

NEWS RELEASE



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Mahoning County Children Services Applauds Governor's Unprecedented Investments *Ohio Children Services Funding to Nearly Double*

COLUMBUS – Today before an audience of county children services agency leaders, Governor Mike DeWine announced an unprecedented 95 percent increase in the state's investment in protecting abused and neglected children.

"That \$74 million announcement, along with related spending proposals, makes good on a campaign promise that Ohio should not be last in the nation when it comes to the state's responsibility for funding such a critical program," states Randall B. Muth, J.D., Executive Director, Mahoning County Children Services.

"This proposed investment is very needed in Mahoning County. The opioid addiction crisis has affected every agency department. We are experiencing increased reports of child abuse and neglect which has led to an increase of 53% more cases accepted for investigations and a 50% increase in child removals resulting in over 223 children placed into foster care. There is also critical shortage of licensed foster homes in the County. In addition, caseloads have become more complex and demanding and children are lingering longer in foster care due to relapse rates while reunification with the family becomes more challenging to accomplish," explains Muth.

"Governor DeWine is standing up for the vulnerable children and families of Mahoning County," Muth said. "This investment will help us address the crisis in our children services system by providing funding for the rising placement costs, serving families struggling with addiction and mental illness, preventing children from coming into foster care, and providing more suitable placements for children who do have to come into custody."

In addition to increasing the State Child Protection Allocation by \$30 million per year, up from \$60 million, to give struggling county agencies the ability to pay the rising costs of serving children, Governor DeWine announced:

- \$25 million for multi-system youth will prevent parents from having to relinquish custody of children with developmental disabilities or severe mental illness so that they can get the treatment they need;
- \$8.5 million to support struggling grandparents and other kin care providers who unexpectedly find themselves caring for children, and to invest in recruiting much-needed foster parents;
- \$5.5 million to expand the Bridges program for youth who emancipate from our system without achieving permanency;
- \$4.5 million to expand evidence-based programs like Ohio START and 30 Days to Family to prevent children from coming into foster care; and
- \$2.6 million to help our caseworkers be more efficient and productive in the field.

"The Governor is saving a system in crisis and making wise investments," Muth stated. "These programs will alleviate the pressure on our county agency budget, which has struggled to pay rising costs. But more importantly, he is saving children and families by improving their chance for a better future."

Mahoning County Children Services is a longstanding member of Public Children Services Association of Ohio, which is working with county agencies across the state and other stakeholders to support the Governor's proposals. "The Governor's leadership, with the support of his Administration, will afford Ohio's vulnerable children and families the quality services that will strengthen our state across the board," Muth said. "As an association, we stand ready to work with our local legislators on the Governor's proposals."

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