



Ohio's Executive Response: **A Plan of Action to Advance Equity**

AUGUST 2020



MIKE DEWINE
GOVERNOR OF OHIO

www.Governor.Ohio.gov



Letter from the Governor

Dear Fellow Ohioans:



In my inaugural address as your Governor, I laid out the values that would guide this administration. Everyone -- no matter where they were born or who their parents are -- deserves the chance to succeed, to get a good-paying job, to raise a family comfortably, and to be secure in their future.

It is my job to serve all the people of Ohio. It is my job to bring people together, to seek out opinions and ideas, and to find solutions to the problems that are holding this state, and too many of our citizens, back.

Coronavirus has brought into stark contrast disparities that have long existed in Ohio and the nation. These disadvantages in health and health care are closely linked with social and economic conditions and tied to race, ethnicity, age, and even geography.

Further, race is indisputably a factor in health, education, and economic disparities and these divisions of race have plagued us since our country's inception. These inequities can only be changed through intentional acts to break down barriers.

Throughout my career, I have focused on making Ohio a better place for everyone. Through my administration's equity agenda, our agencies have been actively engaged in healing those

who are hurting, fighting discrimination, creating opportunities, focusing on inclusion, and building awareness of areas that need improvement.

In April, I formed the Minority Health Strike Force, a group that expanded to 52 people -- some with backgrounds in health and all with ties to minority communities. In May, the strike force released the COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strike Force Interim Report of COVID-19-related recommendations, which my team immediately began to act upon to save lives and improve health outcomes.

Now, the strike force has released the "COVID-19 Ohio Minority Strike Force Blueprint," which addresses racism and promotes long-term health equity through 34 recommendations. I would like to thank the members of the strike force for their hard work and commitment to this important task.

Today, to respond to the strike force, I am releasing an executive plan of action. Through these actions, we are continuing Ohio's course for change so that all Ohioans -- regardless of race, background, gender, or religion -- have the opportunity to live up to their full potential.

Very respectfully yours,

Mike DeWine



Message from the Cabinet



Dear Fellow Ohioans:

When Governor DeWine brought us together as a State Cabinet and asked us to lead these critical agencies, we understood the importance of the work and the honor and privilege to serve. He understood that diversity makes Ohio strong. From the earliest days of his Administration and since, the Governor has advocated for and invoked positive, constructive policies that lead to permanent change for Ohio's disadvantaged citizens and for Ohio. His expectations of his Cabinet are also clear: each day that we are in our positions, we will take swift and continual actions that result in an Ohio that every Ohioan deserves.

We have read the report of the Minority Health Strike Force and appreciate the gravity of the analyses and the recommendations brought forth. As a Cabinet, we know that we must transform the contributing and confounding factors that surround social determinants of health for Ohio's minority communities. We recognize the critical role that our respective agencies perform accessing quality care to internet connectivity, ensuring the quality of the air we breathe, the intersections of neighborhoods, uplifting the development of our neighborhoods, and caring for our mental and physical health.

We know that every Ohioan can thrive when provided equitable opportunities and supported in healthy environments.

While we are at a unique time in our history in navigating the COVID-19 emergency, we are grounded in our stance that health and racial inequities are co-occurring crises that must be addressed with urgency and action. How each of us, as citizens and community members, lead in this time will have lasting impact on generations to come. Our agencies are leaning in and committed to change.

This report provides the compelling insight and recommendations needed to inform our policy decisions and activate change. Together, we will achieve an Ohio where disparities are quelled and equity is our norm.

Very respectfully yours,

Cabinet of Governor Mike DeWine

Adjutant General
Major General John C. Harris, Jr.

Ohio Department of Administrative Services
Director Matthew Damschroder

Ohio Department of Aging
Director Ursel McElroy

Ohio Department of Agriculture
Director Dorothy Pelanda

Office of Budget and Management
Director Kimberly Murnieks

Ohio Department of Commerce
Director Sheryl Creed Maxfield

Ohio Development Services Agency
Director Lydia Mihalik

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
Director Jeffrey Davis

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Director Laurie Stevenson

Ohio Department of Health
Interim Director Lance Himes

Ohio Department of Higher Education
Chancellor Randy Gardner

Ohio Department of Insurance
Director Jillian Froment

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Director Kimberly Hall

Ohio Department of Medicaid
Director Maureen Corcoran

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Director Lori Criss

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Director Mary Mertz

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
Director Kevin Miller

Ohio Department of Public Safety
Director Thomas Stickrath

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
Director Annette Chambers-Smith

Ohio Department of Taxation
Commissioner Jeff McClain

Ohio Department of Transportation
Director Jack Marchbanks

Ohio Department of Veterans Services
Major General (Retired) Deborah Ashenurst

Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation
Administrator Stephanie McCloud

Ohio Department of Youth Services
Director Ryan Gies



Overview



On April 20, 2020, Governor Mike DeWine launched the COVID-19 Minority Health Strike Force. This group of advisers has worked with state leadership to provide feedback on the immediate action necessary to address COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on Ohioans of color. Once convened, the Strike Force collectively agreed that the roots of these disparities are deep and require a steadfast commitment to eliminate racism and advance equity to ensure the promotion of healthy communities.

The COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strike Force Blueprint was developed during an exceptional time in history. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and amplified the health disparities and inequities facing Ohioans of color. At the same time, Ohio, and the rest of the nation are grappling with instances of unjust use of violence and the lives of people of color taken too soon. This led to widespread recognition that racism must be addressed throughout our country.

The events of recent months present a unique opportunity to shine the spotlight on the challenges

faced by Ohioans of color and propel policy action toward change. Ohio can combat this crisis by taking a comprehensive and systemic approach. The COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Blueprint created a path forward for citizens, communities and organizations alike.

When Governor DeWine received the Blueprint, he intentionally brought together his senior leadership and cabinet directors. Through a unified approach and process, state government leadership reviewed the Blueprint individually and then participated in several meetings to discuss and plan next steps.

This document, the Ohio Executive Response, is a culmination of commitments resulting from state leadership discussions that will guide the state enterprise as we embark on a strategic planning process. The process will advance equity in Ohio's systems; promote diversity, equity and inclusion in state workplaces; embed equity in our programs and policy; and provide tools for our statewide partners to advance equity in public service.



The Impact on Ohioans



Ohio is a diverse state with the seventh-largest population in the nation. As of 2018, African American, Latino, and Asian American Ohioans, and Ohioans who are members of other racial and ethnic groups with smaller populations, such as immigrants and refugees, comprised 21% of the state's population. In addition, farms in Ohio employ about 5,700 migrant workers according to an estimate from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Ohio is also an aging state; it is estimated by 2025, more than 1 in 4 Ohioans will be age 60 and older. Ohio is also home to more than 1.6 million people (14%) who live with a disability.

While diversity is a state strength, many Ohioans — including communities of color, people who are older and/or living with disabilities, residents of rural and Appalachian counties, immigrants, refugees, migrant workers and Ohioans who identify as LGBTQ, among others — are at risk for poor health outcomes.

As an example, in Ohio we lose more than 900 babies each year before they reach their first birthday. This tragedy disproportionately impacts the minority community. In fact, African American babies die at a rate nearly 2.5 times their white peers. For every 1,000 white babies born, about five die; for every 1,000 African American babies born, about 14 die.

Coupled with that, the African American community is also losing more mothers. African American women are

more than 2.5 times more likely to die of a pregnancy-related condition than white women.

Tragically, there are many other distressing health disparities in African Americans and other communities of color as well:

- The overall life expectancy of African American Ohioans is over four years shorter than that of white Ohioans -- 72.8 years of age compared to 77 years of age.
- Child poverty 2.1 times worse for Hispanic Ohioans compared to that of white Ohioans.
- African American Ohioans also have higher rates of heart disease (8.5 percent to 7.6 percent), higher rates of hypertension (39.9 percent to 35.1 percent), and diabetes (14.3 percent to 11.1 percent).
- 43 percent of Hispanic Ohioans are obese compared to 33.1 percent of white Ohioans.
- Further, African American Ohioans are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty (28 percent to 11 percent) than whites and even worse, African American children in Ohio are 3.1 times more likely to live in poverty (42 percent to 14 percent).



Social Determinants of Health



The mission of Ohio’s state government is to provide for and promote the general welfare of all citizens of Ohio. This is done through the missions of Ohio’s agencies, boards, commissions, elected officials, legislature, and judiciary with each responsible for mandated duties such as public health, education, cultural development, human services, economic prosperity, and criminal justice. This work can be interdependent and collectively influence how our government system functions. A lens of equity must be continually applied to guard against the creation of unintended but real barriers that impact the health and well-being of Ohioans.

Overall health and well-being are influenced by a wide range of factors. Only about 20% of those factors involve clinical care (such as healthcare quality and access), and about 30% involve health behaviors (such as tobacco use, physical activity). The remaining half are driven by social and economic conditions and environment. These are commonly referred to as “social determinants of health” and include modifiable factors such as housing quality, access to transportation, education and employment opportunities, neighborhood crime, and air quality. Minority populations are more frequently negatively impacted by these factors than other populations.

For example, African American children in Ohio are nearly five times more likely than white children to attend high poverty schools, Hispanic children are twice as likely as white children to live in poverty, and Ohioans with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities.

Health outcomes follow similar trends. Adult depression is four times worse for Ohioans with disabilities than for those without disabilities. Overall health status is 1.3 times worse for Hispanic Ohioans than for white

Ohioans. And, as stated earlier, African American babies are nearly three times more likely than white babies to die before their first birthday.

Disparities in our state will continue unless the inequities are eliminated. It is imperative that Ohioans work together toward achieving the goal of creating policies, programs, and initiatives that will allow every resident to thrive.

OHIO examples



Our Environment



Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency will evaluate the policies, procedures, and distribution of agency funding for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure to help ensure all Ohioans are equally protected from environmental and health hazards and have access to information and public decision-making processes.

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment Income Expenses Debt Medical bills Support	Housing Transportation Safety Parks Playgrounds Walkability Zip code/ geography	Literacy Language Early childhood education Vocational training Higher education	Hunger Access to healthy options	Social integration Support systems Community engagement Discrimination Stress	Health coverage Provider availability Provider linguistic and cultural competency Quality of care

Health Outcomes

Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

Source: <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/>

OHIO examples

Public Transportation



Ohio Department of Transportation

The Ohio Department of Transportation will explore ways to incentivize, among Ohio's large urban transit authorities, the provision of on-demand micro-transit for health care related trips.

Inequities and community conditions

In the COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strikeforce Blueprint, it discusses how healthy behaviors — such as physical activity, good nutrition, not smoking, and the appropriate use of primary care — can help to prevent many of the chronic conditions that put people at greater risk for severe COVID-19 complications.

However, racism and other forms of discrimination have created inequities that present substantial obstacles to making healthy choices for groups of Ohioans, such as people of color, people living with disabilities, and people with low incomes.



Ohio's Vision and Commitments



Everyone deserves the chance to succeed and to be secure in their future. There are too many Ohioans living in the shadow of opportunity and often barriers, like the inequities discussed in the Blueprint, are holding back Ohioans of color in their efforts to reach their full potential.

The State of Ohio must be strategic and assertive in its path toward acknowledging and eliminating the existence of institutional bias and its resulting impacts on providing the best public services to Ohioans. Institutional bias was introduced through past decisions and practices and must be intentionally and forever removed from work culture and service delivery.

Outlined in this document is the vision set forth by the Minority Health Strike Force and adopted by state government leadership. The vision is to advance health equity by establishing Ohio as a model for justice, equity, opportunity, and resilience to withstand future challenges.

Ohio's Vision to Advance Equity

Ohio is a model for justice, equity, opportunity, and resilience to withstand future challenges.

We -- as people, as agencies, as government -- must come together to advance equity and bring hope and opportunity to Ohioans. The State of Ohio commits to direct and lasting change to eliminate racism, oppression, and inequity in all aspects of our public service to Ohio. To do this, we have gathered our initial

10 commitments to every Ohioan that will act as the catalyst for the important work to come.

Commitment #1:

Form the Governor's Equity Advisory Board

The Governor's Equity Advisory Board will advise state government leadership on the recommendations provided in the COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strike Force Blueprint, assist the state's efforts to dismantle racism and promote health equity, and assist in developing a strategic plan to improve health outcomes for Ohioans.

The Board will also work to:

- Identify strategies to improve the state's structure to advance diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Promote community understanding of racism and its impacts.
- Encourage health literacy and the importance of trust.
- Build or strengthen relationships with trusted community leaders and organizations and regularly engage; and
- Provide feedback on plans to eliminate disparities in future emergency response efforts.

The Board's composition shall include individuals who serve(d) communities of color in any of the following capacities: health care; community health organizations; criminal justice; education; nonprofit or private business representatives; and individuals concerned about the well-being of Ohioans of color, and other members deemed appropriate by the Governor's Office and state agency leadership.

Our People: Investments to drive change:

Some of Ohio's greatest assets are the more than 50,000 state employees who are charged with carrying out the mission of each organization within the state enterprise. Valuing, respecting, and including all their dimensions of diversity assists in the delivery of mission focused service to all Ohioans.

Commitment #2:

Build a state workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.

The State of Ohio must respect and value the diversity found within our state because every person, organization, institution, and system in Ohio has a specific and distinct role to perform in promoting equity. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Develop strategic plans and measurable goals to hire and retain a diverse and inclusive state workforce.

Commitment #3:

Invest in state employees to identify and drive changes.

The state's workforce must work together to identify and end both institutional and systemic bias, ensuring we are providing the best and most equitable public service to all Ohioans. To do this, Ohio commits to:

- Require diversity, inclusion, implicit bias trainings all state employees within state agencies, boards, and commissions.
- Invest in leadership development to create a culture of diversity and inclusion that provides strategies on how to create and manage a diverse organizational culture that is inclusive and effective.

Commitment #4:

Establish Ohio as a model employer that is focused on eliminating institutional bias.

The State of Ohio must seek out and eliminate explicit and implicit bias or discrimination practices by strengthening our internal processes. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Encourage reporting by state employees and the public.
- Conduct independent investigations of alleged bias or discrimination.
- Enable enforcement authority of findings and corrective actions.

OHIO examples



Connectivity



Ohio Department of Transportation

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) will continue to collaborate with InnovateOhio to explore options to expand broadband to underserved areas, particularly rural schools and homes, by placing fiber optic cables in interstate rights-of-way.

OHIO examples



Juvenile Justice



Ohio Department of Youth Services

The Ohio Department of Youth Services will coordinate with the 17 Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) counties to reduce the number of minority youth admissions and their length of stay in secure detention and other congregate care placements.

Our Policy and Programs: Advancing Equity in our Work

The work of Ohio government is implemented through its internal and external policies, practices, and processes. Achieving systemic change and better service to all of Ohio will require identifying and removing hidden barriers and oppressive impacts, correcting institutional bias, and working toward equitable and holistic systemic transformation.

Commitment #5:

Evaluate Ohio's existing governance structure to provide opportunity for collective impact.

The State of Ohio must respect and value the diversity found within our state because every person, organization, institution, and system in Ohio has a specific and distinct role to perform in promoting equity. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Evaluate Ohio's state enterprise structure, state agency systems, and agency-level policies to identify hidden barriers or bias that could lead to unintended negative results.
- Strengthen the internal structures of organizations within the state enterprise to better support and advance equity in policies, programs, funding opportunities, and procedures.
- Identify and utilize best-practices such as short- and long-range planning, lean process improvement tools, and collective impact models to organize and invoke permanent, systemic changes.

Commitment #6:

Approach equity holistically.

Only 20% of the factors that establish our health and well-being involve clinical care (such as healthcare quality and access), and about 30% involve health behaviors (such as tobacco use, physical activity). The remaining half are driven by social and economic conditions and environment. Ohio must use a deliberate and comprehensive lens through which social determinants of health are analyzed for change. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Adopt and implement best practices that enable Ohio's agencies, boards, and commissions to become proficient at linking Ohio's clinical, health behaviors, social, and economic factors to the social determinants of health across Ohio's communities.
- Develop the planning tools and implementation strategies that can transcend Administrations thus assuring that long-range systemic changes can maintain momentum and without interruption.

OHIO examples

Supporting our Families



Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services will identify and fund culturally appropriate prevention programs that help keep families of color together and recruit a diverse and qualified pool of resource families who can foster, mentor, and support children of color in custody and their parents in order to return children to their families of origin and avoid placing them in institutions.

Commitment #7:

Collaborate across departments to strengthen equity-informed policy.

The work of each of Ohio's agencies, boards and commissions are deeply intertwined as we all work to serve Ohio's 11.7 million residents in every corner of the state. Ohio's state organizations must effectively collaborate to promote the overall health and well-being of Ohioans. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Require implementation of the Board's recommended strategies to strengthen equity-informed policy(ies).
- Elevate the work of the Diversity and Inclusion Office established within the Ohio Department of Administrative Services to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion across state government.

- Establish a common language and set of definitions that will be used consistently across all agencies, boards, and commissions to promote and advance equity so that success can be tracked and measured consistently throughout the state enterprise.
- Identify correlations between state agencies' missions and the contributing and confounding factors of social determinants of health that can be affected through collaborative policy changes.

Commitment #8:

Measure progress against widely accepted benchmarks and standards.

The State of Ohio often employs measurement tools to monitor and track program performance and must maintain its plan to measure and monitor social determinants through the use of the Ohio's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Utilize the Ohio Department of Health's 2020-2022 SHIP to eliminate disparities and inequities within 10 years by focusing on populations that have various measurable health outcomes significantly worse than outcomes for Ohioans overall.
- Employ the SHIP and other equity promotion tools, like the Strategic Action Plan on Aging led by the Ohio Department of Aging.
- Develop necessary strategic plans that focus on what is measured in the SHIP.
- Align performance measures with standards and metrics used by national accreditation organizations and other professional standards-setting bodies.
- Build a public-facing dashboard dedicated to tracking progress and promote transparency and trust.
- Evaluate state metrics to ensure that plans extend recommendation beyond "access" to outcome or completion measures (i.e., completion rates, graduation, program completion, etc.).
- Implement the plan through an extensive list of public and private partners across many sectors.

OHIO examples 

Our Food



Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services will implement a benefits bridge program to provide targeted resources to minimize the impact of changes in public programs for those who receive food and cash assistance and childcare benefits.

Our Public Service: Advancing Equity in our Services

An important purpose of Ohio government is to provide for the general welfare of Ohio's people. Eliminating bias and inequities in how we interact, engage, and assist our diverse populations of Ohioans achieve more equitable, accessible, and culturally competent public service to all Ohioans.

Commitment #9:

Adopt culturally competent practices and standards across state government.

Public service is not successful if those intended to benefit from its services are not positively served. It is important for all Ohioans to have the ability to connect with and understand state content, programs, and policy. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Improve accessibility to culturally and linguistically competent information that will enable and inspire people to independently take action and utilize services.

Commitment #10:

Public service is not successful if those intended to benefit from its services are not positively served. It is important for all Ohioans to have the ability to connect with and understand state content, programs, and policy. To do so, Ohio commits to:

To address health disparities, Ohio must begin with the fundamental step of making known, the nature of the disparities and the at-risk groups that are affected. Efforts must be made to achieve state-level data and analyses to allow for better comparability and consistency. To do so, Ohio commits to:

- Collect state-level health care quality information stratified by race, ethnicity, and language data.
- Identify the contributing and confounding factors affecting the health disparities.
- Identify and targeting the resources where interventions may be best applied.
- Adopt of standards by state agencies to achieve a normalized set of data that uses the same categorization scheme.
- Establish evaluation criteria of impacts to inform policy.

OHIO examples

Owning a Home



Ohio Housing Finance Agency

Home ownership in Ohio is just over 68 percent. However, historic patterns of housing discrimination and segregation continues to cause inequity in housing ownership in Ohio. The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) will expand outreach efforts in minority communities to make them aware of opportunities toward home ownership. OHFA will begin hosting roundtable discussions on "Equity in Housing Policy" that will include community members and leaders from finance, builders and housing industry.



The DeWine-Husted Administration's Equity Milestones



Governor Mike DeWine is dedicated to improving health, environmental, and social conditions for the prosperity of all Ohioans — regardless of race, religion, age, gender, gender identity or expression, national origin, or disability — so that no one is left behind. Through a series of executive orders and initiatives, he set the tone for his administration and is working to bring greater diversity and inclusion to state government and fair treatment and equal opportunities for all Ohioans.

Key Executive Orders and Initiatives

After being sworn into office, Governor DeWine signed a series of executive orders setting the equity agenda for his administration, including:

- [Executive Order 2019-02D](#)[Executive Order 2019-03D](#) Establishing Ohio as a Disability Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities.
- [Executive Order 2019-05D](#) Setting the Anti-Discrimination Policy in State Government.

Other actions the Governor has taken to provide opportunities and level the playing field for all Ohioans, include:

Fighting substance use disorder, focusing on mental health

Early in 2019, when the Ohio Department of Health released statistics on drug overdoses and it showed that African American males had the highest overdose death rate in the state, Governor DeWine formed the RecoveryOhio Minority Health Working Group to recommend ways to reduce such deaths. Also, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

invested more than \$30 million in federal resources toward that cause and to improve access to quality, culturally competent, behavioral health services across the state.

Protecting Ohio's Families

Governor DeWine has committed his career to protecting Ohio's children and families. Because he believes that Ohio's children deserve to grow up in safe and loving families and to reach their full potential, he appointed a director of Children's Initiatives and secured \$675 million to provide resources to assist in student wellness and success. Among other actions taken:

- An expansion of home visiting services to improve maternal and newborn health.
- An increase in eligibility to better serve children suffering with neonatal abstinence syndrome or toxic lead exposure through Early Intervention services and care coordination through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.
- An expansion of the OhioSTART program, which offers specialized services to families, particularly children who have suffered victimization due to their parents' drug use.

Cleaning up lead

Lead exposure is a preventable environmental public health threat to children. To clean up lead and prevent lead poisoning:

- Governor DeWine formed a Lead Advisory Committee to help lead the state's efforts to abate and remediate lead contamination.

- More than \$44 million in grants were offered for the identification and elimination of lead paint in Ohio homes.
- The Ohio Department of Health provided lead abatements to low-income and middle-class families who own contaminated homes; created a repayment program for abatement workers and contractors who earn licenses; strengthened enforcement of lead hazard control orders; and created a public awareness campaign for the new Lead-Safe Housing Registry.

OHIO examples 

Justice Involved Adults



■ **Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction**

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction will submit plans to the Governor with suggestions for criminal justice policy reforms that would influence current sentencing, release, and supervision laws and practices. If approved and implemented, the reforms would result in targeted reductions of both the incarcerated and supervision populations.

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction will launch an initiative to innovate recovery and addiction services provided to incarcerated Ohioans.

Ensuring safe drinking water

With a goal of safe, clean water for all Ohioans, Governor DeWine invested \$172 million in the H2Ohio water quality initiative. In November, he outlined the H2Ohio plan, which focuses on reducing phosphorus in Lake Erie and elsewhere; restoring wetlands; addressing failing home sewage treatment systems in disadvantaged communities; and preventing lead contamination in water at daycares and schools.

Improving foster care

Governor DeWine signed an executive order to elevate child protection and foster care priorities in the state to improve and reform the child welfare system. More than 16,000 children are in the custody of a children services agency in Ohio. Of those children, 31% are African American children, even though African American children make up only 16% of the population of children in Ohio. Other actions:

- Governor DeWine established the Children Services Transformation Advisory Council.
- The council held 10 foster care forums and heard from nearly 500 Ohioans on their experiences with the foster care system.
- The council is working on a report with recommended enhancements, some of which will target organizational racial and cultural injustices.
- The Ohio Department of Higher Education awarded grants to help students from foster care earn credentials and certificates that will help them achieve their academic and career goals.

Removing financial barriers for college students

Through the budget, Governor DeWine showed support for grants and scholarships to remove financial barriers for college students, including:

- A record increase in the Ohio College Opportunity Grant program, which provides direct financial support to Ohio college students who demonstrate the highest levels of need.
- More funding for the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program, which provides scholarship money to Ohio's colleges and universities to award, based on need and merit, to undergraduate and graduate students in STEM fields.
- Full funding for the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Program, which awards tuition assistance to the children of deceased or severely disabled Ohio veterans.

Assisting students with disabilities

To assist students with disabilities seeking higher education and career services, Governor DeWine, through the budget:

- Invested in the Ohio College2Careers program, which placed vocational rehabilitation counselor in the disability services offices of 15 public colleges and universities to provide career counseling and job placement services for students with disabilities.
- Expanded the Ohio Transition Support Partnership to provide individualized career exploration and transition services to about 270 additional students with disabilities.

Expediting pardons

In December 2019, Governor DeWine announced a new project to expedite the pardon process for certain former criminal offenders. The Ohio Governor's Expedited Pardon Project simplifies Ohio's clemency process for certain rehabilitated citizens who have demonstrated that they have become contributing members of society. Potential pardon candidates are welcome to apply at OhioExpeditedPardon.org.

Transforming the parole board

Under the leadership of Governor DeWine, the Ohio Parole Board has worked to enhance transparency of the board process and diversity among its members. It also broadened participation during the release consideration process.

OHIO examples 

Promoting Wellness



Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services

The Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services will amplify the voices of minority Ohioans living with and recovering from mental illness and addiction, by reaching out to leaders in racial and ethnic communities to meet identified needs and help them become equipped with tools, funding, and expertise to address prevention, treatment, and recovery.

OHIO examples 

Supporting Aging Ohioans



Ohio Department of Aging

The Ohio Department of Aging will launch an initiative focused on using data from the ODA's existing systems to better identify greatest needs; identify and track disparities; correlate findings to demographics, geography, and communities/groups; and target efforts accordingly.

Improving law enforcement training, transparency, accountability

On June 17, Governor DeWine and Attorney General Dave Yost announced actions and proposed legislative reforms aimed at making meaningful improvements to law enforcement training, transparency, and accountability, including:

- A law enforcement oversight and accountability board made up of members of the law enforcement community and the public.
- Independent use-of-force investigations and prosecutions.
- A new public database to house information on use-of-force incidents in Ohio.
- A ban on chokeholds unless the officer is justified in using deadly force in situations where an officer is fighting for his or her own life or protecting the life of another.
- The use of body cameras.
- Financial help to pay for law enforcement training.
- Psychological exams for potential law enforcement officers.
- A new Ohio Office of Law Enforcement Recruitment.



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