohio's Future can count a number of positive policy changes and strategic investments during the three months *after the budget was first introduced* in **Health Transformation and Medicaid**, the **Safety Net**, and services for **Children and Families**. Stay informed about these issues by **signing up** or **endorsing** at:

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Health Transformation and Medicaid

- Both **Medicaid eligibility** levels and “**optional**” **services** (dental, vision, etc.) were maintained. The Medicaid payment system to **large providers** was modernized to induce better outcomes and lower costs.
- **Long-term care for seniors** was “rebalanced” to provide greater resources and emphasis on home- and community-based care instead of more expensive institutional care. Funding for PASSPORT was increased by \$38 million over the executive budget, with overall Medicaid spending for long-term care services in FY13 increasing by \$166 million from FY11 levels. **Challenges Remain:** Despite an anticipated 15% growth in caseload, PASSPORT was funded below last year's level.
- Medicaid match for **behavioral health** services (mental illness and addiction) was elevated to the state, freeing local resources for non-Medicaid services. Also, funding for behavioral health increased by \$26.9 million over the biennium from the executive budget, including \$22 million added for non-Medicaid mental health services and \$4.8 million added for non-Medicaid alcohol and drug addiction services. **Challenges Remain:** The behavioral health system is still on the brink of collapse in many parts of Ohio, and supplemental appropriations for these services may well be needed before the biennium ends, particularly as reforms in sentencing and prescription drugs drive more people to these services.
- Funding for “**health homes**” will offer coordinated, patient-centered care for people with serious health conditions (including persistent mental illness), with federal support under the Affordable Care Act.
- Funding for **Federally Qualified Health Centers** was restored (\$5.46 million over the biennium).
- Funding for Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) for people with **developmental disabilities** was restored (\$4 million restored over the biennium). **Challenges Remain:** The Ohio Home Care Waiver (for **people under 60 with disabilities**) and the DD Waiver both have long waiting lists not adequately addressed by the budget.

The Safety Net: Food and Shelter

- An attempt to divert \$10 million from the **Ohio Housing Trust Fund** to county recorders was stopped, maintaining the entire fund for affordable housing.
- Funding for **emergency food assistance** increased from \$24 million in FY10-11 to \$25 million in FY12-13. **Challenges Remain:** Millions of Ohioans rely on the emergency food assistance network and/or affordable housing supports to meet their basic needs. During a time when foodbanks, food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters are seeing steady increases in demand, advocates anticipate a \$9 million shortage for this basic safety-net program. The Kasich Administration has provided assurances that more will be done to shore up support for emergency food assistance.

Children and Families

- A \$3 million cut to executive-level funding for the **Help Me Grow** home-visiting and early intervention program was restored, though the program was reduced by \$5.8 million.
- While eligibility for **subsidized day care** was reduced from 150% of poverty to 125%, enrollment in these programs was largely preserved to keep working parents from losing child care. **Challenges Remain:** Resources to improve **quality in early childhood care** and funding for **Early Childhood Mental Health consultations** were eliminated in order to preserve those child care slots.
- **Adoption assistance** was fully restored to \$140 million over the biennium from an initial \$14 million cut, partial funding for the **Kinship Permanency Incentive Program** was restored, from \$10 million in FY10-11 to \$8.4 million over the new biennium, and funding for **youth transitioning from foster care** was secured (\$4 million).
- The budget invests in mental health treatment and services for youth involved in the **child welfare** and **juvenile justice** systems.

Service provider rate cuts:

- Child care providers: cut up to 7%
- Home care providers: cut 3%
- Independent home care providers: cut additional 20%
- Assisted living providers: remain at 2011 levels

Despite these successes, many children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities will be vulnerable over the next two years. Funding for emergency food assistance and mental health and addiction services remains woefully inadequate. Local government social services were slashed. Waiting lists persist for long-term care supports for people with disabilities. Advocates for Ohio's Future will monitor implementation of state budget reforms, stay on top of developments in the federal budget, and continue advocating for vital public services that meet people's basic needs and protect our state's most vulnerable populations.

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Advocates for Ohio's Future is a statewide coalition that works to maintain vital public services – health, human services, and early care & education – at a level that meets people's basic needs and protects our state's most vulnerable populations.



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