

Office of Human Services Innovation
Move Ohioans Up and Out of Poverty

Governor Kasich's Budget:

- *Provides an individualized approach to case management.*
- *Removes barriers to employment, like affordable child care.*
- *Simplifies and automates enrollment.*
- *Creates new opportunities for county shared services.*

Background:

Many Ohioans remain trapped in poverty despite numerous federal, state and local programs intended to assist low-income families, and the human services programs designed to help the poor often are fragmented and uncoordinated. In addition, many human services programs provide a benefit without connecting individuals to work opportunities or encouraging self-sufficiency. As a result, many low-income families have a long-term reliance on benefits.

The Office of Human Services Innovation (OHSI) was established in August 2014 by Governor Kasich to transform programs designed to lift Ohioans out of poverty. OHSI's charge is to work with state and local agencies and stakeholders to pursue a better-coordinated, person-centered human service system across the [existing array of services](#) the state administers to assist Ohioans get a job, succeed at work and prevent or move out of poverty.

The foundation OHSI's work has been laid by the Governor's Offices of Health and Workforce Transformation. These offices provide clear evidence that better-coordinated, person-centric programs can begin to lift up Ohioans in need, provide taxpayers with better value, and chart a course toward a better workforce for Ohio employers. OHSI will apply the same transformative and innovative approach to Ohio's array of human services programs in order to help extend the benefits of the state's continued economic recovery to more Ohioans.

The Executive Budget Proposal and Impact:

The Executive Budget seeks to fulfill the original promise of welfare reform, which John Kasich voted for as a Congressman. That reform was the right idea, but it was implemented on top of an existing system that was not challenged to change. Now, as Governor, and in this budget, the challenge will be to change, to create an individualized approach to case management, remove barriers to employment, and simplify and automate enrollment.

An individualized approach to case management

A job is the most critical, long-term element to stabilizing families and moving them up and out of poverty. However, many families have multiple needs across multiple systems, ranging from housing to behavioral health to education. To ensure that families find long-term success in becoming self-sufficient, a more holistic approach is needed to address the many factors that contribute to a family's economic instability.

In addition, Ohio's teens and young adults, ages 16-24, face higher rates of unemployment than any other age group and many teens struggle to complete high school. Many of these youth also encounter additional barriers to reaching their full potential including homelessness, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and mental health issues. Addressing these issues and barriers early on in a coordinated way, could break the cycle of poverty for more Ohioans.

- **Combine TANF and WIOA.** Create a comprehensive case management and employment program to serve low-income individuals. The program will integrate Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) monies to be funded with \$310 million from existing TANF and WIOA dollars over the biennium. County commissioners will be asked to appoint a lead agency to oversee program coordination between county job and family services offices and local workforce boards to ensure the most effective utilization of combined public resources.
- **Create a comprehensive case management and employment system.** Individuals participating in the program shall receive a comprehensive assessment of employment and training needs as developed by the Department in consultation with the Office of Workforce Transformation. Completion of the comprehensive assessment of employment and training needs will direct which of the following services the individual will receive: individualized employment plan, provision of services and benefits in support of the employment plan, support for educational attainment of a high school diploma or equivalence if needed, job placement, job retention support, and review and closure of individualized employment plan.
- **Strengthen work supports for TANF/WIOA-eligible teens and young adults.** Because teens and young adults have the highest rate of unemployment, and earlier barrier removal can prevent a life-time of poverty, a cornerstone of the strategy to strengthen services and work supports will begin first Ohioans ages 16-24. Through this budget, the TANF Summer Youth and WIOA Youth programs will be integrated into a comprehensive case management and employment program, effective Dec. 15, 2015. What is learned with this age group will inform how comprehensive case management is rolled out to all age groups on cash assistance and/or who have a work requirement to receive benefits, effective July 1, 2016.

Remove barriers to employment

The lack of access to affordable and quality child care remains one of the key barriers to work. The loss of subsidized child care once a family reaches an income above 200 percent the federal poverty level (FPL), approximately \$3,298 a month for a family of three, represents one the biggest benefit cliffs for the working poor and often is a deterrent for individuals to take better paying jobs. Many working families also are in need of short-term assistance in the areas of housing and transportation, two additional significant barriers to work.

- **Expand access to child care statewide.** In order to reduce the benefit cliff for working families, the Office of Human Services Innovation recommends raising the income limit for initial child care eligibility from the current 125 percent FPL to 130 percent FPL, aligning child care eligibility with food assistance, and allowing families to keep child care assistance from the current cap of 200 percent FPL until their income reaches 300 percent FPL or approximately \$4,948 a month for a family of three. The estimated cost is \$14 million over the biennium. In addition, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services will waive child care copays for families with income at or below the 100 percent FPL.
- **Provide better work supports.** There are inconsistencies across the state in how individuals are supported with short-term barrier removal for employment and self-sufficiency. This budget recommends that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services establish guidelines for the use of Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) dollars, funded through TANF, for supported services, including but not limited to emergency transportation and housing, to better support a new comprehensive case management and employment program.

Simplify eligibility determination

Public assistance programs currently have separate eligibility processes and systems, making it difficult to holistically manage an individual's case across various support programs. By standardizing and automating eligibility for public assistance programs, Ohio can better serve needy Ohioans as well as create better value and accountability for taxpayers. Improved uniformity of services in conjunction with better sharing of client information will provide the backbone for a system that will focus more on individuals and less on general processing.

Shared data is an inherent part of the *Ohio Benefits* system. Seamlessly combining eligibility data across Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, WIC, and child care will give Ohio a unique ability to understand the benefits and resources families utilize and need on their path to self-sufficiency. The *Ohio Benefits* team also is integrating other data such as Medicaid claims and early childhood data. This combined data will allow state policy makers to make data driven decisions and objectively measure the effectiveness of those policies.

- **Transition additional income-tested programs to Ohio Benefits.** The Ohio Benefits system has been designed and built with the vision of supporting most of Ohio's income-based health and human services programs. Currently, all of Ohio's Medicaid expansion population and all of the family and children population are currently enrolled in Medicaid via the Ohio Benefits system. During fiscal years 2016 and 2017, eligibility determination for additional programs will transition to the Ohio Benefits platform, including Medicaid ABD, SNAP, TANF, WIC, and Child Care. The transition of these programs to Ohio Benefits will mark a significant milestone toward Ohio's vision of streamlining eligibility determination across all health and human services programs.
- **Create new opportunities for counties to share services to be more efficient.** The value of a streamlined eligibility system extends beyond just helping citizens access benefits. An integrated approach provides new opportunities for state and county workers to provide citizens better service and work more efficiently. The Ohio Benefits system, along with other OHT and OHSI initiatives, will finally allow county JFS offices to adopt a shared services model. The system will allow any county to access and process any case regardless of geographic boundaries. The county JFS offices have already begun to organize themselves to take advantage of the new capabilities – nine counties through an initiative called Collabor8 and a coalition of 23 counties in northeast Ohio.
- **Create one clear version of the truth in administering public assistance.** Seamlessly combining eligibility data across Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, WIC, and Child Care will give Ohio a unique ability to begin to holistically understand the benefits and resources families utilize and need on their path to self-sufficiency. The Ohio Benefits project team is also integrating other data such as Medicaid claims and early childhood data. This combined data will allow state policy makers to make data driven decisions and objectively measure the effectiveness of those policies, and it will provide the infrastructure needed to support comprehensive case management at the county level.
- **Replace Ohio's two disability determination systems with one.** Every year, about 50,000 Ohioans with a disability newly qualify for Medicaid coverage. Today, these Ohioans have to prove they are disabled twice, once via county job and family services offices to qualify for Medicaid benefits, and separately through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) to qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Most states (33) have already eliminated this duplication and automatically enroll SSI individuals in Medicaid. The Executive Budget requires Ohio Medicaid and OOD to replace Ohio's two duplicative disability determination systems with one that will determine eligibility for both Medicaid and SSI (see *Simplify Eligibility Determination*).

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