

# MEDICAID: A Vital Lifeline for Ohio's Children and Pregnant Women



Access to quality health care, beginning before birth and continuing throughout childhood, is vital to ensure that children have the best possible start in life. Medicaid plays a crucial role in ensuring that children receive necessary medical care.

## Maternity Care & Delivery

Medicaid provides access to timely, appropriate, and safe care during the prenatal period, delivery, and the postpartum period and ensures babies are born healthy.<sup>1</sup>

## Comprehensive Coverage & Preventative Care

Medicaid covers a wide range of health services for children, including routine check-ups, immunizations, dental care, vision care, and emergency services. This comprehensive coverage keeps children healthy and catches potential issues early.

### OVER HALF

of all Ohio births are currently covered by Medicaid.

## Support for Special Needs

Medicaid covers services for children with special needs, such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, in-home nursing, and other specialized care and medical equipment. This support is vital for children with serious and/or chronic conditions or disabilities and is often not covered by employer sponsored health insurance.

## Mental Health Services

Mental health is as important as physical health, and Medicaid covers mental health services—including counseling and therapy—which can be essential for a child's overall well-being.

Almost  
**380,000**  
of Ohio's young children, or  
**48%**  
of all children ages 5 and under, are currently enrolled in Medicaid.



My biggest concern is being able to provide for our disabled son by affording his equipment, medical necessities, and care.

• Central Ohio parent



Insurance through Medicaid has helped with mental treatment for my older child, which has helped us a lot.

• Northeast Ohio parent

# Medicaid Helps Ensure Children Become Healthy Adults

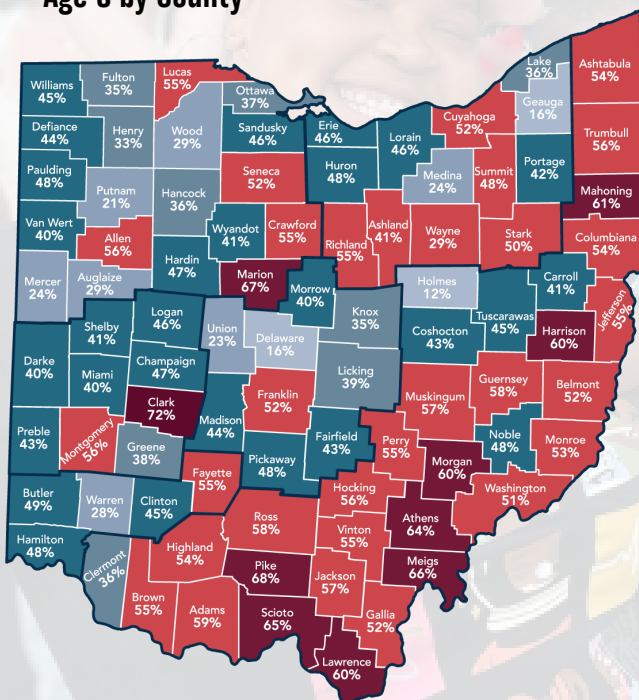
Early childhood is a period of rapid growth and development, making timely access to health care essential to ensure strong foundations for lifelong well-being and provide every child with the opportunity to thrive.



I'm currently in a high-risk pregnancy . . . so I have had to take a lot of time off work and I've had multiple doctor's appointments a week and taking that time off work cuts into my paycheck. I don't get paid, so I am really struggling in that sense because when I go on maternity leave, I'm worried and I'm terrified because I don't get paid.

• Montgomery County parent

## Medicaid Enrollment Rates for Children Under Age 6 by County



Source: Ohio Department of Medicaid, Medicaid Demographic and Expenditure Dashboard, Enrollment as of July 2024.

Across Ohio, Medicaid coverage enables young children to receive preventive care, early identification, and timely intervention—key factors in addressing health concerns before they escalate into more serious issues.

- **Early access to care is essential for young children.** Delayed or missed health care can lead to significant short- and long-term consequences, affecting crucial areas such as language development, motor skills, and social-emotional growth.<sup>2</sup>
- **Medicaid costs less for children compared to other populations.** Since children are generally healthier, they incur fewer health care costs. While children make up 42% of Ohio's Medicaid enrollees<sup>3</sup>, they only represent 14% of the program's total spending<sup>4</sup>
- **Kindergarten readiness remains a challenge for many children in poverty.** Strengthening Medicaid access from birth to age five can improve health, development, and readiness to learn. In 2023, just 20% of all Medicaid-enrolled children—and only 18.2% of Black children—were kindergarten ready. In response, the Ohio Department of Medicaid set a goal to boost academic success by increasing readiness. Early investment in Medicaid is essential to advancing equity and long-term educational outcomes.<sup>5</sup>
- **Healthy children are more likely to become healthy, productive adults.** Investment in child health has long term benefits for all. Prevention, early detection, and treatment can help ensure children are healthy and able to thrive, laying the foundation for greater academic achievement and ultimately producing a stronger economy with healthier adults.<sup>6</sup>



Our son's disability made him eligible for Medicaid, which has helped with medical costs.

• Southeast Ohio parent

1. KFF State Health Facts, [Health Insurance Coverage of Children 0-18 and Births Financed by Medicaid](#), 2023 data.
2. Center for Children and Families at Georgetown University. (2024). [Medicaid Managed Care and Early Childhood Development: A 12-state Scan](#).
3. Ohio Department of Medicaid, Medicaid Demographic and Expenditure Dashboard, July 2024 enrollment and Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimate, Census Table B09001, Population Under the Age of 18, 2023.
4. KFF State Health Facts, [Monthly Child Enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP](#), September 2024, [Medicaid Spending by Enrollment Group](#), 2021.
5. Ohio Department of Medicaid. (2025). The Ohio Department of Medicaid Population Health and Quality Strategy 2026-2028. [https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/medicaid.ohio.gov/About%20Us/PublicNotices/ODM\\_Population\\_Health\\_Quality\\_Strategy\\_2026-2028\\_Draft\\_4-14-2025.pdf](https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/medicaid.ohio.gov/About%20Us/PublicNotices/ODM_Population_Health_Quality_Strategy_2026-2028_Draft_4-14-2025.pdf)
6. Perrin, James, et al, American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Child Health Financing, "The Unique Value Proposition of Pediatric Health Care." *Pediatrics*. February 2023.