



# Transforming Ohio for Growth

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*Stronger. Together.*

## **A STRONG COMMITMENT TO EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Governor John R. Kasich has made it a priority to expand and improve Ohio's early childhood programs since a child's earliest years are so critical to their future wellbeing. The 2016-17 budget includes \$61.5 million in new funds for early childhood programs.

Increasing Slots for High Quality Preschool: Gov. Kasich doubled the number of preschool opportunities in his first term for economically disadvantaged children by expanding the program from 5,700 to 11,090 children. Now, in FY16-17, the budget will add an additional \$40 million to provide preschool for 6,125 additional children, bringing the total number of children served to more than 17,000—more than a threefold increase from 2013 in both children served and funding.

Improving the Quality of Early Childcare Services: Because we know that most of the brain development takes place in the first five years of life, Ohio is taking steps in this budget to assure that children, of all ages, who attend quality-rated child-care facilities, have access to at least 12.5 hours of educational instruction each week. This will align childcare standards with preschool education.

New Behavioral Health Resources for Young Children: The impact of poverty and trauma on young children can have a lasting effect on their emotional and academic wellbeing. To help address these issues, Ohio will apply best practices developed over the past three years and provide \$5 million over the biennium to make Early Childhood Mental Health Counselors available to children, teachers and early childcare staff; create a hotline for acute problems; and make an early childhood counselor available for site visits within 48 hours of a request to conduct observations, train staff and develop support plans for children in need.

Removing Barriers to Moving Up: The lack of access to affordable, quality childcare remains one of the top employment barriers to low-income parents.

- Covering Copays: Many families below 100 percent of the federal poverty level cannot afford the current copays for childcare thus keeping them from getting a job. The state will allocate \$7 million each year to cover the copays for families making less than 100 percent of the federal poverty level. This will make it easier for low-income families to get childcare while they go to work and align childcare with preschool education.
- Ending the Childcare "Cliff": The sudden loss of subsidized childcare if a parent or family's income exceeds 200 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$3,298 a month for a family of three) can actually prevent some parents from taking a better-paying job and moving up on the economic ladder. The budget softens barriers to economic advancement by allowing families to keep subsidized child care on a gradually reducing scale up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$4,948 a month for a family of three).

**BOTTOM LINE:** The budget continues Governor John R. Kasich's commitment to expanding and improving Ohio's early childhood programs since a child's earliest years are so critical to their future wellbeing. The budget includes new funds for early childhood programs, including expanded preschool opportunities for economically disadvantaged children.

