



# 2025-2027 Implementation Strategy



**NATIONWIDE  
CHILDREN'S®**

*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

# Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Strategy 2025-2027

As set forth in Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s Community Health Needs Assessment, Nationwide Children’s and several community partners completed the Franklin County *HealthMap2025*. The Franklin County *HealthMap2025* identifies five health priorities, and Nationwide Children’s adopted two additional priorities based on pediatric needs identified within the Franklin County assessment. These two additional priorities, Preventive Care and Disease Management, remain as targets from the 2022-2024 Implementation Strategy due to the continued importance they have for our pediatric population. This Implementation Strategy explains how Nationwide Children’s will address and impact the priorities identified in Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s 2025-2027 Community Health Needs Assessment.

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# 1. Basic Needs

## Description:

Non-medical factors, such as economic stability, education and health care access, transportation and neighborhood safety, are key drivers of good health outcomes. According to Healthy People 2030, addressing the quality of housing as a public health issue may help prevent and reduce negative health outcomes. This is because poor housing quality and inadequate housing conditions can contribute to negative health outcomes, including chronic disease and injury. Furthermore, the presence of lead, mold or asbestos, poor air quality and overcrowding can lead to irreversible health effects. In addition, people who live in overcrowded homes may be at risk for poor mental health, food insecurity and infectious disease.

The median net household income in Franklin County was \$69,681 in 2022, which was higher than Ohio residents overall, but lower than the national average. A higher percentage of families are living below 125% of the federal poverty level (FPL) in Franklin County compared to Ohio and national rates. The percentage of families and children living below 125% of the FPL has slightly increased since *HealthMap2022*.

## PERCENTAGES OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN LIVING BELOW 125% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE



2019	2022	2025
21.4%	17.7%	18.8%

## Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners

Substandard housing, financial instability, unsafe neighborhoods, food insecurity and limited access to nutritious food are barriers to basic needs for many families in Franklin County. Affected families and children are at higher risk for infant mortality, low birth weight, chronic illness, poor nutrition, exposure to environmental hazards, toxic stress, injury and more adverse health outcomes with lifelong implications. Nationwide Children's and its partners are engaged in several initiatives to address basic needs including housing, income, neighborhood safety, food security and access to nutritious foods. Future plans include transportation, education and health care access.



### Renter Occupied Housing Units



<i>HealthMap2025</i>	<b>47.5%</b>
<i>HealthMap2022</i>	<b>46.6%</b>
<i>HealthMap2019</i>	<b>48.1%</b>

## HOUSING SECURITY

In Franklin County, the percentage of households spending 30% or more of their monthly household income on housing costs has increased by 3.7% since *HealthMap2022*. These are considered cost-burdened households and are at risk of housing insecurity. The estimate of unhoused individuals in Franklin County has increased substantially in previous years, as the eviction rate has increased and is above the state average.

### Households Spending 30% or More of Monthly Income on Housing Costs



<i>HealthMap2025</i>	<b>31.9%</b>
<i>HealthMap2022</i>	<b>28.2%</b>
<i>HealthMap2019</i>	<b>30%</b>

Nearly half (47.5%) of Franklin County residents live in rental housing. Safe, affordable housing to rent or purchase remains a high priority countywide. Outside investors, poor structural and security conditions, lack of transportation access, low-income housing stipulations and access to affordable housing all create additional stressors on families already struggling.

## Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families

A child's overall health and well-being is impacted by many factors, like where they live and their access to health care, fresh foods and economic opportunities. That's why Nationwide Children's created the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative with community partners who are dedicated to reaching children and families with the services they need to live healthier lives.

Through the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative, Nationwide Children's, Community Development for All People and other partners have treated Columbus's Southern Orchards neighborhood, the area directly by the hospital, as a patient instead of the traditional health care model of treating one child at a time. The neighborhood, composed of 4,300 residents near the hospital, was marked by gun violence, high infant mortality rates and high asthma rates in children before the initiative began in 2008. The initiative later expanded to the Linden area, a community facing similar factors as the South Side. The Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative targets five impact areas: affordable housing, education, health and wellness, community enrichment and economic development.

Now, Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families invests millions of dollars each year in home repairs, home builds and affordable housing; and workforce development, training and hiring initiatives. Coupled with countless volunteer hours for community enrichment activities, these initiatives help the people and communities thrive.





## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing through Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families is coordinated through Healthy Homes, a nonprofit housing organization and collaboration between Community Development for All People and Nationwide Children's. Since inception in 2008, Healthy Homes has impacted more than 900 properties on Columbus's South Side and in Linden, with plans to impact more than 1,000 by the end of 2025. Healthy Homes invested \$52 million in affordable housing in South Side and Linden between 2022 to 2024.



### 2024 South Side Affordable Housing Statistics

**11** home repairs completed

**15** rental projects completed  
3 ongoing

**5** homes built and sold,  
3 more started

**Total investment \$6.5 million**



### 2024 Linden Affordable Housing Statistics

**74** home repairs completed

**30** rental projects completed  
30 more started

**28** homes constructed and sold

**35 volunteers** landscaped  
**11 properties** and planted  
**21 trees** during the annual  
Linden Beautification Event

## Home Improvement

Investing in the community does not only mean access to affordable housing and pathways to home ownership. Another important component of Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families is making sure families have access to home improvement grants and home renovation partners.

From 2022 to 2024, Healthy Homes completed 41 home repairs on the South Side and 170 home repairs in Linden. The repairs consisted of full exterior facelifts, which often included new roofs, windows, doors, porch railings, siding and more per property. These repairs are more than cosmetic — they are critical updates that allow residents to remain in their homes and avoid the risks of unsafe living conditions or forced relocation. A large portion of the home repair projects in Linden required a full scope of repair, including a roof, siding and new windows versus just a roof or siding. The team will continue to look for ways to get additional funding to help in these neighborhoods.

## FINANCIAL STABILITY

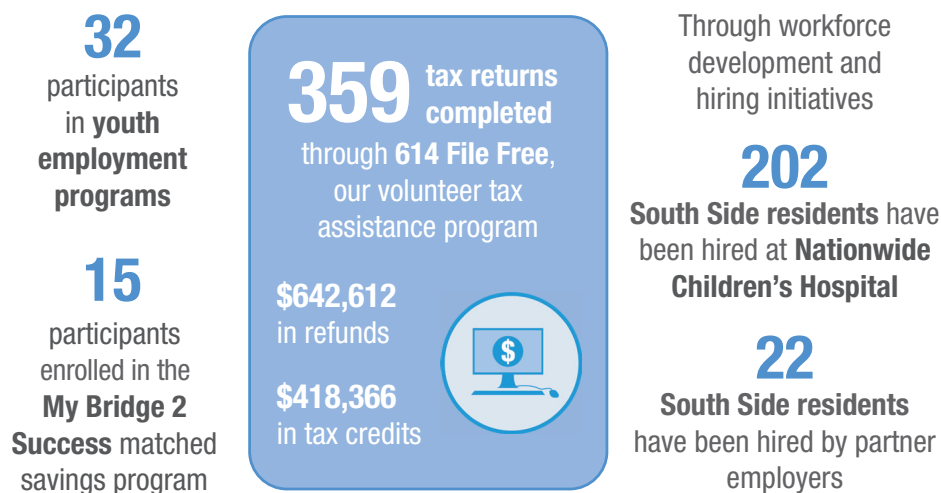
*HealthMap2025* cites that socioeconomic status is one of the most well documented influences on health. Many Franklin County residents feel they are vulnerable to poverty, perceiving basic needs as increasingly expensive and their overall financial stability as precarious. In fact, just the effort to make ends meet gets in the way of thinking about health needs and financially prevents families from accessing health care and nutritious foods. While resources are available, many community members are not aware of the resources, do not know how to access them or can't find the right people to help them.

As the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative at Nationwide Children's works to address concerns like stable housing and educational opportunities, it is also accelerating its efforts to get at a more basic concern: poverty. The initiative's career development and free tax preparation programs have made a difference for hundreds of families over the last five years.

### 2024 Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families Economic Development Initiatives Impact in South Side Community



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## 2024 Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families Economic Development Initiatives Impact in Linden Community



### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**16**  
participants  
in **youth  
employment  
programs**

**19**  
participants saved  
**\$23,570** in the  
**My Bridge2  
Success** matched  
savings program

**317** tax returns  
completed  
through **614 File Free**,  
the Volunteer Income Tax  
Assistance Program

**\$623,446**  
in refunds

**\$4,616**  
in tax credits



Through workforce  
development and  
hiring initiatives

**100**

**Linden residents** have  
been hired at **Nationwide  
Children's Hospital**

**21**

**Linden residents** have  
been hired by partner  
employers

#### My Bridge 2 Success

Nationwide Children's began the Mobility Mentoring program, My Bridge 2 Success, in 2020. My Bridge 2 Success supports families, young adults and adolescents in the community by becoming financially stable and achieving goals in five outlined pillars: family stability, well-being, financial management, education and career.

My Bridge 2 Success supports adults to become more economically mobile and even provides funds for families to overcome obstacles. Those funds can be put toward a vehicle, tuition or any number of other "bridges" that could ultimately break a family out of poverty. My Bridge 2 Success supports families in their journey toward wellness and financial stability in three key areas: Financial Literacy Counseling, Community Programming, and Mobility Mentoring & Matched Savings Program. Between 2023 and 2024, a total of \$148,084 was saved for a match by participants.

#### Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Some of the most important outcomes of increasing filings for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are related to improved maternal and child health. And yet, low rates of Black women who are pregnant or with young children seek tax preparation help or are aware of EITC and other tax credits as measured by attendance at tax sites, filings and awareness in maternal child health settings in Columbus.

An innovative partnership between the regional United Way Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) collaborative and Nationwide Children's have enhanced EITC filings and improved maternal child outcomes.

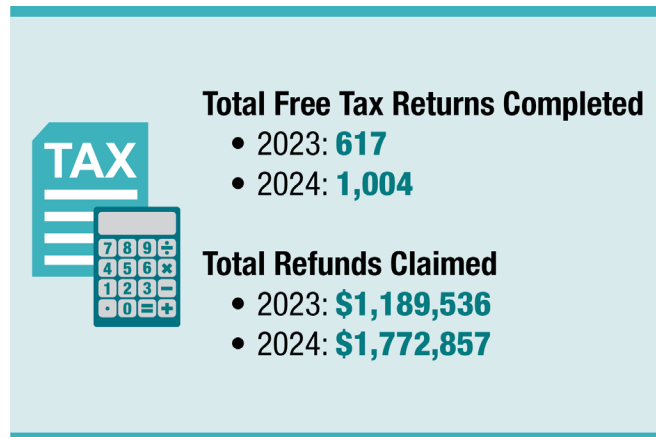


The partnership aims to improve financial stability and health outcomes for low- to moderate-income households. Through outreach, coordination and evaluation, the number of families who successfully claim the EITC, Child Tax Credit (CTC) and other valuable tax benefits has increased each year.

In addition, Partners For Kids, Nationwide Children's accountable care organization, will look to host free tax clinics in areas they serve.

Since 2020, Nationwide Children's helped more than 1,000 families earning less than \$70,000 annually

claim \$5.4 million in refunds through the program in central Ohio. The financial impact potential exceeds \$6.1 million, including the amount in filing fees that families have saved. In 2023, 617 free tax returns were completed, with families claiming more than \$1.1 million. In 2024, more than 1,000 families earning less than \$70,000 annually completed tax returns for free, allowing those families to claim nearly \$1.8 million in refunds.



## Supplemental Security Income

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) project educates and helps providers contracted by Partners For Kids, Nationwide Children's accountable care organization, with the necessary tools and knowledge about the SSI process. If families qualify, the program can give money to help pay for food, rent and clothes. Partners For Kids has outreach initiatives to educate families about SSI eligibility and application processes; one-on-one support for families in completing SSI applications, including gathering documentation and reviewing eligibility criteria; informational workshops that cover SSI benefits, appeals processes, and rights of beneficiaries; and partnerships with local social services and nonprofits to expand access to resources and information about SSI.

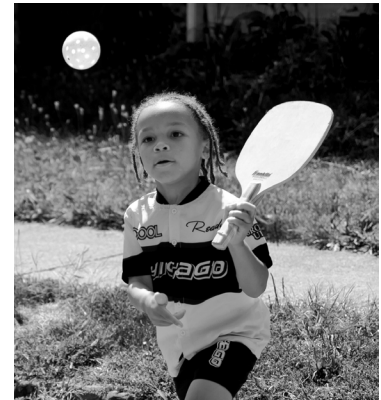
## TRANSPORTATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Neighborhood programming is vital to build community engagement and a sense of belonging among residents. Neighborhood pride helps improve feelings of safety, as well.

## PlayStreets

PlayStreets events are part of Nationwide Children's efforts to address and improve social determinants of health in local communities, specifically Linden and South Side. PlayStreets promote outdoor play, social interaction and recreational activities

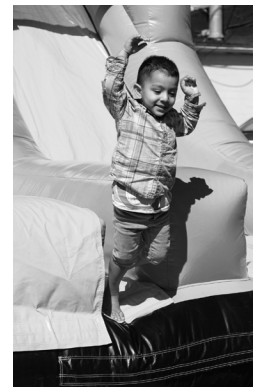
designed to encourage kids to be physically active. Residents reported that the events made them feel connected to the community and that PlayStreets made the neighborhood feel safer. In 2024, more than 2,875 participants attended 12 PlayStreets events. Participation has continued to rise annually, and two new locations were added to support attendance and demand.



## Linden Fall Festival

The Linden Fall Festival began in October 2023 to celebrate the community and promote neighborhood wellness in Linden.

In addition to having activities for children and free food, more than half a dozen local organizations provided free resources for families. Nationwide Children's Mobile Care Center provided immunizations, and Linden Primary Care Center gave away winter accessories.







More than 1,500 participants attended the second annual Linden Fall Festival in October 2024. Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families and community partners plan to continue this annual festival to celebrate the Linden community, bringing together friends and families for a day of fun while providing resources and services, including haircuts, free meals, winter accessories and more.



## FOOD INSECURITY

### Increased Access to Nutritious Food

One of the most important factors for good health is access to fresh, nutritious food. Over 40% of Franklin County residents eat fruit less than once per day. Community members stated that having access to grocery stores is essential to eating healthy. However, grocery stores are not accessible enough, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. By contrast, corner stores often don't have nutritious foods, and restaurants cannot guarantee affordable prices. Many Franklin County community members mentioned that their neighborhoods are healthy food deserts, due to grocery stores and healthy restaurant options being inaccessible within a short distance from their homes.

Food insecurity increases the risk of a variety of physical and psychological illnesses, including heart disease and depression. This risk is particularly notable for children, who are at risk for developmental and health consequences related to prenatal and early childhood food insecurity. The percentage of Franklin County residents experiencing food insecurity increased from

12.8% in 2022 to 13.5% in 2025.

Because of access barriers to healthy food, Nationwide Children's supported Community Development for All People in creating the All People's Fresh Market. Started in 2018, the free food market serves thousands of unique families per year on the South Side of Columbus. In collaboration with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, it's now the largest point of free fresh food distribution in the entire state of Ohio. Between 2022 and 2024, All People's Fresh Market provided services to 758,486, representing 105,630 unique individuals.

After years of planning, partnership and investment, the Linden Fresh Market opened in September 2021, providing fresh food in an area that was a food desert. The Linden Market partners with Mid-Ohio Food Collective to distribute free food in Ohio. The market provides members with free, fresh and healthy produce to any household earning less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Between 2022 and 2024, the Linden Fresh Market served 139,378 households and 501,073 people.



### WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Nutrition Program

Partners For Kids families who are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are connected to the WIC-Ed program to receive additional nutrition education and support. WIC-Ed offers free nutritional education classes aimed at helping low-income individuals make informed food choices and improve their overall health. Participants can complete online nutrition education lessons around their own schedules, which alleviates transportation and child care issues.

## EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE ACCESS

### Workforce Development Programs

Education and work opportunities are cornerstones of healthy communities. That's why increasing school retention rates, improving high school graduation rates and boosting local workforce development efforts remain important to Nationwide Children's. From healthy beginnings as early as kindergarten, after school sports programs and expanded elementary age tutoring to engage students in positive experiences at a younger age, to pathways to in-demand health care careers, several initiatives are in place to provide opportunities for educational and career advancement.

Nationwide Children's Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families initiative supports education and workforce development through several programs. Nurturing engagement in these programs begins in middle and high school, with special emphasis on boosting high school attendance and graduation rates. Strengthening school partnerships, sharing program outcomes with schools, collaborating on improvement efforts, and expanding program capacity to better meet student needs remains vital to improving school attendance and high school graduation rates. The team is looking for new ways to increase capacity by exploring opportunities for staff training and resource alignment to meet growing demand. The team is elevating student feedback to help shape program priorities and activities and using the Developmental Relationships Survey to assess how effectively programs support students in feeling connected and empowered. Results are pending.

### BOOST Workforce Development Program

BOOST is a free work readiness training and coaching program, available to all residents of the Linden and South Side communities who are 18 years and older. The initiative supports those who may be entering the workforce for the first time, returning to work after a break or looking to grow their career. Participants receive support with completing job applications, developing interviewing skills and connecting directly with hiring managers at Nationwide Children's and other employer partners. Many program graduates go on to secure meaningful employment in the community. In 2024, 62 residents from the South Side graduated from the BOOST program. Thirty six graduates landed jobs in 2024, and eight of those hires joined Nationwide

Children's. Forty-four residents from Linden graduated from the BOOST program in 2024, and 37 graduates landed jobs.



### Summer Youth Employment Program

Nationwide Children's also hosts youth and young adults (ages 16 to 24) for paid summer work learning experiences through its Summer Youth Employment Program. Students learn, build their skills and gain valuable work experience within a health care setting. This program is more than just a summer job for young adults — it's a gateway to a future in health care. By participating, young adults gain invaluable exposure to diverse clinical and non-clinical health care careers, all while building essential skills and gaining hands-on experience. An average of 91 students participate each summer, with nearly 10% receiving job offers after completing the program. The number of interns grows each year.



## Credit Recovery Summer Program

The Credit Recovery Summer Program is aimed at rising juniors and seniors who could benefit from a paid internship at the hospital and school credit recovery. The goal is to reduce barriers for students to achieve graduation and ensure they have access to career training while earning wages. The pilot program launched summer of 2025, allowing three students to obtain school credits to stay on track to graduate high school on time.

## High School Career Academy

Nationwide Children's hosts the High School Career Academy for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students enrolled in the Columbus City School District and surrounding schools such as Reynoldsburg School District. This six-month program introduces students to various health care professional tracks through paid shadowing experiences, with the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized credentials. Students gain hands-on experience in an environment that develops leadership character and confidence toward navigating a successful health care career. They receive training and education in CPR, HIPAA and protecting patient health information, medical terminology, financial literacy, interview skills, resume writing, networking and more. Since the program's inception in the fall of 2023, 61 students have completed the program, averaging 30 students per program.



## In-Demand Careers and Career Pathways

To support future career growth, Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families, Nationwide Children's and partners plan to develop career pathways for in-demand health-related careers. The goal is to establish

pathways for young professionals graduating from high school or a career center in the fields of medical assistants, radiological technologists and respiratory therapists.

The team is working with Nationwide Children's Talent & Acquisition Team and department leaders to determine required skills and training needed for entry-level positions within the in-demand careers. In addition, the team collaborates with school administrators by attending bi-monthly meetings to identify students for the program and attends quarterly advisory board meetings facilitated by school administrators and career centers.

## Dental Assisting Career Pathway Pilot

Students from the Fort Hayes Career Center Dental Assisting Program will be given opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings. It will facilitate professional growth and mentorship for students by connecting them with dental professionals from Nationwide Children's, enhancing their practical skills and industry knowledge. The pathway will prepare students for the next phase of the pipeline pathway by equipping them with the necessary experience and skills to successfully apply for the unit aide position, ultimately supporting their transition into dental assisting careers. This pathway was established in collaboration with the Fort Hayes Career, Nationwide Children's Community Dental and School Health Services.

## Behavioral Health Career Pathway Pilot

This pathway offers students the opportunity to earn a Registered Behavioral Health Technician certification, positioning them to apply for roles within Behavioral Health. Students engage with behavioral health professionals to gain knowledge about different treatment modalities, processes, procedures and various careers within behavioral health.

## Pediatric Vital Signs and High School Graduation

Pediatric Vital Signs is a pioneering initiative led by Nationwide Children's in partnership with community organizations to assess and improve the health and well-being of all children in Franklin County. Much like traditional vital signs — such as heart rate or temperature — this initiative tracks eight key indicators that reflect the overall health of children, including key social factors.



High school graduation is one of these pediatric vital signs. Graduation is a predictor of success during adulthood. Monitoring high school graduation rates can help identify opportunities for early interventions to address challenges such as chronic absenteeism or teen pregnancy, factors that can increase the risk of students dropping out before earning their diploma. To track progress on this initiative, attendance and graduation rates will be monitored to track the number of students who participate in high-impact programs such as the High School Career Academy, Upward Bound Math and Science, Summer Youth Employment Program and others. Additional impact measures and comparisons studied for those students in programs versus the rest of school include attendance rate, average GPA (weighted and unweighted), avoidance of disciplinary action, saved seat time and on-time graduation rates.

## Medicaid Redetermination

In an effort to keep children enrolled in Medicaid, the Medicaid redetermination project focuses on ensuring that Partners For Kids' patients are promptly contacted and informed about their eligibility during the redetermination (re-enrollment) process. Partners For Kids has employed a robust follow-up system to remind families of redetermination deadlines and required documentation; easy-to-understand guides and templates to help families accurately complete Medicaid redetermination forms; training for staff on the Medicaid redetermination process to ensure they can effectively assist families; and a dedicated customer assistance line or support group for families to ask questions and receive guidance on redetermination.

## To help improve residents' access to basic needs including housing and financial stability, Nationwide Children's and Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families will:

- Add 25 rental units to the South Side.
- Add 15 homeownership units to the South Side.
- Add 90 scattered-site rental units to South and North Linden.
- Add 25 homeownership units to South and North Linden.
- Complete 30 home repairs on the South Side.
- Complete 155 home repairs in South and North Linden.
- Expand the My Bridge 2 Success program to support more community members and high school students in becoming financially stable.
- Increase the number of tax returns prepared and filed for low-to moderate-income families throughout CelebrateOne zip codes who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax credits year over year.



## To help improve residents' access to basic needs including transportation, neighborhood safety and nutritious foods, Nationwide Children's and Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families will:

- Maintain PlayStreets events and hit 3,000-person attendance goal each year.
- Continue annual Linden Fall Festival to promote neighborhood resources and connection.



## To help improve residents' access to basic needs including education and health care access, Nationwide Children's and Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families will:

- Ensure WIC clinics are accessible for Partners For Kids' families by expanding hours and locations.
- Simplify the enrollment and recertification processes for WIC for Partners For Kids families to minimize barriers and implement nutrition education programs for Partners For Kids families to teach families about healthy eating, budgeting for food, and utilizing WIC benefits effectively.
- Create a pipeline of employment to Nationwide Children's and other partners in central Ohio for community members living in Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families zip codes for BOOST program.
- Increase the number of South Side and Linden resident hires to Nationwide Children's and partners and improve community members' retention rate within their first year.
- Expose and develop adolescents from Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families zip codes to better prepare them to join the workforce and be successful through employment at the hospital and facilitate educational sessions through the Youth Summer Employment and Career Academy.
- Establish processes to support student attendance in the health care setting by integrating attendance support strategies into health care services.
- Increase participation in programs among students from target neighborhood schools and track improvements in attendance rates, reductions in chronic absenteeism and increases in on-time high school graduation.
- Increase capacity by exploring opportunities for staff training and resource alignment to meet growing demand.
- Compare attendance rates and high school graduation rates among students participating in multiple Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families workforce development programs.
- Increase Medicaid enrollment and redetermination for Partners For Kids families.

## Community Partners

### Housing

- Central Ohio Community Land Trust
- City of Columbus
- Community Development for All People
- Nationwide Insurance
- Ohio Capital Finance Corporation
- Turner Construction
- Franklin County Board of Commissioners Job & Family Services
- OhioHealth
- Partnership4Success
- United Way (Tax Clinics)
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

### Financial (Income and Poverty)

- Centauri
- City of Columbus
- Community Financial Wellness
- Department of Education and Workforce
- Educational Center of Central Ohio
- Financial Empowerment Center

### Food Security (Food Access)

- Community Development for All People
- Local Matters
- Mid-Ohio Foodbank
- The Ohio State University School of Agriculture – Buckeye ISA
- The Reeb Center

## 2. Mental Health

### *Description:*

According to the CDC, childhood mental health conditions affect many children and families. In fact, nearly one in five children ages 3 to 17 (21%) have been diagnosed with a mental, emotional or behavioral health condition. This can continue into adulthood. Social isolation and loneliness are widespread problems in the U.S. and pose a serious threat to both mental and physical health, per the CDC. Social isolation can increase a person's risk for heart disease, self-harm, dementia and eventually may lead to an earlier death. Screening and treatment for mental health care is complicated by the stigma associated with mental illness. Access to mental health care providers and resources remains a challenge as well.

### Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners

Big Lots Behavioral Health Services at Nationwide Children's is dedicated to the care of children and adolescents living with emotional, behavior, development, thought and adaptation-to-life challenges, including those associated with physical illness and trauma. The hospital and its partners are continuing to expand and improve treatment options, including inpatient and outpatient services, along with outreach and community programs, to serve children in Franklin County and southeast Ohio. In 2020, Nationwide Children's opened the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion, America's largest center dedicated exclusively to child and adolescent behavioral and mental health on a pediatric medical campus.



### ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE RESOURCES

#### Behavioral Health and Primary Care Locations

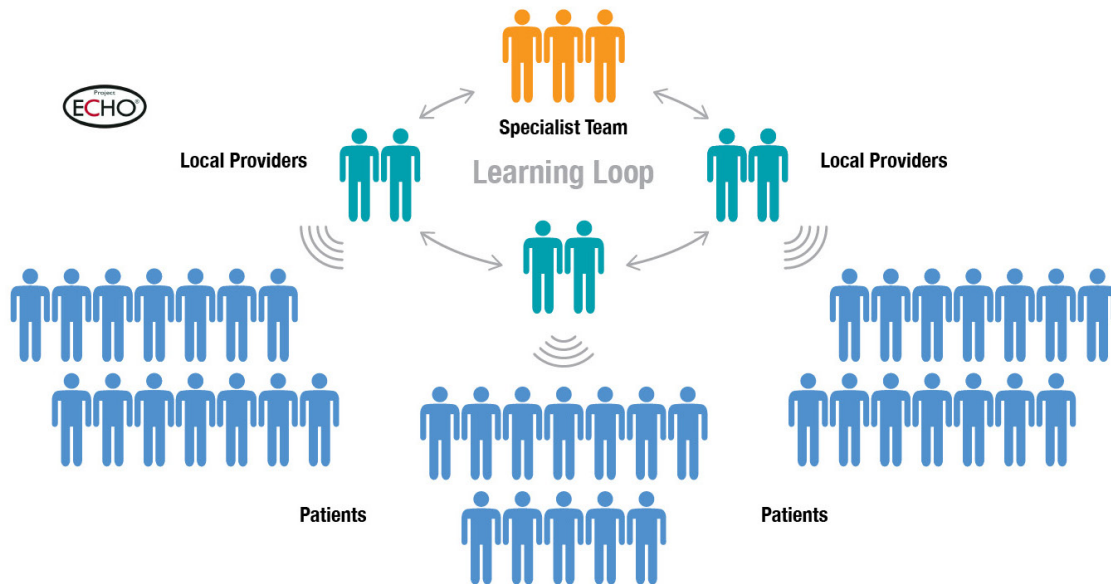
Primary Care providers serve as the front door for many families to access health care services. That's why Nationwide Children's integrates behavioral health into its Primary Care Centers.

Plans include starting a virtual group within the Primary Care Network to provide a new level of evidence-based treatment for caregivers of Primary Care Network patients and expanding the Feeding Program at the Westside Primary Care Center. This new service will be developed at the Westside Primary Care Center to manage patients with feeding concerns, (i.e., failure to thrive, picky eating, behavioral feeding concerns) by integrating feeding psychologists to provide quick access to care.

A new program in partnership with Child Life specialists and nursing staff in the Primary Care Network will help train and educate nursing staff in evidence-based strategies such as the use of visual schedules, comfort holds, age and developmentally appropriate language to better support patients with developmental differences during vaccine administration and vital signs. This will help promote access to care and keep patients, caregivers and staff safe. Training currently includes one virtual education session and one in-person, hands-on training.

## Project ECHO

In partnership with Partners For Kids, Behavioral Health Services launched Project ECHO in 2019. This initiative is dedicated to increasing comfort and capacity of primary care providers to care for patients with behavioral health needs and developing a system of care connecting communities to specialty resources. Project ECHO utilizes an expert interdisciplinary behavior health team to work collaboratively with pediatricians throughout each series so that they are more confident in their ability to respond to their primary care patients who present with behavioral health concerns. Primary care providers can ask questions and present cases to interdisciplinary teams at Nationwide Children's as well as other primary care sites.

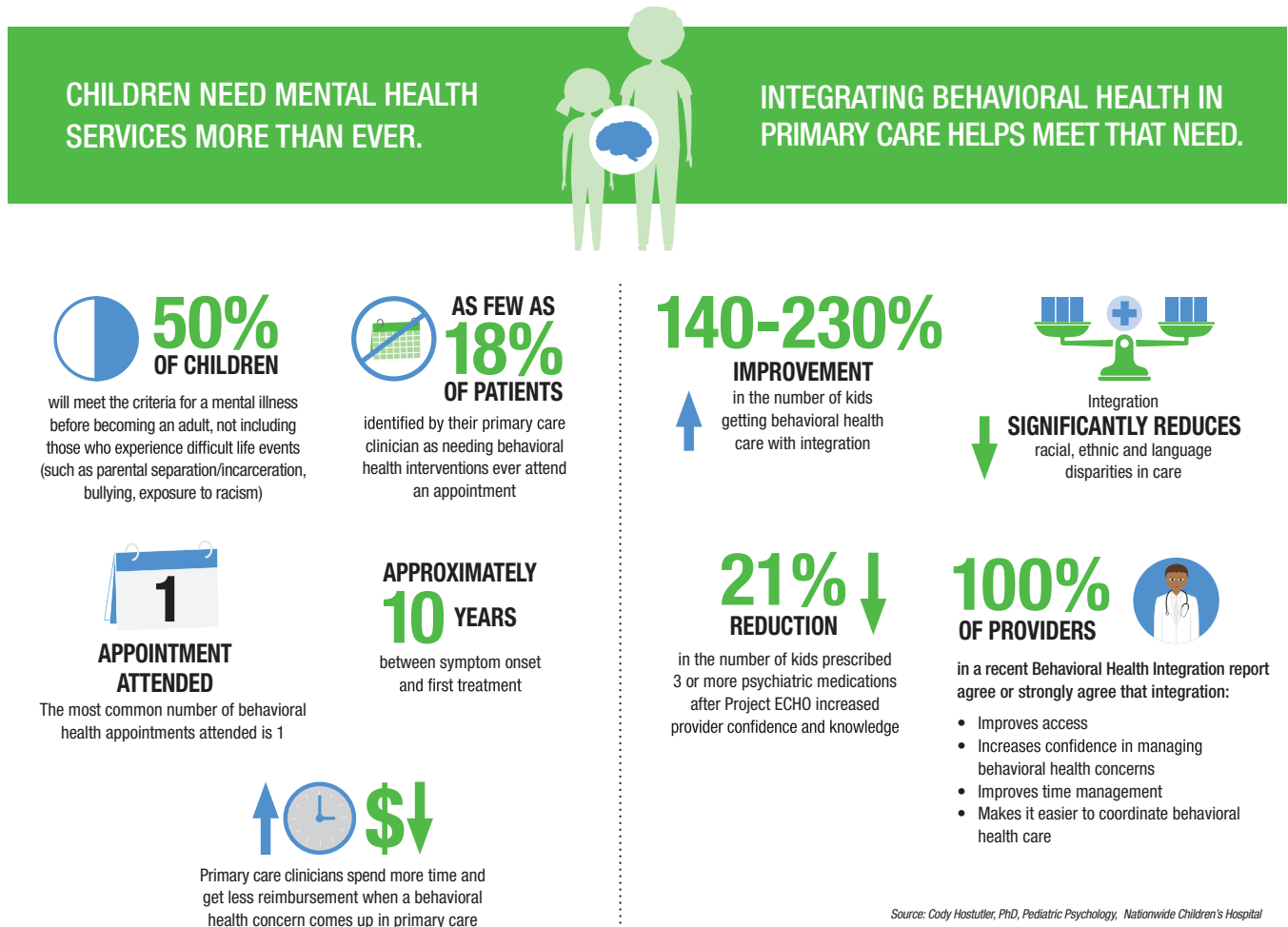


## Behavioral Health Treatment Insights and Provider Support (BH-TIPS)

Another collaboration effort with primary care providers includes the Behavioral Health Treatment Insights and Provider Support (BH-TIPS) for primary care providers, which launched in 2021. Created to help address the long wait times for a psychiatry appointment, this program offers primary care providers a way to schedule a 15-minute video consultation with a Nationwide Children's psychiatrist and social worker to discuss any cases on their caseload with behavioral health concerns.

## Behavioral Health Integration (BHI)

Nationwide Children's plans to expand local capacity by continuing integration of Behavioral Health providers into primary care locations in collaboration with Partners For Kids. This allows for increased access to behavioral health services within the patient's and family's community and medical home. A member of the Behavioral Health Community Development and Engagement Team provides technical assistance to support integration efforts. The technical assistance varies by location, but could include consultation, practicing skills gained, evaluating data with a goal of encouraging practices to engage in quality improvement and introducing/initiating behavioral health-specific quality projects.



## Workforce Development

To meet the growing demand for behavioral health services, Nationwide Children's is investing in a workforce development strategy. This includes expanding educational pathways, strengthening training programs, and supporting career advancement to build and retain a skilled, diverse behavioral health workforce. Nationwide Children's is working with local colleges and universities to create cohort-based degree programs for incumbent behavioral health staff to provide them with relevant education that can be applied in their current role and/or provide a foundation for the pursuit of advancement opportunities in various mental health professions (e.g., psychiatric nurse, board certified behavior analyst). Nationwide Children's is also providing more opportunities for master's and doctoral level trainees to learn how to provide behavioral health care and consultation in an integrated primary care setting, enabling more specialists to meet the needs of patients and families in their health home.

Providing support for those seeking advanced college degrees is not enough, however. In addition to reimagining how Nationwide Children's provides efficient, timely and effective care to those in need, it is also important to reimagine who is providing that care. Through providing robust onboarding education and supervision to non-specialist staff with undergraduate degrees, such as qualified behavioral health specialists (QBHS), the team is able to exponentially expand the impact of one licensed specialist with a graduate degree (e.g., psychologist). Under the close supervision of a specialist, QBHS staff can deliver the key ingredients of evidence-based interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with fidelity. This model holds a great deal of promise in improving access to care.

## Seven-Day Follow Up Appointments

Partners For Kids is working to increase follow-up visits within one to seven days of an emergency department visit for either mental health or substance abuse concerns. When youth get a follow-up visit in this timeframe, there is a less likely chance they will be readmitted. Partners For Kids will designate care navigation staff to follow-up with patients. In the pilot of this program, 71% of patients had been contacted on the first day of their discharge from the Psychiatric Crisis Department (PCD) at the Big Lots Behavioral Health Pavilion at Nationwide Children's Hospital and 74% of pilot patients had follow-up visits scheduled within seven days of discharge. Anecdotally, families report they appreciate the outreach and assistance scheduling their follow-up appointment. Partners For Kids will also start a collaborative with the Nationwide Children's Behavioral Health and Primary Care to ensure that rates of seven-day follow-up visits are increasing.

## The Kids Mental Health Foundation

Nationwide Children's created The Kids Mental Health Foundation to provide free upstream resources to parents, caregivers and educators across the United States. The resources cover emotional regulation, behavior activation and more to build mental health skills, promote mental health literacy and break stigmas. More than 24 million people have been reached since 2018. The Foundation will continue to expand its resources.



Patients hospitalized for suicidality are

**300x more at risk**

of suicide in the first week after  
hospital discharge, and

**200x more at risk**

over the first month, compared to the  
general population.

## Provider Attribution System

Partners For Kids implemented a new behavioral health provider attribution system to facilitate real-time patient care team information between Ohio behavioral health organizations (BHOs) and health care systems to facilitate continuity of care among all Partners For Kids providers. Participating BHOs will send patient level data to a central data hub that indicates the name and basic demographics (i.e., DOB) of patient, names of provider(s) who are caring for the patient and their role (i.e., outpatient therapist, case manager, psychiatrist).

Partners For Kids will integrate this information into the Nationwide Children's Epic care team and publish it through the Nationwide Children's Partners For Kids provider portal. BHOs will be able to access the portal or Nationwide Children's Epic Care Link, and view care team information from all participating BHOs (including Nationwide Children's outpatient). The goal is for providers to access improved real-time data. As of 2025, three behavioral health organizations have been recruited to participate in this project.

## Research Expansion

The Institute for Mental and Behavioral Health Research (IMBHR) is located in the Behavioral Health Pavilion at Nationwide Children's Hospital. The mission is to conduct innovative translational, clinical and epidemiological research focused on etiology, prevention and treatment of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. In addition to collaborative efforts across the Nationwide Children's campus, institute members work in collaboration with The Ohio State University (OSU) Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health and the OSU Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research.

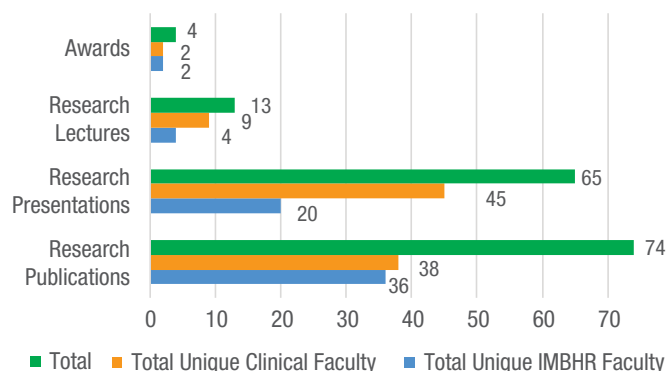
With 25,000 square feet of current research space and additional research space in development, the institute has flexibility for growth and offers ample room for staff and trainees.

Nine students from across the U.S. were selected to participate in RISE: Research Intensive Summer Experience, a 10-week paid internship under Eric Youngstrom, PhD. Dr. Youngstrom, a nationally renowned psychologist specializing in the relationship between mood and psychopathology and the clinical assessment of children and families, leads the Institute for Mental and Behavioral Health Research. Interns utilized clinical data to produce a research project suitable for presentation at the close of the internship with the help of Nationwide Children's faculty mentors.



A total of 3,600 hours of research and analysis from interns produced five publications and 10 conference presentations related to mood disorders.

### Research Expansion 2024 Data



## SCREENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Hospitalizations due to self-harm and deaths from suicide have both increased in Franklin County since the last *HealthMap*. The Franklin County Suicide Prevention Coalition has identified high-risk populations, including youth.

Embedded within the The Institute for Mental and Behavioral Health Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital is the Center for Suicide Prevention and Research (CSPR). Awarded a P50 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the CSPR hosts four principal investigators and a large staff to sustain the work of multiple NIMH-funded projects. A P50 grant is a Specialized Center grant awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It supports multidisciplinary, innovative research programs focused on a specific disease or biomedical problem.

### Expand Inpatient Bed Capacity

As the mental health crisis among children and adolescents continues to grow, expanding access to timely, high-quality behavioral health care has never been more urgent. In efforts to meet this rising demand, Nationwide Children's is increasing capacity at the Behavioral Health Pavilion. The phased opening of 27 new inpatient beds and the expansion of outpatient clinic space are critical steps toward ensuring that more children receive timely mental health screenings, interventions and the ongoing care they need. In 2024,

six new inpatient beds opened. Three more were made available in February 2025, and an additional three will open in the third quarter of 2025. A fourth inpatient unit with 15 more beds, as well as expanded outpatient clinic space, will support growing demand for services over the next few years.

### ZerOH Suicide Clinical Pathway

In response to growing youth mental health care needs, Nationwide Children's is committed to expanding and sustaining suicide prevention efforts across all levels of care. These initiatives aim to improve early identification, crisis response and continuity of care for at-risk youth.

The foundational belief of Zero Suicide is that suicide deaths for individuals under the care of health and behavioral health systems are preventable. For systems dedicated to improving patient safety, Zero Suicide presents an aspirational challenge and practical framework for system-wide transformation toward safer suicide care.

Plans include continued Zero Suicide external expansion across multiple youth-serving health and behavioral health care providers encompassing multiple counties throughout central and southern Ohio. This community implementation of the Zero Suicide framework to expand knowledge and practices of those caring for at risk youth will be done in collaboration with Partners For Kids. With this funding, Nationwide Children's is also able to provide more specific consultation and support for organizations. This improves care transitions for patients following assessment or treatment for suicidal ideation and/or behavior by implementing automated Caring Contacts text messages to let patients know they are supported.



Future plans include expanded engagement outside of Ohio by participating in the Midwest Zero Suicide collaborative. The team will collaborate with other children's hospitals across the country and Children's Hospital Association (CHA) to help launch a national suicide prevention learning collaborative. The goal is to unite children's hospitals in reducing suicide by raising awareness in pediatric settings, sharing best practices nationwide and standardizing metrics and data reporting.

The aim is to create a collaborative learning network that promotes the development and evaluation of suicide prevention best practices, maximizes Nationwide Children's resources and facilitates continuous improvement through benchmarking, consensus recommendations and data-driven outcomes.

### **Ohio Children's Hospital Association Ohio Youth Suicide Prevention Collaborative**

Nationwide Children's is both a participating and leading organization in the Ohio Children's Hospital Association Ohio Youth Suicide Prevention Collaborative with a vision of zero suicides for Ohio youth aged 12 to 18. Goals include developing a statewide report on youth at risk for suicide and sponsoring/providing community education.

### **Suicide Screening in Non-Behavioral Health Departments**

Suicide screening remains a priority throughout clinical departments that do not focus solely on behavioral health. Seven departments fully implemented a safer suicide care practice between 2022 and 2024. Four additional departments were exploring and planning to adopt or expand a practice at the end of 2024. The Suicide Safer Care Collaborative launched in September 2024 with the goal of increasing the unique number of youth screened for suicide risk annually by expanding to additional areas and moving from targeted to universal screening.

Goals of the collaborative include:

1. Enhancing participant comfort, confidence and competence in suicide screening, assessment and safety planning.
2. Implementing, testing, improving and embedding suicide safer care best practices organization wide.

## **CENTER FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AND RESEARCH**

### **Improving Youth Mental Health Support**

#### **School-Based Suicide Prevention**

Mental health plays a huge role in a student's academic success. Students who receive mental health and social-emotional support at school often experience improved academic outcomes. To support this, Nationwide Children's provides services from elementary through high school that promote overall academic well-being. Students who are at higher risk can access individual and family therapy, while licensed mental health professionals offer counseling and prevention services directly within schools.

The Center for Suicide Prevention and Research (CSPR) will increase Franklin County middle and high school exposure to evidence-based suicide prevention programs including Signs of Suicide (SOS), Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) and other HB123 programs.

SOS is a nationally recognized suicide prevention program offered in middle and high schools. The SOS program teaches students, school staff and parents that suicide is preventable by promoting the ACT<sup>®</sup> message. When anyone notices warning signs of depression or suicide, they should acknowledge there is a serious concern, care and show the person you care, and tell a trusted adult. Over the next few years, Nationwide Children's will identify all schools in Franklin County that have yet to receive SOS and evaluate needs and preparedness to engage in planning and administration of SOS.



Youth Aware of Mental health, also known as YAM, is a school-based program for students ages 13 to 17, in which they learn about and explore the topic of mental health. YAM is an evidence-based program taking place in classrooms around the world. Students actively engage with the topic of mental health through role-play and

student-led discussions. YAM has been conducted with more than 170,000 teenagers in 17 countries, and more than 1,600 people have been trained as YAM instructors worldwide.

In response to the growing need for preteen suicide prevention options, the CSPR has recently completed the development of an elementary school program called Little Acts: SOS for Elementary Schools in partnership with Mindwise Innovations. Piloting and evaluation of feasibility and acceptability will occur in the next few years.

## PAX Good Behavior Game

The PAX Good Behavior Game is a universal prevention model implemented in schools. The model has a strong evidence base with regards to short- and long-term youth outcomes in the areas of social, academic and behavioral functioning. Nationwide Children's expanded consultation support for the PAX Good Behavior Game to southeast Ohio through 2024, reaching 33 schools, nearly 685 classrooms and over 12,000 students.

Nationwide Children's support for the PAX Good Behavior Game encompasses consultation to schools and community partners for planning, implementation and sustainability of PAX at school and regional levels, as well as support with integration into requirements, such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS). In addition, teacher, student and school-level data are collected to evaluate progress and outcomes. Additional projects to gather population-level health data in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education and Partners For Kids are in place to evaluate long-term effects of PAX saturation.

## Training and Community Engagement

The team will identify organizations for partnerships for vulnerable populations. Boys and Girls Clubs in Franklin County will receive standardized suicide prevention training with curriculum developed by the Center for



Suicide Prevention and Research (CSPR). Youth will receive the 10-session curriculum focusing on awareness, coping and reduction of suicidal behavior with demonstration of increased knowledge

and staff preparedness to support youth in crisis.

Nationwide Children's and CSPR will deliver programming from Be Present Ohio: The Online Experience (BPO:XP) to more youth organizations in Franklin County. BPO:XP is a suicide prevention program for youth in grades 7 to 12. BPO:XP packages life-saving suicide prevention content into a series of self-paced modules that teach youth about the warning signs of suicide, ways to support each other and talk about mental health, and how to cope during hard times and reach out for help. BPO:XP can be completed in school or community settings, in large or small groups, and on a computer, tablet or cell phone. The program fulfills suicide prevention requirements for Ohio House Bill 123 and can be implemented at no cost in Ohio.

## AUTISM

### Improve Access to Care in Primary Care Centers

The Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network noted that prevalence increased from one in 150 in 2000 to one in 26 in 2020. Before 2016, the highest prevalence was found among White children and children from higher socioeconomic status neighborhoods.

More children — especially very young ones and those from groups that were often overlooked — are being diagnosed with autism. That's why there's a growing need to improve how hospitals and care centers plan and provide fair and equal access to diagnosis, treatment and support services for all children with autism.

Nationwide Children's remains committed to improving access to care for autism spectrum disorder within the Primary Care Centers.

### Early Identification and Screening

Early identification of autism spectrum disorder can significantly improve outcomes for people with ASD. Early intervention can positively impact cognitive, language and social-emotional development. The Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers, Revised (M-CHAT-R) is a screener that asks a series of 20 questions about a child's behavior. This screener is used at 24-month well child checks at Primary Care visits. Results determine if further screening is needed.

From January through November 2024, 477 children were referred to the Integrated Primary Care Program at the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders. More than



1,200 patients have been referred to the program since November 2020. The program provides a range of services including individual and family therapy, caregiver training and resource support. The median time from referral to evaluations is approximately 38 days. Most patients, at 74%, completed the program within 90 days.

### Family Support and Safety Resources

Helping families keep their children safe while at home is an important part of safety planning. Screening children who are at high risk for elopement during a Primary Care visit enables families to work with their providers to create a safety plan and keep elopement kits and safety kits on hand in case of emergency. The Primary Care Network distributed over 60 elopement kits to patients and families. Plans are in development to expand elopement kit distribution within the Primary Care Network and other programs such as Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Child Development Center and Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders. The Primary Care Network received feedback from 37 of the 60 families who received the kits; 84% used the items in the kit and found them helpful. The most useful item was the door/window alarm.

### Autism Training and Behavioral Strategies

Training and education about autism was provided to nursing staff at two Primary Care Network Centers. Nursing staff learned about the use of comfort holds and other behavioral strategies and interventions (i.e., coping plans) to support patient and staff safety and improve completion of vaccines and vitals at Primary Care Network visits.



The Integrated Primary Care Autism Spectrum Disorder (IPC ASD) pathway is a collaborative approach between primary care physicians and specialists to improve access to timely and effective diagnosis and support for children with ASD. Nationwide Children's Primary Care Network will support the implementation of the IPC ASD pathway to community practices with integrated psychologists.

### To improve access to behavioral health care resources and screening for behavioral health care concerns, Nationwide Children's will:

- Increase the number of primary care practices engaged in Behavioral Health Integration.
- Develop curriculum for general pediatric residents four-week mental health rotation and train initial cohort of 40+ general pediatric residents in behavioral health diagnoses/topics of depression, anxiety, ADHD and substance abuse.
- Get at least 30 community-based integrated primary care practices across Ohio to actively participate (e.g., have staff attend three or more meetings) in the Collaborative Learning for Integrated Care (CLIC) community.
- Increase participation in Project ECHO's Behavioral Health in Primary Care series.
- Expand BH-TIPS and increase utilization by providing full-time ability to virtually connect with a psychiatrist and care management clinician for pediatric case consultation.
- Support career advancement by increasing enrollment and retention in key programs including: Mental Health Specialist (MHS) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program; bachelor's-level autism treatment staff pursuing master's degree; and board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) graduate programs.
- Engage more pediatric practices in the ZerOH Suicide Collaborative.
- Continue to increase the unique number of youths screened annually and improve compliance with safety planning protocols in Behavioral Health, Emergency Department, inpatient and outpatient.
- Open the 8B inpatient unit with a phased care model for youth with prior inpatient stays.
- Expand Caring Contacts outreach beyond Behavioral Health acute services.
- Improve the seven-day follow-up rates for youth seen in Emergency Department or Primary Care for mental health or substance use concern from 57% to 75%.
- Expand evidence-based programming (i.e., SOS, YAM, House Bill 123 programs) to reach over 80% of Franklin County middle and high schools by the 2027-2028 school year.

- Pilot and test Little Acts: SOS for Elementary Schools in at least two elementary schools in 2026 and 2027.
- Deliver Be Present Ohio: The Online Experience (BPO:XP) programming to five to seven new organizations annually, reaching at least 400 youth per year.
- Establish and maintain sustainability in two schools for PAX Good Behavior Game, an elementary school-based prevention model designed to help children develop self-regulation, self-control and social-emotional skills.
- Expand existing Integrated Primary Care Autism Spectrum Disorder (IPC ASD) pathway with recruitment of new IPC psychologist to have Integrated Psychology at all Primary Care Network sites by 2027.
- Screen for elopement risk and provide elopement kits to patients < 6 years old with autism or developmental delay who are determined to be high risk for elopement.
- Muskingum Area Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services
- Muskingum Behavioral Health
- Ohio Department of Health
- Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
- Ohio Department of Medicaid
- Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OHMHAS)
- Ohio Department of Youth Services
- OhioHealth
- OhioRISE
- Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation
- The Ohio State University/Government Resource Center
- Partners For Kids
- Primary Care Practices/Providers
- The Buckeye Ranch
- The Center for Family Safety and Healing
- The Mooderators - GoNoodle
- USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

## Community Partners

### Mental Health

- Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Board of Franklin County (ADAMH)
- Ask Me
- Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Ohio
- Columbus City Schools and other Franklin County school districts
- Columbus Public Health
- Community Engagement
- Family and Children's First Council
- Franklin County Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Board (ADAMH)
- Franklin County Children Services
- Integrated Services for Behavioral Health
- MHAOhio
- Mid-Ohio Psychological Services (MOPS)

### Autism

- Cultural centers, religious organizations, community centers
- Community leaders
- Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- HOPE Line: Department of Children and Youth
- Olentangy Pediatrics
- Pediatric Associates
- Public school districts/Head Start Centers – Special Needs Preschools and Early Learning Centers

### 3. Adverse Childhood Experiences

#### *Description:*

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are traumatic or potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood. Examples of ACEs include violence, abuse and neglect. They can also include family instability or household dysfunction that can affect a child's sense of safety or stability, such as growing up in a household with people who have substance use problems, mental health challenges or parents who were separated or in jail.

Research shows that ACEs can have lasting effects on health and well-being in childhood, as well as impact one's education and job potential into adulthood. These experiences can increase the risks of injury, as well as maternal and child health problems including teen pregnancy, pregnancy complications and fetal death. ACEs can also lead to chronic disease and impact cause of death, such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and suicide.

This is a new metric on *HealthMap2025*, with 17% of Franklin County adults reporting having four or more ACEs. These include (1) emotional abuse; (2) parents' separation/divorce; (3) living with someone who was a problem drinker/used illegal drugs/abused prescription medication; and (4) physical abuse.

Between *HealthMap2022* and *HealthMap2025*, the number of child abuse victims and abuse reports have declined and the number of domestic violence victims in Franklin County has dropped dramatically.

#### **Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners**

Addressing ACEs early is critical to breaking cycles of trauma and promoting lifelong well-being. Nationwide Children's is actively addressing ACEs through a combination of clinical programs, community partnerships and research initiatives.

#### **PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION**

##### **Proud Linden Parent Program**

The Proud Linden Parent Program is a free, community-rooted initiative designed to support parents and caregivers of children ages 2 to 8 living in the Linden neighborhood. The 11-week program equips families with practical, evidence-based parenting strategies that promote positive child development and resilience. The curriculum is thoughtfully adapted to address the unique social and economic challenges families in Linden may face. With an average of 20 to 24 participants per cohort and eight successful cohorts completed since 2021, the program demonstrates invaluable impact in reducing risk factors associated with ACEs while building nurturing relationships and community. So far, more than 120 children have been positively impacted.



##### **Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)**

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Program oversees the implementation of Triple P across 13 central Ohio counties, including Franklin County, as part of a prevention plan to prevent child abuse and neglect. Triple P works to prevent ACEs through building resilient parents and children, reducing challenging behaviors and reducing the risk for child abuse and other behavioral health conditions. The ECMH Program serves as the clinical hub for program implementation, technical assistance, professional development and sustainability of a regional Triple P learning community. A secure digital data collection system was developed for parent survey and outcome measures to centralize and improve reporting for ongoing quality improvement. Since 2018, this program has reached over 9,200 families regionally. All sessions are free and available in person or online.

## INCREASE AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO CARE

### The Center for Family Safety and Healing

The Center for Family Safety and Healing (TCFSH) provides comprehensive services to address child abuse, domestic violence and other forms of trauma. It integrates prevention, intervention and treatment services to reduce the impact of ACEs on children and families. There are various initiatives and teams within the center that work toward preventing and responding to ACEs.

The Child Assessment Team is an inpatient consultation service for children with suspected child maltreatment. The Child Assessment Team (CAT) Clinic is an outpatient clinic for children with suspected physical abuse to receive coordinated follow-up care. In 2024, there were 472 consults provided to Nationwide Children's and 222 clinic visits. This helps ensure more children in crisis receive timely support.

The Training and Advocacy Department creates programs to change social norms that support power-based violence. These programs aim to change attitudes and behaviors and raise awareness of community resources for those experiencing family violence. In partnership with the Ohio Department of Health, TCFSH developed a train-the-trainer curriculum focused on building adolescent resiliency through supportive adults. More than 4,167 adults have been trained to strengthen trauma-responsive practices and enhance positive youth experiences.

In 2024, the Prevention Team, with support and partnership from the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, facilitated community-led initiatives to prevent child abuse and neglect. Those initiatives included collaborations with The Ohio State University and Triple P programming.

The Maternal-Infant Home Visitation programs plan to improve pregnancy outcomes and reduce child abuse by promoting preventive health practices and screening for intimate partner violence. The programs enhance self-efficacy through home visits by nurses, social workers and early childhood professionals.

In 2022, TCFSH was awarded a \$200,000 grant from the Allstate Foundation to support the development of a new prevention program to support healthy relationships for teen girls called *Healthy Relationships in a Digital World: Empowerment and Resiliency with Black Girls*.

In 2024, over 3,000 youth in central Ohio were

trained in the healthy relationships curriculum. The five-session program addresses digital boundaries, health literacy skills, bystander interventions and ways that adults can support healthy relationships for teen girls. The *DMs to Doubletaps* session, focused on somatic experience of emotions and social media, includes an innovative body mapping exercise that supports the development of positive digital boundaries and behaviors.



Because of the national shortages in the behavioral health space, TCFSH and Nationwide Children's often see that demand outweighs capacity. Since intentional child time and parent-child relationships are important protective factors in building a child's mental health and wellness, TCFSH and Nationwide Children's worked to bring together children and families affected by incarcerated fathers in Franklin County.

Following the completion of parenting classes for incarcerated fathers on-site at the Community-Based Correctional Facility, the team facilitated Family Engagement Days to provide meals, pro-social games and activities, and opportunities for family bonding and connection for those fathers and their children. Family Engagement Day offers fathers and their children a chance to spend quality time together, fostering positive relationships and strengthening bonds. This safe, non-judgmental environment lets families, communicate and express emotions freely while enjoying food, music and games. This day has contributed to the emotional well-being of both fathers and their children. Since the program's inception, 188 children have participated in Family Engagement Day.



**To increase prevention, early intervention, awareness and access to care for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), Nationwide Children's will:**

- Provide Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) groups for over 1,000 caregivers of children ages 0-16 (335 annually) in various community/school locations, including the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families areas and Hilltop.
- Provide Triple P services throughout Franklin County using a universal prevention/population health approach but also targeting at-risk areas to prevent ACEs, building resilient parents and children, and reducing challenging behaviors and the risk for child abuse and other behavioral health conditions.
- Attend community events to raise awareness, build partnerships with family-serving agencies, and host accessible virtual and in-person gatherings while offering support such as meals, transportation and childcare to reduce participation barriers.
- Hire a community health worker to continue providing services to families of men incarcerated in the Community-Based Correctional Facility to receive outreach by Nationwide Children's, participate in a volunteer needs assessment, and connect with relevant resources and services.
- Host a Family Engagement Day following the completion of each cohort of parenting classes on-site at the Community-Based Correctional Facility, reaching more than 100 fathers, caregivers and children each year.
- Increase participation in health education (including hygiene, healthy relationships, reproductive health and opioid overdose information) in the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center, particularly focusing on reaching Black adolescents at risk for human trafficking.

- Increase participation in therapeutic interventions designed to build resiliency and coping skills through group and individual cognitive behavioral therapy for youth incarcerated in the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center.
- Continue hosting the Proud Linden Parent Program and offer additional programs for alumni.

**Domestic violence and child abuse happen in every community regardless of race, education or socio-economic status. They are prevalent, pervasive and preventable.**

## **Community Partners**

- Allstate Foundation
- Community Development For All People
- CDC Head Start
- Canal Winchester Schools (Indian Trails Elementary)
- Community-Based Correctional Facility
- Families Flourish
- Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities – preschools and Home based
- Franklin County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court
- Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center
- Franklin County Office on Justice, Policy and Programs
- Healing Broken Circles
- Healthy Families America
- Hilltop Early Learning Center/Columbus Early Learning Center
- Maryhaven Recovery Center
- Mujjedid Mohammed/Restored Citizen Faith Foundation
- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Ohio Children's Trust Fund
- Ohio Department of Youth Services
- St. Mary in German Village
- The GAP Initiative
- YMCA Head Start

## 4. Maternal and Infant Health

### Description:

Healthy children need healthy parents. The health of the mother — before, during and after pregnancy — has a direct impact on the health of the child. According to Franklin County *HealthMap2025*, 43.7% of women who had a live birth had a chronic health condition, which can increase the chance for complications for both mother and baby. In addition, 44.9% of women who had a live birth were not taking vitamins before pregnancy.

According to the CDC, each year, more than 50,000 pregnant people are affected by severe maternal morbidity, 800 women die due to pregnancy-related complications and over 20,000 infants die. Per CelebrateOne, a public/private impact collaborative addressing and reducing infant mortality, 126 babies died in Franklin County before their first birthday in 2023, with 20 deaths due to sleep-related conditions. Unfortunately, the infant mortality rate in Franklin County has not decreased significantly in recent years.

CelebrateOne was established as Franklin County's overarching collective impact initiative to reduce infant mortality. Ohio Better Birth Outcomes (OBBO) is a national model of collaboration between hospitals, federally qualified health centers and public health organizations and a lead partner of CelebrateOne. Nationwide Children's leads the OBBO initiative, providing dedicated staff to support each prenatal clinic with quality improvement consulting, project management and data analysis to track progress. OBBO is composed of the four central Ohio hospital systems, Columbus Public Health Department, Heart of Ohio Family Health, Lower Lights Christian Health Center and PrimaryOne Health. Intervention priorities include perinatal support referrals (evidence-based home visiting, Medical Legal Partnership (now called Lawyers for Kids™), Baby & Me Tobacco Free Program™, contraceptive access and safe sleep education. Since 2015, CelebrateOne, OBBO, Nationwide Children's and other partners have implemented action steps in safe sleep education, prematurity prevention and early access to prenatal care. This work has resulted in a reduction of the Franklin County infant mortality rate by 20%.

Not only does infant mortality remain relatively high, but it is also especially high among Black (non-Hispanic) babies. There is still progress to be made on infant mortality and preterm births to achieve the Healthy People 2030 goal of reducing the rate of all infant deaths to 5.0 or fewer per 1,000 live births.

### Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners

Nationwide Children's aims to decrease infant mortality and preterm births and improve prenatal care in Franklin County through several programs and services.

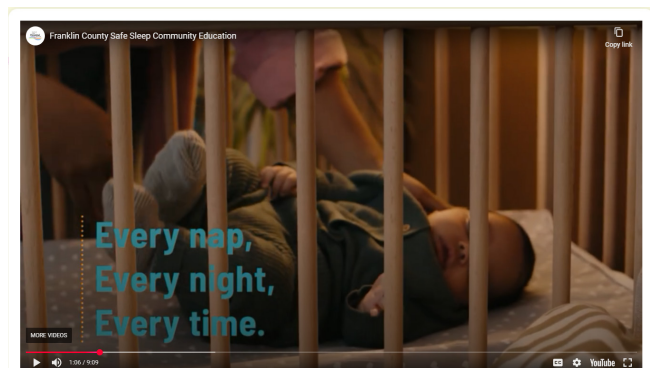
### INFANT MORTALITY

#### Safe Sleep

In Franklin County, 17 to 30 infants die each year unexpectedly due to sleep-related causes. A public service campaign remains in place to help inform and educate parents about baby sleep in the safest way to help them reach their first birthday. The Nationwide Children's Hospital Safe Sleep Consortium established a quality improvement collaborative that brings service lines that see patients less than 1 year old to improve education and connection to services related to safe sleep practice.

OBBO and community partners updated the safe sleep video that is shared at the birthing hospital after each

birth and created a site to house safe sleep resources at [safesleepohio.org](https://safesleepohio.org).



#### Infant Well Visits

Partners For Kids, Nationwide Children's accountable care organization, created a process to engage new Partners For Kids' moms who gave birth at the OhioHealth Doctors Hospital postpartum unit on

Columbus's West Side. The process was set up to ensure their baby's first medical appointment was scheduled prior to hospital discharge. This project is also anticipated to roll out at The Ohio State University hospitals' postpartum units by summer 2025.



## MATERNAL PRE-PREGNANCY, PREGNANCY AND POSTPARTUM HEALTH

Adolescent pregnancy and increased risks for adverse infant outcomes are associated with serious physical and social consequences for mothers. According to *HealthMap2025*, 7.4 infants per 1,000 live births did not make it to their first birthday in Franklin County. This is slightly higher than the rate of 6.9 per 1,000 births in 2022. The teen birth rate has significantly declined since the previous *HealthMap*. In 2022, it was 17.2 per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 and has decreased to 15.2 per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19.

### Decrease in Teen Pregnancy Rate in Franklin County

<i>HealthMap2022</i>	<b>17.2 per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19</b>
<i>HealthMap2025</i>	<b>15.2 per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19</b>

## Teen and Pregnant Program

When teens are pregnant, Nationwide Children's Teen and Pregnant (TaP) program offers assistance for healthy pregnancies. The program provides prenatal and postpartum care for pregnant women up to 21 years and 6 months. In the TaP program, participants receive health care; meet other young pregnant people; learn about safe sleep practices and ways to care for their baby; sign up for home visiting, WIC

and other programs; learn about how to have a healthy pregnancy and healthy habits; discover about balancing parenthood with school and relationships; and choose the best birth control after baby's birth to prevent another pregnancy. Partners For Kids created a process to follow up with TaP patients postpartum to check on the baby and see how the family was managing after completing the program.

## Ohio Better Birth Outcomes (OBBO)

Ohio Better Birth Outcomes (OBBO) is the lead partner of Franklin County's public-private partnership to reduce infant mortality, CelebrateOne. OBBO is a quality improvement collaborative that is accountable for health care system-based interventions across the prenatal and perinatal periods. OBBO's implementation activities are focused on improving prenatal care and connecting with upstream providers, expanding evidence-based home visiting and reproductive health planning (specifically accelerating access to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)) and maintaining clinical quality improvement initiatives to increase the use of progesterone in certain high-risk pregnancies.

## Home Visiting

Healthy Families America (HFA) and Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) serve as the two evidence-based home visiting programs in Franklin County. Nationwide Children's is one of the largest providers of both models, which operate as part of The Center for Family Safety and Healing. Program goals include improved birth outcomes, reduced prematurity and improved parent-child attachment and bonding. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) granted the five-year Catalyst for Infant Health Equity grant, under the Healthy Start initiative. The goals for this grant are to continue reducing overall infant mortality rates in the United States, and 2) to decrease and ultimately eliminate disparities in infant mortality across racial/ethnic groups by achieving steeper declines for groups with the highest rates. Through this opportunity, Nationwide Children's is able to provide funding to prenatal care clinics to hire community health workers who help connect families to needed services.

The Maternal-Infant Home Visitation Programs aim to improve pregnancy and infant health outcomes by promoting preventive health practices. As the program continues to grow, there are plans for expansion to target the 13 CelebrateOne zip codes throughout Franklin County.



## Maternal-Infant Home Visiting 2024 Outcomes

**1,491**  
Families served



**85%** Mothers received a depression screening

**86%** Infants breastfed  
by 1 year of age

**89%** Infants born  
full-term

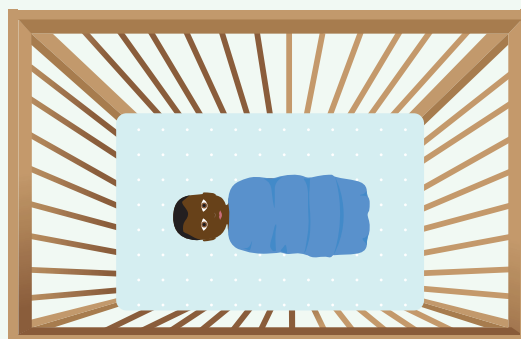
### To reduce the rates of infant mortality and enhance maternal health, Nationwide Children's will:

- Roll out Partners For Kids interventions at local well-baby nurseries in Nationwide Children's partner hospitals.
- Align OBBO funding to better involve community perspectives in the infant mortality work and support organizations that have an innovative approach to the work.
- Co-develop and implement, with community organizations/members and hospital leaders, a strategy for the community to directly communicate with hospital systems around prenatal care.
- Reduce sleep-related deaths by developing and implementing a community safe sleep marketing strategy that explains the importance of practicing safe sleep.
- Increase connection to perinatal services to women and families by expanding access to home visiting and other evidence-based perinatal supports through increased community health workers (CHWs) in prenatal care clinics trained in direct enrollment.

## Community Partners

- CelebrateOne
- Central Ohio Hospital Council
- Columbus Public Health
- Franklin County Public Health
- Heart of Ohio
- Health Impact Ohio
- Lower Lights
- Mount Carmel Health System
- OhioHealth
- Partners For Kids
- PrimaryOne Health
- Queens Village Columbus
- The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

**One way to reduce the risk of SIDS is to **always put your baby to sleep on their back**. Only 44% of parents do this at every sleep.**



# 5. Violence and Injury-Related Deaths

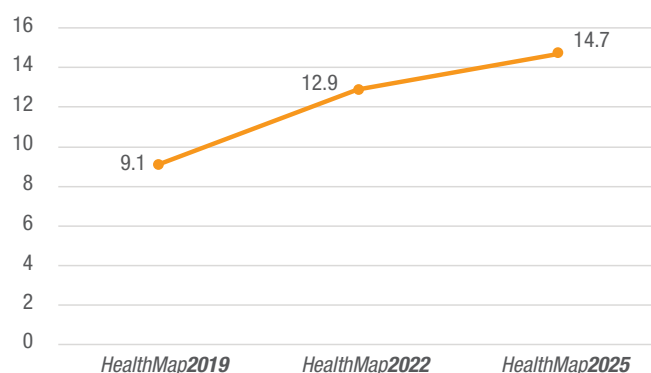
## Description:

Injury and violence affect everyone, regardless of age, race or economic status. According to the CDC, Americans aged 1 to 44 die from injuries and violence — such as motor vehicle crashes, suicide, overdoses or homicides — more than any other cause. Locally, *HealthMap2025* shows that while the leading causes of death among children in Franklin County have remained consistent over time, perinatal conditions continue to be the most frequent cause. Other leading causes of death for children include accidents, congenital conditions and assault.

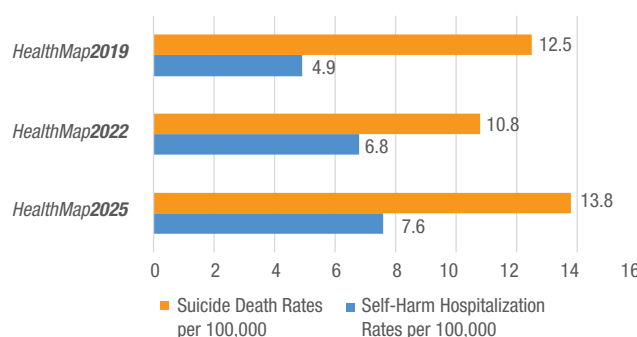
Notably, accidental deaths have been on the rise, increasing from 7.6 per 100,000 children in 2022 to 9.8 in 2025, making accidents the second leading cause of death among children ages 0 to 17.

This trend is mirrored by a broader increase in drug overdose deaths and deaths from alcohol-attributable causes since the last *HealthMap*. Alcohol use disorder frequently co-occurs with other mental health disorders. Compared to the last *HealthMap*, Franklin County residents whose deaths were 100% alcohol-attributable have increased and are particularly high among males, White (non-Hispanic) individuals and the elderly.

**Alcohol Attributable Deaths (Rate per 100,000)**



**Self-Harm and Suicide Rates (Rate per 100,000)**



Injuries due to firearms, whether intentional or accidental, are the highest rate of trauma hospitalizations for children ages 0 to 17 (14.8%). Hospitalizations due to self-harm and deaths from suicide have both increased in Franklin County since the last *HealthMap*. In 2023, the United States Surgeon General issued an advisory notice that warned Americans about an emerging public health crisis: the epidemic of loneliness, isolation and lack of connection. The suicide rate in Franklin County has risen to a rate of 13.8 per 100,000 people, above the Healthy People 2030 objective of 12.8 per 100,000.

## Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners

*HealthMap2025* data reports community members say stigma around depression can prevent people from getting help they need. People still fear negative perceptions around taking medications for depression. Generational and cultural attitudes around depression may also prevent helpful conversations around mental health. Nationwide Children's continues to work with mental health, public health and community partners to develop programs to prevent self-harm, violence, substance use and injury-related deaths.

## PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND INJURY RELATED DEATHS

**Safe Storage Saves Lives**

Safe storage of potentially harmful items is everyone's responsibility. It is hard to predict when someone might experience an emotional crisis, so keeping your home safe at all times is a smart decision. Suicidal thoughts can come on quickly in response to highly stressful situations, and in these moments, the brain does not think as clearly. By making sure that potentially harmful items are secured, you can get ahead and protect yourselves and your friends before a crisis can even start. **Don't do this alone.** Team up with your parent or caregiver and talk about safe storage.

**Firearms**  
Always store firearms unloaded in a safe or with a gun lock with ammo stored separately.

**Everyday Items**  
Tell a caregiver about anything that could cause serious harm to yourself or a friend and secure it.

**Medication**  
Keep only the medicine you need, store medicine in a secure place and dispose of old medicine.

**Communicate**  
Talk openly with a trusted adult about how you feel. It is important and sometimes feels uncomfortable, which is normal!

**Help is available 24/7**  
If you or a friend are experiencing suicidal thoughts call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or text "4HOPE" to the Crisis Text Line at 741-741. In an emergency, call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

### Firearm Injuries and Deaths

According to the CDC, unintentional injury is a leading cause of death among U.S. children and adolescents aged 0 to 17 years, and firearms are a leading injury method. Unsecured firearms (unlocked and loaded) are associated with the risk for unintended firearm injury death. This is a child mortality Pediatric Vital Sign, and reducing firearm related injuries and deaths is the greatest opportunity to impact the child mortality rate in Franklin County.

Behavioral health contributes to the Pediatric Vital Signs child mortality initiative by supporting screening efforts, promoting secure storage practices and distributing secure storage devices. Using electronic health records (EHR), departments can track distribution and usage of lockboxes, ensuring providers are utilizing them effectively. EHR data can also be used to ensure that all relevant information, including risk assessment and safety planning, is easily accessible for youth, families and providers. Departments will continue to expand the safe storage program to additional distribution points throughout Nationwide Children's to increase access and will begin follow-up surveys to assess device usage and injury prevention effectiveness.

### Safe Storage

Safe storage cable locks and lockboxes are provided free of charge to families interested in securing hazards in their homes. Devices are available in a variety of clinics at Nationwide Children's, including Social Work, Emergency Department, Behavioral Health Pavilion, surgical follow-up clinics, School-Based Health Centers, Primary Care and more.

**Since October 2020, 1,909 lockboxes have been provided to more than 1,800 families.**

Cable lock distribution began in January 2024, and 139 cable locks have been handed out. Patient Education created a Safe Storage Helping Hand in multiple languages.

### Safety City

Nationwide Children's and the City of Columbus Department of Neighborhoods partner every summer to host Safety City for central Ohio children ages 5 to 7. This free, four-day program is filled with active learning and features a safety village. The curriculum includes topics such as fire safety; vehicle, pedestrian and bike safety; school bus safety; firearm safety; and personal health and wellness. Upon completion of the program, each child receives a certificate of achievement during a graduation ceremony. Safety City Columbus is hosted in high-risk zip codes in Franklin County. Work continues to expand reach by exploring the programming for older students, condensed programming that can be offered in one day, and/or sessions throughout the school year. Since 2022, 686 children have completed the program.



## VOICE: Violence, Outreach, Intervention and Community Engagement

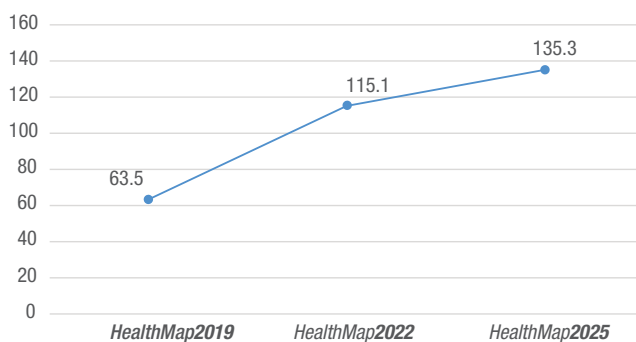
The VOICE: Violence, Outreach, Intervention and Community Engagement Program works alongside victims of crime to create positive change in their lives. The program is a collaboration between Clinical Medical Social Work, Trauma Program, Columbus Public Health and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department to implement at Nationwide Children's. To date, 13 patients have been referred, with five youth fully enrolled, and four pending enrollments.

## MENTAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH

During the past 20 years, drug overdose deaths have increased exponentially, with a particular spike noted in the COVID-19 pandemic. The rise in deaths is attributed to opioids, which includes prescription medications, heroin, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. The combination of opioids and other substances is a rising trend that can increase the potential of fatal overdose.

*HealthMap2025* shows that overdose rates in Franklin County continue to rise. The rate is significantly higher than both the Ohio rate of 98.1 per 100,000 residents, and the national figure of 70.9 per 100,000 residents. *HealthMap2025* does not specifically call out pediatric overdose rates.

**Overdose Mortality (Rate per 100,000 Residents)**



## DECREASED UNINTENTIONAL DRUG AND ALCOHOL DEATHS

### Naloxone Distribution and Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone)

Pediatric and adolescent overdose has increased due

to the increasing presence of illicitly manufactured fentanyl in the market supply. Many counterfeit pills, designed to look like prescription opioids or anti-anxiety medications, are laced with fentanyl, often without the user's knowledge. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimates 7 out of 10 pills or substances confiscated have fentanyl in them. Because of this, overdose is a high risk for anyone using an illicit substance or a pill not from their own prescription, especially if they are experimenting with a substance for the first time.

Adolescents with opioid use disorder are no longer the only group at risk; therefore, overdose education and naloxone distribution need to be expanded to a wider range of patients, not just those with substance use or opioid use disorder.

**Data also shows that in 2023, one-quarter of children were living in a household with at least one parent with a substance use disorder.**

To treat the child means to also treat the family, and many parents with a substance use disorder may be only interacting with the medical system by bringing their child to a medical appointment. Allowing parents to have access to overdose education and naloxone could save their child's life or their own.

Adolescent Medicine has been designated as an Opioid Education and Naloxone Distribution Program (OENDP) through the Ohio Department of Health Project DAWN initiative and was approved as a Project DAWN site in September 2024. Nationwide Children's is the only pediatric hospital in Ohio that is an OENDP. Patients and families can now receive overdose education and naloxone free of charge during an Adolescent Medicine visit.

Project DAWN is being implemented in Adolescent Medicine in cumulative steps.

- Step 1 introduces awareness materials, with posters in each clinic room and bathroom that read, "Ask Me About Free Naloxone." Patients can request naloxone during their visit, and a trained nurse, physician or social worker will provide education and a kit.
- Step 2 offers overdose education and a naloxone kit to patients who score above 2 on the Screening to Brief Intervention (S2BI) and CRAFFT (Car, Relax, Alone,

Forget, Friends, Trouble) intervention screener during their well visit, as their substance use places them at higher risk of overdose.

- Step 3 expands access by offering overdose education and naloxone to all adolescents during every well visit, regardless of screening results.

Beyond Adolescent Medicine, Project DAWN has also been implemented in the Treatment for Healthy Alternatives program and the Family AIDS Clinic and Educational Services (FACES) program. The pilot in Adolescent Medicine is part of a broader plan for thoughtful, system-wide implementation throughout Nationwide Children's with the goal of protecting patients, families and the community from overdose.

### Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center

All youth released from the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center (JIC) will receive overdose education, along with naloxone and fentanyl test strips, to help reduce the risk of overdose upon re-entry into the community.

The Center for Family Safety and Healing (TCFSH) is working to expand Project DAWN across additional service lines and clinics, including the JIC clinic. Through this expansion, TCFSH plans to distribute hundreds of overdose prevention kits containing fentanyl test strips, naloxone and education to youth and families.

Future plans include targeting clinics and service lines that serve adolescents and intersect with areas of high opioid use or overdose risk. TCFSH also plans to strengthen partnerships with alternate distribution sites and provide oversight and staff training to support consistent, effective implementation.

### To reduce the rate of violence and injury-related deaths, Nationwide Children's will:

- Increase percent of patient families who have received Safe Storage Screening, Education and Resources and/or VOICE referral, in all admitted injured patients, from 0% to 50% by December 2027.
- Decrease the Firearm Injury Rate\*, in children in Franklin County aged 1-19, from 11.24 to 8.75 per 100,000 by December 2027.

\* = Incidence of Fatal & Non-Fatal Firearm Injuries

among hospital-treated children residing in Franklin County aged 1-19

- Continue to refer patients to VOICE and work with Clinical Medical Social Work and VOICE partners to evaluate effectiveness of this program for youth and their families.
- Develop a Hospital Based Violence Interruption Program to provide a mid-level intervention to high-risk youth in the community.
- Build a predictive model to help identify/prioritize patients who would benefit from safe storage and/or violence interruption intervention.
- Increase the number of patients receiving overdose education and naloxone kits.
- Continue to expand Safety City programming by delivering services to at least six neighborhoods annually, while engaging entire households through take-home activities and safety equipment distribution.

### Community Partners

- All Paws Retreat
- City of Columbus
- Columbus City Schools
- Columbus Fire Department
- Columbus Public Health
- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department
- Franklin County Court Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch
- Franklin County Juvenile Detention Center
- Goldfish Swim School
- I Know I Can
- Ohio AAP
- Ohio Department of Health
- OhioHealth
- Ohio State Highway Patrol
- RealEyes
- The Center for Family Safety and Healing



## 6. Preventive Care

### Description:

According to *HealthMap2025*, many patients report visiting the emergency department multiple times for the same condition, indicating there may be a gap in either inpatient or follow-up care that drives frequent ED visits. Community members spoke about how difficulties finding providers who accept their insurance and long waitlists for appointments can lead individuals to use the emergency department for issues that could have been treated more affordably elsewhere. Additionally, many community members may not know about federally qualified health centers, where they can get more affordable care if they are uninsured. Community members also pointed out that a general lack of education about the medical system can lead individuals to use the ED for minor issues, and that more education is needed to ensure people seek the appropriate level of care for their health issues.

### Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners

Nationwide Children's has multiple programs in place to address asthma, diabetes and obesity, many of which are designed to empower patients and their families to manage their conditions. For children with asthma and diabetes, this has led to fewer emergency department visits and inpatient hospital treatment.

### PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

#### Improved Patient Access

According to *HealthMap2025*, the diagnoses associated with emergency department use are an important indicator of health care access in the community. Many concerns treated in the emergency department might have been treated by a primary care provider, but patients often report being unable to access that first line of treatment in a timely manner. Demographic variables such as low socioeconomic status are also associated with non-urgent use of the emergency department. Establishing a primary care provider is one of the best ways to help manage chronic conditions. Primary care providers become the main point of contact and can help patients stay out of emergency departments for routine health care.

Nationwide Children's is working to expand access to Primary Care services. This is especially important during high-volume times of year, like RSV and flu seasons. Plans include expanding Northland Primary Care, relocating Whitehall Primary Care to a larger facility, and hiring additional physicians and staff. Primary Care developed surge plans for high-volume surge times like flu and RSV seasons. During these times, additional sick visits are made available, more clinics are added and walk-in access is expanded.

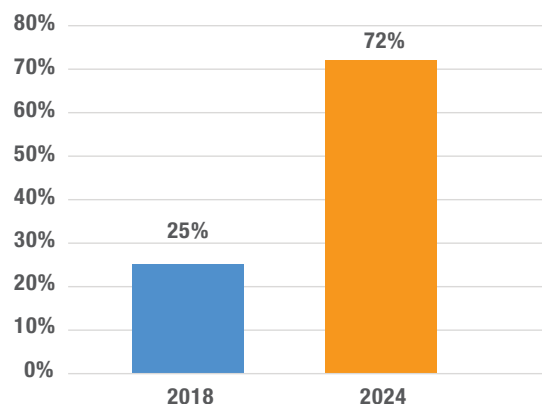
Nationwide Children's Primary Care Centers optimize

patient access by utilizing flexible and patient-friendly scheduling. This supports timely completion of well visits and immunizations, and provides access to sick care that decreases emergency department and urgent care visit rates. Primary Care implemented online scheduling for nearly every visit type and chief complaint. This enhances the family experience by making it easier to schedule appointments, while also reducing the burden on the scheduling team making appointments. Primary Care also added Speech Therapy, Integrated Dentistry, Behavioral Health and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics to hub office sites.

#### Patient-Provider Continuity

Another way to improve patient satisfaction is to increase the continuity between patients and providers during preventive care visits. This is a challenging initiative in academic settings, given the non-clinical aspects many academic pediatricians have. Patient-provider continuity during preventive care visits increased from 25% in 2018 to 72% in 2024. This improves patient outcomes, enhances patient experience and increases provider satisfaction.

**Patient-Provider Continuity During Preventive Care Visits Increase**

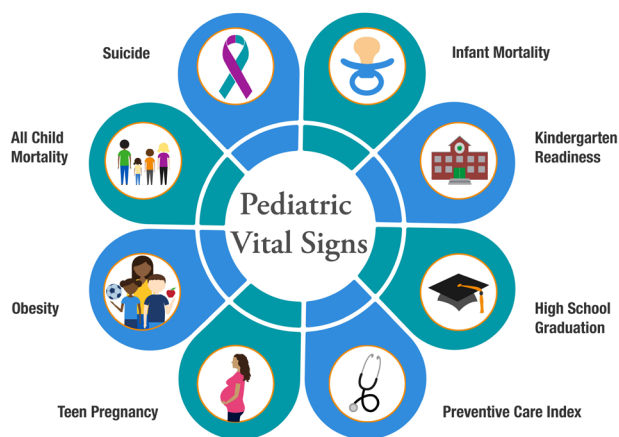


## Adolescent Depression and Suicide

This project began by standardizing screening for depression and suicide at all preventive care visits for patients aged 12 and older. Primary Care achieved success implementing a reliable process for screening. The team is working to improve the management and care provided after a positive depression or suicide screen and have reached goals in this area.

## Pediatric Vital Signs

Pediatric Vital Signs is an initiative to improve outcomes for not only the patients seen in Primary Care offices, but also the entire pediatric population of Franklin County. The Primary Care Network leads the preventive care index section of the Vital Signs project, which focuses on five HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set) measures around well care and immunization series completion. Other Vital Signs projects are led by other teams but involve the preventive care team. They focus on kindergarten readiness, high school graduation, infant and child mortality, suicide, obesity and teen pregnancy. HEDIS measures are a set of standardized performance measures used to assess the quality of care provided by health plans. These measures cover various aspects of health care, including effectiveness of care, access to care, patient experience and more.



## Reducing Urgent Care and Emergency Department Visits

Primary Care is working to decrease Emergency Department and Urgent Care visits for follow-up care. Efforts include collaborating with Urgent Care to get Primary Care Network patients who require a follow-

up appointment to leave Urgent Care with a scheduled appointment.

## Care Navigation and Patient Outreach

The Care Navigation Program helps families by making it easier to access care. Care Navigation team members work with schools, insurance companies, community groups and the health care team to help the child get what they need. Care Navigation is for children and families with complex medical problems or special health care needs. These families may have many people involved with their children's health care, such as specialists, homecare nurses and schools. It is also for those who come to the doctor's office, emergency department or hospital a lot.

Services include making sure all who are involved with the child have the information they need; helping fix current problems and preventing new ones from occurring; lessening the burden on families related to the child's health conditions; helping families know the right questions to ask and understanding the next steps to take; and getting medicine, supplies and other items families need to be healthy.

## Social Determinants of Health Screening

Primary Care implemented screening for social determinants of health (SDoH) at any visit — if the screening had not been completed within the past 12 months — several years ago. Recently, screening practices have changed to align with a uniform hospital-wide screening tool. Social Work and clinic teams provide resources to families when indicated. In 2024, more than 240,000 screenings were completed.

## Community Health Workers and Parent Coaches

In 2022, Primary Care piloted a community health worker program at the Linden Primary Care Center. The Primary Care Network is also in the middle of a five-year research project to assess the impact of parent coaches being integrated into well-child visits for children ages three and under. Primary Care plans to continue expansion of the community health worker and parent coach programs to support families with education, advocacy and connection to community-based resources. This program has expanded into seven Primary Care locations and five partner prenatal care clinics (OhioHealth, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Lower Lights Christian Health Center, PrimaryOne Health). Expansion of this program will continue in both pediatric Primary Care and prenatal care settings.

## School-Based Health Programs

Nationwide Children's operates one of the most comprehensive school-based health programs in the United States, which has an important, positive impact on the children of central Ohio. The school-based health centers offer health care to students, families and community members. Providers work on-site to provide primary care services, mental health counseling, asthma therapy care and more. Throughout 2022 and 2024, the amount of well visits and immunizations provided at school-based health centers has increased significantly, reflecting its expanding reach. By embedding these services directly within schools, the program removes several critical barriers to care, meeting students where they are, to ensure their health needs are addressed in a timely and supportive environment.

School-based Health Well Visits and Vaccinations		
Year	Well Visits	Vaccines
2022	2,707	6,035
2023	3,093	11,219
2024	4,453	16,208
Total	10,253	33,462

- Primary Care continues to focus on screening for mental health needs. School-based health centers are identified as a key strategic area to do this. This will occur through the continuation of school-based telehealth mental health primary care program. Primary Care will partner with Psychiatry to provide access to comprehensive integrated mental health within the school setting through a peer consultation and telehealth program.
- Nationwide Children's offers significant school-based support programs for asthma and diabetes care. These programs are covered in detail in the preventive care section of the Implementation Strategy.
- Primary care and school-based care provide vision, dental and other preventive care services for students in communities where primary care clinics are difficult to access. Increasing access to these services remains a priority to expand care to students who may not have established providers or lack access to these types of care.

## Health Initiatives for Justice-Involved Families

Nearly 70% of young people in juvenile detention centers have an unmet health care need. These centers

are designed for short stays while a case is adjudicated or other arrangements are found, but some people stay weeks, months or years. The Center for Family Safety and Healing and Nationwide Children's work closely with Juvenile Intervention Center (JIC) residents to support health education and other health initiatives.

Plans include expanding existing health education programming by utilizing three separate Nationwide Children's departments (Community Wellness, School-Based Health and The Center for Family Safety and Healing) to facilitate needed health education in the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center. Each department has its own area of expertise, trainers approved by the facility, and programming approved by the administration. Programming will increase during the summer months, winter breaks and spring breaks from Columbus City Schools to minimize the amount of idle time residents have in their rooms and maximize the capacity of the educators.

The second focus involves providing holistic, family-centered support for Franklin County minors with interactions with juvenile or criminal court through Partners For Kids Care Navigation. This will be accomplished by staffing a full-time licensed therapist to engage in group and individual therapeutic sessions for any resident of the JIC. Nationwide Children's plans to collaborate with the JIC's staffing systems to supplement the services each youth receives and not duplicate efforts.

Over the last three years, Partners For Kids focused on enrolling JIC residents in care navigation and helping them meet their self-identified goals, including gaining access to medical care, educational programs and meeting basic resource needs. Partners For Kids will continue this work with current and former JIC residents, as well as expand the service population by accepting referrals for youth who are not currently incarcerated but who are court-involved.

## To improve access to preventive care, Nationwide Children's will:

- Improve on the five Health care Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures around well care and immunization series completion.
- Increase capacity to support 260,000 Primary Care visits per year.
- Expand SDoH screening to all outpatient locations.



- Begin implementation of SDoH screening via MyChart.
- Expand the community health worker program to all Nationwide Children's Primary Care locations and four additional partner prenatal care clinics, primary care and prenatal care settings.
- Increase participation in health education (including hygiene, healthy relationships, reproductive health and opioid overdose information) in the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center, particularly focusing on reaching Black adolescents at risk for human trafficking.
- Increase participation in therapeutic interventions designed to build resiliency and coping skills through group and individual cognitive behavioral therapy for youth incarcerated in the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center.
- Expand Care Coordination efforts by decreasing eligibility requirements and developing additional promotional materials and resources.
- Continue and expand Primary Care mental health in school-based health centers as well as telehealth appointments with Psychiatry.
- Improve access to well child visits and immunizations through school-based health centers and increase patient access from 17,000 visits to 20,000 visits per year.
- Open three new school-based centers to increase access to health care.
- Implement community roving vaccine clinics to improve immunization rates.
- Expand access to school-based vision and dental services within community sites.

## DENTAL CARE ACCESS

Oral health plays an important role in a person's physical, mental, social and economic well-being. Poor oral health has been associated with a variety of health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, pregnancy and birth complications and pneumonia. Therefore, equitable access to dental care is critical to ensure optimal health. *HealthMap2025* cited factors or barriers that contribute to people not seeking dental care, including fear, embarrassment, low priority, scheduling challenges and cost. Lack of emergency dental services also are cited as a factor. From *HealthMap2022* to *HealthMap2025*, fewer children aged 3 to 18 needed dental care but could not secure it, at 3.3% in 2025, down from 3.9% in 2022.



### Teledentistry

To remove barriers to timely care and increase access to dental clinicians and expertise, Nationwide Children's will continue to lean on innovative and emerging technology such as teledentistry. This program has already improved access for patients, and Nationwide Children's will continue to expand this program in meaningful and impactful ways to better provide care to patients. By utilizing teledentistry, Nationwide Children's has demonstrated the ability to prevent redundant or unnecessary appointments. Using this experience, the team will use teledentistry to expand their ability to reach patients and families who could benefit from the remote services provided.

### Improve Patient Access

As Nationwide Children's and the Dental Clinic continue to grow, the team will find ways to enhance systems and protocols to ensure efficient and safe patient care. The team is actively looking for opportunities to expand the clinical footprint in the outpatient and

operating room settings and will continue to explore avenues to increase access. Plans are underway for an expansion of the clinical footprint, which would allow growth into new spaces to enhance services and increase the ability to see patients in the community. A business plan has been submitted to expand the dental clinic to adjacent clinical spaces.

### **Improve Internal and External Referral Systems for Specialty Dental Care**

Building on relationships within the hospital and with dental services provided by specialty clinics at The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Dentistry, Nationwide Children's is working to decrease the roadblocks that prevent efficient and timely referrals. The team will continue to leverage existing referral networks within the hospital, providing efficient access to medical specialties at Nationwide Children's. Working with OSU colleagues, the Dental Clinic is implementing direct referrals using their updated integrated dental electronic health record within Epic. As early adopters of this novel inter-institutional referral system, the team hopes to provide effective referrals to dental specialties at OSU to ensure patients receive the care they need for best outcomes.

### **Provide More Significant Social Work Support and Increase Dental Informatics Program**

With the hiring of a full-time social worker dedicated to the Dental Clinic, Nationwide Children's will be able to support enhanced coverage to help patients and families. This additional support will ensure families

have greater access to resources that will help them thrive, improving overall health and social outcomes for patients and their communities.

### **Making Professionals Able Through Immersion**

Nationwide Children's Dental Clinic is using approved grant funding to adapt existing clinic rooms to provide sensory adjuncts to clinical spaces. The team is concurrently applying for additional grant funding to further this support for patients who require it.

### **To improve access to pediatric preventive and restorative dental care, Nationwide Children's will:**

- Continue to support the teledentistry program to ensure best access for patients.
- Increase access through expansion and operational efficiency.
- Implement upgraded systems in Epic and operational processes to enhance and improve communication with referred providers.
- Apply for funding to allow for dental informatics integration into the training program.
- Enhance ability to create a sensory-aware environment for patient treatment.



## **Community Partners**

- Access Columbus
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters Columbus
- City of Columbus, Department of Neighborhoods
- Columbus City Schools
- Columbus Health Department
- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department
- Cristo Rey Columbus High School
- Directions for Youth
- KIPP Academy
- Mobile Experience (H.O.M.E. Coach)
- National Youth Advocate Program
- Ohio Department of Health
- South-Western City Schools
- The Ohio State University College of Dentistry
- The Ohio State University Dental Health Outreach
- The Ohio State University's Early Childhood Head Start
- The Ohio State University Nisonger Center
- United Way of Central Ohio
- Village Network
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- YWCA Family Shelters

## 7. Disease Management

### *Description:*

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects people's lungs and is one of the most common long-term diseases among children. Environmental health factors such as outdoor air pollution (e.g., ozone, particulate matter) have been associated with increased asthma symptoms. A recent analysis of asthma prevalence by poverty status revealed that among Franklin County residents living in poverty, 22.7% of adults and 18.8% of children have been diagnosed with asthma.

Diabetes is more common among older adults than younger adults. Diabetes prevalence is higher in most Franklin County zip codes that are within the I-270 corridor, except for those zip codes in the northwestern quadrant. Community members report that diabetes is at the forefront of their chronic condition concerns. They perceive rates of diabetes to be increasing among youth and noted it co-occurs with other chronic conditions.

Obesity is another chronic concern that can lead to type 2 diabetes. Nationwide Children's has identified pediatric obesity as a pediatric health concern. According to the CDC, from 2017 to March 2020, the prevalence of obesity among U.S. children and adolescents was 19.7%. This means that approximately 14.7 million U.S. youths aged 2 to 19 years have obesity.

According to the CDC, sickle cell disease (SCD) affects about 100,000 people in the United States. Many people with SCD do not receive the recommended health care screenings and treatments. For those reasons, Nationwide Children's has identified SCD as a disease management priority.

### **Nationwide Children's Programs and Partners**

Nationwide Children's has multiple programs in place to address asthma, diabetes obesity and sickle cell disease, many of which are designed to empower patients and their families to manage their conditions. For children with asthma and diabetes, this has led to fewer emergency department visits and inpatient hospital treatment.

### **ASTHMA**

#### **Asthma Quality Improvement Efforts in Primary Care**

Quality improvement (QI) efforts within Nationwide Children's Primary Care Centers focus on using any visit as an opportunity to assess asthma status. Asthma Control Tests (ACT) were given to asthma patients at more than 85% of their Primary Care Network visits. The ACT includes five questions that help health care providers determine if a child's asthma symptoms are well controlled.

Partners For Kids, Nationwide Children's accountable care organization, is responsible for more than 370,000 lives of children on Medicaid. It has continued providing quality improvement coaching to Primary Care practices to optimize asthma management for patients seen in the

primary care office, aligning with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) 2020 revised asthma guidelines. Through these QI projects, practices can receive expert guidance from Partners For Kids QI specialists and pharmacists as well as asthma and allergy specialists affiliated with Nationwide Children's.

The Partners For Kids QI Coaching Team works with practices to customize the care provided to patients. Areas of focus could include administering an ACT at every office visit, providing updated Asthma Action Plans annually, arranging follow-up visits for asthma every six months, and utilizing pharmacy data for patients with persistent asthma. This data includes proportion of days covered, which measures medication adherence based on pharmacy fills, and the Asthma Pharmacy Profile, which measures risks based on prescriptions for controller medication, reliever medication and oral steroids; asthma follow-up; asthma-related emergency department visits or hospitalizations.

The team will continue to utilize asthma risk scores, calculated based on predictive models developed by the Nationwide Children's Hospital Data Science Program, to identify Primary Care patients at increased risk for poor asthma outcomes for more intensive interventions (referral to community asthma programs, referral to asthma specialty care.)



Additional measures include utilizing the teach back method for asthma education in the Asthma Specialty Clinic within the Primary Care Network.

### Reduced Emergency Department Visits

Nationwide Children's continued quality improvement work on asthma in the Primary Care Network. Two initiatives were documented and published in national medical journals.

The first, published in *Pediatrics*, focused on reducing emergency department (ED) visits for asthma. By implementing a long-term quality improvement program, the hospital achieved a 33% drop in asthma-related ED visits over nine years.

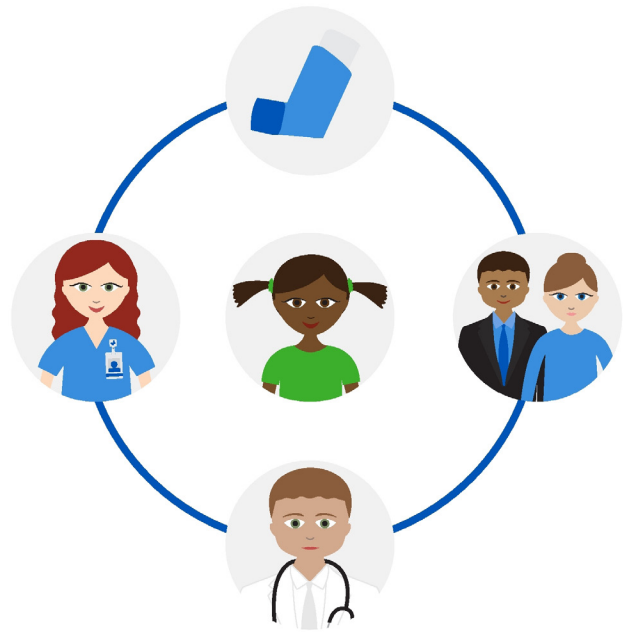
The second, featured in *The Journal of Asthma*, introduced a predictive tool to identify children at risk for asthma emergencies. The model showed strong results and can be adapted to different health care systems by adjusting for local data.

### School-Based Asthma Therapy (SBAT)

School-Based Asthma Therapy (SBAT) helps children with poorly controlled asthma, marked by frequent or severe symptoms at school or frequent exacerbations requiring urgent therapy. The program promotes communication among the school, caregiver and health care provider. It focuses on ensuring children are taking their routine controller therapy (medications that help prevent asthma symptoms). Participating schools assist by administering a portion of the students' controller doses at school.

Results of improved asthma control and health care utilization for children enrolled in the SBAT program were documented in "School-based asthma therapy: Improving medication adherence, asthma control, and health care utilization," published in *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: Global* in January 2025. A recent study published in *JACI: Global* showed big improvements for kids in the program:

- Asthma control improved by up to **56%**
- Emergency room visits dropped by **49%**
- Hospital stays were cut by **50%**
- ICU admissions fell by **71%**



### Pulmonary Clinic and Asthma Care

In addition to Primary Care, the Pulmonary team supports asthma care. The team increased capacity of recently developed continuous albuterol pathway on the floor from two to four patients. The program was expanded to include patients on both the Pulmonary Service and the Hospital Pediatrics Service.

Pulmonary developed an Epic-based tool for adrenal suppression monitoring. They provided education to a multidisciplinary Pulmonary team and will regularly track the use of this tool in the Pulmonary clinic. If successful, Pulmonary will consider utilizing the tool in other asthma clinics.

In 2025, Project ECHO's pediatric asthma series, an educational telementoring program, will roll out for primary care providers. Online asthma education tools and webinars will be developed to be accessible by primary care providers.

### To keep children out of the hospital and minimize the impact of asthma on children's well-being, Nationwide Children's will:

- Expand access for continuous albuterol in a non-intensive care setting.
- Improve medication side effect monitoring in patients with asthma at Nationwide Children's.
- Improve asthma education among primary care providers.

- Improve utilization of the Asthma Control Test for asthma patients followed as outpatients in Nationwide Children's.
- Continue School-Based Asthma Therapy (SBAT) Program with 75% of patients who improve Asthma Control Test (ACT).

## Community Partners

- Columbus City Schools
- Ohio Association of School Nurses
- Partners For Kids
- Reynoldsburg City Schools
- South-Western City Schools

## DIABETES

Nationwide Children's diabetes program continually strives to improve and expand the comprehensive outpatient care it offers to children with the disease. The program's overall goal is to provide patients and their families with needed care and the tools to self-manage diabetes, resulting in independent, healthy and active lives. According to the CDC, cases of type 2 diabetes continue to rise among youth ages 10 to 19 years. A study published in *JAMA Network Open* in 2023 indicated the COVID-19 pandemic may have led to a 62% increase in the rate of new-onset type 2 diabetes in youth.

### Health Equity Among T1D Patients Using Glucose Technology

The incidence of type 1 diabetes is increasing in the United States across all populations. The team is examining technology use as a potentially modifiable and effective intervention to reduce inequity in glycemic outcomes. The goal is to reduce the inequity in technology use, as measured using continuous glucose monitor (CGM) and insulin pump utilization rates. This will be accomplished by standardizing educational materials for CGM and pumps, translating educational materials into highly utilized languages, utilizing Epic best practice alerts to remind providers of qualifications for CGM/pumps, making verbal translation services available in clinic, providing early access to CGMs through sample program at diagnosis and creating a quality improvement project to track and organize efforts.

Since the last *HealthMap*, Nationwide Children's reached the goal of eliminating inequity in CGM utilization among White and Black patient populations.

### Improve health equity among T1D patients use of glucose technology

Nationwide Children's created the Diabetes and School Health, or DASH, program in 2021. A specially trained team meets with students enrolled in the program monthly at their schools and coordinates ongoing care with school nurses.

The program is now available at 65 schools across 12 districts in central Ohio, plus another 12 charter schools. Among the program's biggest successes is an increase in the use of continuous glucose monitors from 16% of eligible students to 81%. The goal is to reach a 1.0 ratio for both CGM (continuous glucose monitor) and insulin pump, meaning there is no disparity in utilization between White type 1 diabetes patients and Black type 1 diabetes patients.

### Turner Syndrome Clinic

Turner syndrome is a genetic condition when a female is either missing one X chromosome entirely or has a structural abnormality in one X chromosome. Turner syndrome is also associated with increased risk of type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Nationwide Children's opened a new clinic for patients with Turner syndrome. This clinic supports streamlined care for patients with Turner syndrome and provides access to experts in subspecialties including Endocrinology, Gynecology, Genetics, Nephrology, Psychology, Audiology, Social Work and others.

### American Diabetes Association Education Recognition Program

Nationwide Children's was recognized by the American Diabetes Association Education Recognition Program. The program provides a framework for effective delivery of quality diabetes self-management education and support (DSME) through the national standards of DSME.

### To improve the quality of life for patients with chronic pediatric diabetes, allowing them to live as normal a life as possible, Nationwide Children's will:

- Expand access to adult transition services by partnering with The Ohio State University Adult Endocrinology to sign an additional joint recruit.

- Grow volume at offsite locations, including adding an advanced practice nurse (APN) to establish Endocrinology and adult transition services at the new Worthington *Close To Home<sup>SM</sup>* Center.
- Improve microalbumin testing among diabetes patients through routine urine collection in all diabetes patients, previsit planning to ensure patients are identified prior to their clinic visit and add an LPIP.
- Continue Diabetes and School Health (DASH) Program with an increase in number of patients with a glucose monitor and insulin pump.

### Community Partners

- American Diabetes Association
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Central Ohio Diabetes Association
- Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools
- Children's Hunger Alliance
- City Year
- Columbus City Schools, South-Western City Schools and 29 other local school districts in Franklin and surrounding counties
- Columbus Metro Parks
- Columbus Public Health
- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department
- Community Development for All People
- Franklin Park Conservatory
- Junior League of Columbus Inc.
- Juvenile Diabetes Foundation
- Kroger
- Local Matters
- Mid-Ohio Food Collective
- Ohio Association of School Nurses
- Ohio Department of Health
- Philip Heit Center for Healthy New Albany
- Primary Care Practices
- The Salvation Army
- YMCA of Central Ohio

## OBESITY

Obesity affects 14 million children (19%) in the United States. Children with obesity often have risk factors for other health complications, such as heart disease and diabetes. These can persist or worsen if they remain overweight or obese into adulthood. Unfortunately, there is no countywide assessment of childhood overweight or obesity for youth, ages 2-17, for Franklin County.

### Bariatric Surgery

For adolescent patients who have not achieved their desired weight loss through lifestyle changes, weight-loss surgery is an option. The Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition offers three types of bariatric surgeries: gastric sleeve, gastric bypass and laparoscopic adjustable band surgeries. The metabolic and bariatric surgery program at Nationwide Children's was the first adolescent-only center in the U.S. to earn accreditation by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP) in 2015. This nationally accredited certification acknowledges Nationwide Children's ongoing commitment to provide and support quality improvement initiatives, including patient safety efforts, in children with severe obesity undergoing surgical intervention. The Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition received their reaccreditation in 2018 and 2022. The center performed 56 bariatric surgeries between 2022 to 2024.

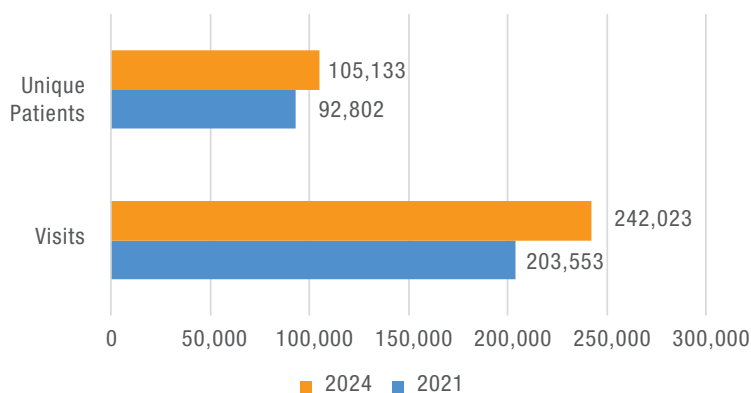
### Patient Retention Rates

Children with obesity often have risk factors for other health complications, such as heart disease and diabetes. These can persist or worsen if they remain overweight or obese in adulthood. As a way of enhancing patient engagement and improving our outcomes, the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition (CHWN) worked to improve their patient contact to three more visits within six months. More than 73% of the center's established patients have successfully achieved three or more visits within six months. Since 2021, this has resulted in an 8% increase in the number of patients who achieved three or more visits in a six-month period.

Patient access continues to be a major focus as patient demand has increased. Visits to Nationwide Children's 14 Primary Care Centers increased from 203,553 (2021) to 242,023 (2024). Unique patients increased from 92,802 (2021) to 105,133 (2024). Plans for more

engagement include expanding educational outreach by primary care and subspecialty clinics, enhancing telehealth services (individual or group), and building sub-specialty partnerships for new models of care or pathways.

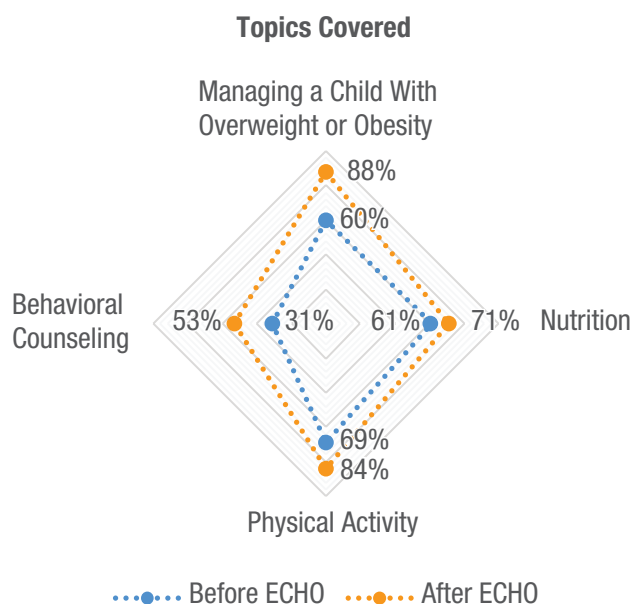
**Patient Retention Rates: 2021 vs. 2024**



## Project ECHO: Obesity

The Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition (CHWN) developed and implemented an obesity-focused training program for pediatric clinicians using the Extension for Community Health care Outcomes (ECHO) platform, a national practice model that uses case-based learning to train health care clinicians. The ECHO obesity core curriculum is an eight-session series on assessment and management of childhood obesity. Topics include implementing lifestyle interventions; motivational interviewing and counseling techniques for parenting, nutrition, and physical activity; coding and billing for obesity-related visits, pharmacotherapy, and bariatric surgery. Since 2021, the ECHO program has trained more than 100 health care clinicians. After the eight-week series, ECHO participants reported an increase in knowledge for managing a child with overweight or obesity (60% vs 88%), nutrition (61% vs 71%), physical activity (69% vs 84%), and behavioral counseling (31% vs 53%).

**Knowledge Increase Due to ECHO Series**





## Community-Based Programming Approach for Obesity

Nationwide Children's Hospital Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition (CHWN) serves as an integrator for Nationwide Children's Pediatric Vital Sign (PVS) obesity initiative. Because obesity has a complex multifactorial etiology, prevention and treatment efforts must happen across multiple sectors to have the greatest impact. Thus, the center's PVS obesity initiative has focused on clinic-community integration for synergy. PVS obesity is measuring change in overweight and obesity among children ages 2 through 17 years seen at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Primary Care Network and School-Based Health Centers, which has seen a 4% decrease (44% vs 40%) since 2021.

## Establish Community Partnerships to Improve Obesity Results

The center partners with community organizations to increase healthy food access, promote nutrition and physical activity education and expand resources on healthy lifestyle habits to improve the health of the community.



Since its inception in 2022, the center has partnered with Columbus City Schools, Nationwide Children's School-Based Health Centers and Local Matters to deliver lunch and learn sessions at five Columbus City Schools locations, impacting more than 300 students. The primary aim of the lunch and learn series is to collaboratively deliver health interventions, with a focus on nutrition and physical activity, to at-risk high school students in low-income, resource-limited communities. These

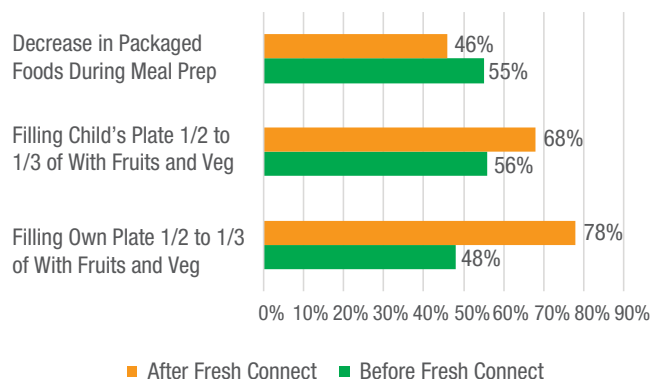
interventions involved introducing students to healthy food choices, promoting mindful decision-making and emphasizing the value of physical activity. To encourage behavior change and offer additional resource support, meal kits were provided after each lunch and learn session. These kits included all the ingredients for families to recreate the same meal at home.

The center partners with Local Matters, a nonprofit organization, to educate children and their families about nutritious food: how to cook it, how to grow it and how to access it affordably. In partnership with a local community center, free community cooking classes are offered monthly, reaching nearly 700 individuals between 2022 to 2024.

In 2023, the center partnered with Local Matters on a pilot program called Fresh Connect. The pilot established an electronic system to allow low-income families living within the Linden area zip codes of 43211 and 43224 to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from the Mobile Farmers Market or a local grocery store. In addition to grocery tours, nutrition education and counseling, the six-month pilot program provided \$150 per month for each family to make purchases of fresh produce. After the six-month pilot, caregivers self-reported an increase in filling a third to half of their plate with fruits and vegetables other and potatoes (48% vs 78%), and an increase in filling one-third to one-half of their child's plate with fruits and vegetables other and potatoes (56% to 68%). Additionally, caregivers reported a decrease in packaged foods in their meals prepared at home (55% vs 46%).

The center is the convener for The Healthy Kids Coalition of Central Ohio (HKC), which works to implement multi-level strategies targeting policies, systems and environmental changes to improve the lifestyles and health of all children in central Ohio.

## Fresh Connect Lifestyle Changes



## To reduce or prevent pediatric obesity and to help children already facing this chronic condition, Nationwide Children's will:

- Continue to decrease prevalence of overweight and obesity among children ages 2 through 17 years seen at the Nationwide Children's Hospital Primary Care Network and School-Based Health Centers.
- Maintain ECHO Obesity Framework by increasing physician knowledge and comfort with weight management treatment modalities and comorbidities associated with obesity.
- Improve patient engagement by maintaining the percent of children with an average number of treatment contacts to three or more visits in six months and increasing the percent of children with an average number of treatment contacts to four or more visits in six months.
- Continue partnerships with six to eight community organizations to address: 1) food access, 2) nutrition education and programming, and 3) physical activity education and programming.
- Maintain Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program for adolescent bariatric surgery as demonstrated by 45 bariatric surgery cases in the next three years.

## Community Partners

- American Heart Association
- CareSource Foundation
- Central Ohio Primary Care (COPC) Network
- Central Ohio Youth Sports Collaborative
- Children's Hunger Alliance
- Columbus City Schools
- Columbus Public Health
- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department
- Franklin County Public Health
- LiFEsports at The Ohio State University
- Local Matters
- Ohio State University Extension
- Primary Care Practices/Community pediatricians
- St. Stephen's Community House
- YMCA of Central Ohio

## SICKLE CELL DISEASE

According to the CDC, sickle cell disease (SCD) affects about 100,000 people in the United States. Many people with SCD do not receive the recommended health care screenings and treatments.

Sickle cell anemia is type of sickle cell disease that is typically most severe and is a common cause of childhood stroke. While a National Institutes of Health's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) panel recommended youth ages 2 to 16 years who have sickle cell anemia receive annual screenings to identify their risk for stroke, a 2019 CDC study of children and teens enrolled in Medicaid found that less than half received the recommended stroke screening.

The NHLBI panel also recommended youth 9 months or older with SCA be offered treatment with hydroxyurea, a medication shown to prevent or reduce severe pain episodes, acute chest syndrome, and other SCA-associated complications and to increase patient survival. The CDC study findings showed less than half of children ages 2 to 9 were using hydroxyurea and about one-half of youth 10–16 years used hydroxyurea. These findings highlight the ongoing gaps in health care for people with SCD and speak to the urgent need to address barriers to care.

In response, Nationwide Children's is working to establish the Sickle Cell Outreach in Schools (SCOUTS) Program to address gaps in care and reduce the negative impacts of sickle cell disease on students. By providing educational opportunities, care management and medication monitoring – right at school – the program hopes to decrease absences, improve graduation rates, limit avoidable health care visits and improve overall well-being. SCOUTS is piloting in select central Ohio schools through 2025, with the goal of continued staffing and expansion to more than 200 enrollees by 2029.

### **To reduce or prevent pediatric sickle cell disease and to help children already facing this chronic condition, Nationwide Children's will:**

- Launch Sickle Cell outreach in schools SCOUTS program to provide sickle cell care in their community at school.



## Conclusion

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To address the community needs identified by community representatives and the Franklin County *HealthMap2025*, Nationwide Children's will commit to the Implementation Strategies identified in the document. In addition, the mission of the hospital will continue to guide Nationwide Children's in its daily efforts to create the best outcomes and provide the highest quality of care to every child and family with which it comes in contact.

Nationwide Children's will maintain its inclusive endeavors for improving care and serving the community by taking a considered and detailed approach to addressing access to basic needs including housing security, financial stability, mental health, ACEs, maternal and infant health, violence and injury-related deaths, preventive care access and disease management.

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