



2025-2027 Toledo Implementation Strategy



NATIONWIDE
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| TOLEDO

Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Strategy 2025-2027

Nationwide Children's Hospital - Toledo is committed to improving access to world-class pediatric care services in northwest Ohio, while collaborating with community partners to expand education, resources and support for children and families across the region. Located inside Mercy Health – St. Vincent Medical Center, the children's hospital offers a wide range of specialty services and general pediatric primary care throughout the community.

Since arriving in 2022, Nationwide Children's - Toledo has welcomed more than 50 new pediatric providers to its team of experts, introduced over 13 new services to the community and strengthened its commitment to local population health initiatives addressing the broader factors impacting child health and well-being.

Nationwide Children's - Toledo is a proud extension of Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, ranked among America's top 10 children's hospitals. In developing its Community Health Needs Assessment, Nationwide Children's - Toledo has defined the community it serves as the residents of Lucas County. Nearly 53.1% of the hospital's inpatient discharges and 51.1% of inpatient gross charges are from residents of Lucas County.

Nationwide Children's - Toledo was among several community partners involved with Healthy Lucas County. The mission of Healthy Lucas County is to improve the health and quality of life for Lucas County residents through data collection and planning that mobilizes collaborative partnerships to develop and implement strategic action in Lucas County and create health equity.

The 2022/2023 Healthy Lucas County Executive Committee includes:

- Advocates for Basic Legal Equality
- Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio
- Board of Lucas County Commissioners
- City of Toledo
- CWA Local 4319
- Connecting Kids to Meals
- Health Partners of Western Ohio
- Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio
- LISC Toledo
- Lucas County Department of Job & Family Services
- Lucas Metropolitan Housing
- Mental Health & Recovery Services Board of Lucas County
- Mercy Health
- NAACP 3204
- Nationwide Children's Hospital - Toledo
- Neighborhood Health Association
- ProMedica
- Toledo Fire & Rescue
- Toledo/Lucas County CareNet
- Toledo-Lucas County Health Department
- Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board
- Toledo Public Schools
- United Way of Greater Toledo
- University of Toledo Medical Center
- YMCA of Greater Toledo
- YWCA of Northwest Ohio

The *2024-2027 Lucas County Community Health Improvement Plan* (herein referenced as *2024-2027 Lucas County CHIP*) identifies six health priorities. This Implementation Strategy explains how Nationwide Children's - Toledo will address and impact the priorities identified in the *2024-2027 Lucas County CHIP*.

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1. Community Conditions

Description:

Healthy communities begin with strong foundations. When families face substandard housing, financial instability, unsafe neighborhoods, or limited access to early childhood education, the entire community feels the impact. These challenges place children and families at greater risk for infant mortality, low birth weight, chronic illness, poor nutrition, environmental hazards, toxic stress and injuries — issues that can shape health outcomes for a lifetime. Nationwide Children's - Toledo, along with local partners, is committed to changing this story. By addressing the root causes of adversity, the work will create safer, healthier and more resilient communities where every child can thrive.

Nationwide Children's - Toledo and local partners will work together to reduce adverse community conditions. Areas of focus under community conditions include:

- Housing affordability and quality
 - Adverse childhood experiences
-

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND QUALITY

The 2021-2024 Lucas County CHIP identified a goal to improve housing affordability and quality by providing Housing Choice Vouchers for priority populations and collaborating to expand affordable housing options for all populations which include children and families, specifically those with household incomes less than \$25,000.

Affordable housing

Nationwide Children's - Toledo has built partnerships with other community agencies to expand affordable housing options for all populations while also working to reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that are a result of housing.



Lead education

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) is dedicated to eliminating childhood lead poisoning as a public health problem. The program strengthens blood lead testing, reporting, and surveillance; links exposed children to recommended services; and targets population-based interventions. In 2023, Nationwide Children's - Toledo collaborated with The Junction Coalition, a nonprofit, grassroots organization located in the Junction community of Toledo, to receive a \$600,000 Centers for Disease Control Lead Grant to promote lead education in the community. This includes information about the importance of screening, lead-based paint hazards, and health signs and symptoms related to lead exposure.

Frequently Asked Questions About Lead Exposure

Exposure to lead can be very harmful to a child's growth and development. No amount of lead exposure is safe. Read below for frequently asked questions about lead.

Why should my child be tested for lead?
Lead is a toxin that can cause serious health problems in children, including:

- Anemia
- Attention deficit disorder (ADD)
- Delayed physical growth
- Digestive problems
- Hearing and speech problems
- Learning and behavior problems
- Lower IQs
- Seizures
- Weight loss and fatigue

Most children with any lead in their blood have no obvious, immediate symptoms. If a child is exposed to lead, parents should talk to their child's health care provider and discuss getting a blood lead test.

What kind of test detects lead in children?
A blood test is the best way to determine if a child has been exposed to lead. During a blood lead test, a small amount of blood is taken from the finger, heel or arm to be tested. Two types of blood tests may be used.

- **Capillary test:** A capillary test is usually the first step to determine if a child has lead in their blood. Finger-prick tests can provide fast results.
- **Venous blood draw:** A venous blood draw takes a small amount of blood from a child's vein. This type of test can take a few days to receive results. It is often used to confirm blood lead levels seen in the first capillary test.

Health care providers and the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department can test for lead in the blood. Talk to your child's health care provider about getting a blood lead test.



How often should they be tested?
Some children are more likely to be exposed to lead than others. All children who are at risk for lead exposure should be tested at least once a year for lead poisoning and again if there are any changes to their regular environment (i.e. moving to a new location or attending a new day care).

What are the risk factors for lead exposure?
Children may be at risk for lead poisoning if they:

- Are from low-income households
- Are immigrants, refugees, or recently adopted from outside the United States
- Are exposed to lead contaminated soil
- Are exposed to lead paint: dust and chips
 - Drink water from lead pipes
 - Live or spend time in a house or building built before 1978
 - Live or spend time with someone who has hobbies that expose them to lead
 - Live or spend time with someone who works with lead

What should I do when my child is diagnosed with elevated lead levels?
If a child has very high levels of lead in their blood, other types of testing and treatment may be recommended. Parents should talk to their health care provider about next steps. Early identification of lead in the blood is key to reducing the long-term effects of lead exposure.

Source: Center for Disease Control Lead Prevention

Workforce development

Education and work opportunities are cornerstones of healthy communities. That's why boosting local workforce development efforts remain important to Nationwide Children's - Toledo. From tutoring programs to engage students in positive experiences to pathways to in-demand careers, workforce development opportunities for young people can

help them obtain careers and stable, quality housing. Nationwide Children's - Toledo is creating career development opportunities for Lucas County Youth through a partnership with Toledo Public Schools. The Toledo Pre-Medical & Health Science Academy is a four-year high school for students passionate about pursuing careers in health care. It is part of the affiliate agreement between Nationwide Children's - Toledo and Toledo Public Schools. In addition to receiving a comprehensive health science education that includes the latest in treatments and techniques, students learn valuable soft skills to help them work in diverse groups and communicate effectively while providing empathetic bedside manner. The program includes the following career development prongs:

- Nationwide Children's Hospital - Toledo Student Aide Program
- Nationwide Children's Hospital - Toledo Speakers Bureau

Health equity and community partnerships

To promote health equity and community-based partnerships, Nationwide Children's - Toledo will continue to manage sponsorship requests from community-based organizations and identify partnerships with nonprofits that align with the organization's mission, vision and strategic plan to support the hospital's commitment to health equity for all children.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Building community partnerships to reduce ACEs

Research shows that children who live below the federal poverty level are at higher risk for negative health outcomes and ACEs. ACEs include, but are not limited to, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, caregiver mental illness and household violence. The 2024-2027 Lucas County CHIP reported that in 2023, 9% of children ages 0-5 and 14% of children ages 6-11 experienced two or more ACEs. This reflects an increase from 0% and 10%, respectively, in 2020.

Thirteen percent of Lucas County parents reported their child experienced two or more ACEs in their lifetime, increasing to 70% of those with annual incomes of less than \$25,000.



A key priority for children in Lucas County includes reducing ACEs and the impact of ACEs on future well-being. This effort will require a multi-prong approach, addressing the multiple domains that impact children and their communities as early as possible. Nationwide Children's - Toledo continues to collaborate and build partnerships with other community agencies to expand affordable housing options for all populations, while also working to reduce ACEs. that are a result of housing. Since the last Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Strategy, Nationwide Children's - Toledo has significantly increased a broad and growing network of community partnerships.

To lessen the impact of housing affordability and quality, adverse community conditions and improve quality of life for children in Lucas County, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Establish and lead community-based partnerships that promote health and wellness for children and families.
- Create career development opportunities for Lucas County youth workforce development.
- Lead education and outreach in partnership with the 419 Get the Lead Out Initiative.

Community Partners

- ABLE (Advocates for Basic Legal Equality)
- American Heart Association
- Anne Grady Services
- Avenues for Autism
- Autism Society of Northwest Ohio
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Ohio
- Bowling Green State University (BGSU)
- Boy Scouts of America – Erie Shores Council
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Toledo
- City of Toledo
- Connecting Kids to Meals
- The Ability Center
- The Athlete Mental Health Summit
- The Junction Coalition
- The Program Inc.
- Diabetes Youth Services
- Down Syndrome Association of Greater Toledo (DSAGT)
- Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center
- Girl Scouts of Western Ohio
- Good Grief of Northwest Ohio
- Habitat for Humanity
- Historic South Initiative
- HOPE Toledo
- HOSA – Future Health Professionals
- Leadership Toledo
- Lourdes University
- LLSC Toledo (Lucas County Suicide Coalition)
- Mom's House
- MOSAIC Family Zone
- National Kidney Foundation
- Northwest Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Ronald McDonald House Charities Northwest Ohio
- TAPA (Toledo Area Parent Association)
- The Ability Center
- Toledo GROWS
- Toledo Museum of Art
- Toledo Public Schools (TPS Proud)
- Toledo Tomorrow
- Toledo Zoo & Aquarium
- United Way of Greater Toledo
- University of Toledo
- Women of Toledo
- YMCA (The Y)
- YWCA Northwest Ohio

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.

Areas of focus under mental health and addiction include:

- Autism
- Depression
- Suicide deaths

Just like national statistics show, mental health in Lucas County remains a high priority yet an underserved need. According to the *2024-2027 Lucas County CHIP*, in 2022, 11% of 6-12th grade students seriously considered attempting suicide, while 8% attempted suicide. In fact, 34% of Lucas County youth felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities. Increasing depression screenings and access to care, as well as implementing a suicide screening Quality Improvement (QI) project, are key focus areas to address mental health in Lucas County.

AUTISM

Develop a three-year strategy to enhance autism services in Toledo and Lucas County

As autism statistics in children rise, access to services remains challenging. In response, Nationwide Children's - Toledo continues to address the region's need for high-quality care and support. The three-year strategy to enhance autism services in Toledo focuses on autism intervention and diagnostics. To further support families awaiting services, the Autism Center expanded access to Research Units in Behavioral Intervention (RUBI) parent training and enhanced care coordination with social work following diagnosis. These efforts provide families with tools, guidance and emotional

support while they remain on the waitlist, helping to bridge gaps in care and strengthen early intervention.

Staffing has increased to enhance diagnostic capabilities, including adding psychologists, a psychometrician and a practice manager to the team. Autism diagnostics also expanded to additional locations, allowing for more convenient patient access. Operational changes were also made to streamline diagnostic processes, including quicker turnaround between visits, more comprehensive testing options and expanded access to testing for all pediatric ages.

LaValley Foundation Grant Improves Neurodivergent Inpatient Experience

The Interdisciplinary Clinical Accommodations for Neurodiversity (I-CAN) Taskforce at Nationwide Children's - Toledo recently received a grant from the LaValley Foundation to develop an initiative that enhances care for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) during hospital admissions. The taskforce is comprised of two physicians, two nurses, two psychologists, a dietitian, a child life specialist, a social worker, a behavior analyst and a parent of a child with ASD. The project involves training staff on how to best support patients with ASD and NDDs; an admission questionnaire to identify sensory,

communication, and behavior needs; sensory, behavior, and communication supports; and the use of social stories and preparation for admissions and procedures.

DEPRESSION

Increase depression screenings in Toledo and Lucas County

Depression is commonly undiagnosed in children and adolescents, which is why increasing screenings is a priority. Nationwide Children's - Toledo has increased the rate of depression screening within its primary care visits to 91% of patients over the age of 12 in 2025, up from 83% in March 2023. The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) is administered at every visit, rather than annually, for any patient over 12 years old. A screening also occurs if there are new complaints of feeling down, depressed or anxious.

Grow the psychology team in Toledo and Lucas County

In 2022, Nationwide Children's - Toledo did not have any employed psychologists, limiting the ability to provide support to children in Lucas County with behavioral health needs, and children who needed psychological support during inpatient stays. Nationwide Children's - Toledo responded by successfully recruiting six psychology providers to its team, who support services in primary care, autism, specialty clinics and inpatient units. The team added a psychology postdoctoral fellow for the 2025-2026 academic year, as well as a psychology student from Bowling Green State University. The team is recruiting for a new outpatient therapist. These additions to the team will help enhance patient access to Behavioral Health services.

SUICIDE DEATHS

Maumee Pediatric Associates implemented a suicide screening QI project to reduce pediatric suicides that began February 2025 and will run through October 2027. The program aims to:

- Increase the percentage of screening using the Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) for all patients 12 years or older seen for all visits from 0% to 85%

- Increase percentage of adolescents who received the Brief Suicide Safety Assessment (BSSA) during the visit for all patients 12 years or older with a non-acute positive ASQ screen during the same visit from 0% to 100%
- Increase the percentage of adolescents who received the safety plan within 24 hours of the visit for all patients 12 years or older with a positive screen who were deemed to be moderate risk, based on clinical judgment from 0% to 100%

To improve access to mental health care resources and screening for autism, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Increase number of autism families served.
- Increase family education and competency in carry over to home.
- Conduct parent education for families on the autism services waitlist.
- Increase parent participation in RUBI training.
- Connect families to ECHO / RUBI app.
- Offer "Journey" binders for incoming families.
- Add a psychologist specific to autism intervention.
- Implement improved inpatient experience tactics for neurodivergent patients while decreasing length of stay.

To improve access to mental health care resources and screening for depression, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Hire a new behavioral health provider.
- Maintain a 90% or above depression screening rate.
- Apply for a grant to create mental health kits for patients within primary care.

To improve access to mental health care resources and screening for suicide, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Develop a process for Suicide Prevention following STARRS-PC Clinical Pathway.
- Implement EHR modifications to embed ASQ, BSSA, and Safety Plans.
- Develop process to implement use of Caring Contacts text messages to let patients know they are supported.
- Provide suicide relevant education handouts to patients and families.
- Create and hand out updated list of Toledo area Behavioral Health resources with insurance options.
- Display parent and patient education posters in rooms and waiting rooms.

Community Partners

Avenues for Autism

3. Maternal and Infant Health

Description:

According to the Ohio Department of Health, the overall infant mortality rate is 8.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in Lucas County, which is higher than the overall Ohio rate of 6.3 per 1,000 live births. Nationwide Children's - Toledo is committed to increasing awareness and reducing infant mortality in Lucas County. This will be achieved through strategic alignment with the ongoing efforts of local organizations, including Mercy Health and other providers of maternal and prenatal care. The initial area of focus for maternal and infant health is infant mortality.

According to the *Toledo-Lucas County Health Department 2024 Annual Report*, the number of fetal deaths decreased 14.29% to 24 in 2024 from 28 in 2023. The Lucas County fetal mortality rate improved to a rate of 5.3, beyond the Healthy People 2030 goal of 5.7, for the first time since 2020.

INFANT MORTALITY

Between 2016 and 2020, nearly half (46%) of sleep-related infant deaths occurred in an adult bed, with 52% involving infants between one month and three months old. As reported in the *2024-2027 Lucas County CHIP*, when asked how parents put their child to sleep as an infant, 80% said on their back, 15% said on their stomach, 6% said with them or another person, and 4% said on their side. Three percent (3%) of parents reported they did not know. Further reporting on safe sleep showed that 80% of parents put their child to sleep in a crib/bassinette without bumper, blankets, or stuffed animals, 46% in a pack n' play, 19% in a swing, 18% in a car seat and 17% in bed with another person.

Provide standard safe sleep education in after-visit summary at Nationwide Children's - Toledo NICU discharge

While safe sleep compliance has improved throughout Lucas County and Ohio, more work needs to be done to reduce sleep-related infant deaths. Standardized safe sleep education is now provided in discharge paperwork for all NICU discharges. Additionally, families can use a QR code to access more information for safe sleep for infants.

Establish a crib distribution program

According to the Ohio Department of Health, two out of every three infant sleep deaths occur while sharing an adult bed, couch or chair, demonstrating the importance of all infants having access to a crib.

Practicing the ABCs of Safe Sleep Can Save Lives
Alone. On their Back. In a Crib.

Unsafe sleep practices are the leading cause of preventable infant deaths in Lucas County. Since 2014, 1 in 3 infant deaths investigated by the coroner's office have been linked to unsafe sleep environments. By practicing the ABCs of safe sleep, we can save lives.

Creating a Safe Sleep Space for Your Baby:

- Place your baby alone, on their back and in a crib, cradle, bassinet or pack-n-play
- Firm mattress with a snug-fitting crib sheet
- No pillows, blankets or crib bumpers
- No soft toys, loose bedding or other items in the sleep area
- Keep baby's head and face uncovered
- Always place baby on their back to sleep
- Use a one-piece sleeper if baby needs extra warmth

Source: Ohio Department of Health

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SAFE INFANT SLEEP PRACTICES, CALL (419) 213-4128 OR SCAN THE QR CODE.

The following organizations are proud members of the Toledo-Lucas County Child Fatality Review Board, working together to promote child safety and well-being.

NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S | TOLEDO | PROMEDICA
 "When your child needs a hospital, choose the name"

MERCYHEALTH | UTOLEDO HEALTH

HEALTH | LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

Created by the Child Fatality Review Board of Toledo-Lucas County. Updated July 2025.

Nationwide Children's - Toledo partners with the Lucas County Health Department's Cribs for Kids program. Cribs for Kids provides participants with a portable crib, sheet and wearable blanket, as well as a 30-minute virtual safe sleep class. All patients at the Nationwide Children's - Toledo NICU and primary care offices are asked about safe sleep practices and are referred to Cribs for Kids if necessary.

Partner for Change grant to reduce infant mortality

In 2025, the Health Council of Northwest Ohio was selected as a grant recipient by the state of Ohio to partner with several local hospitals, including Nationwide Children's -Toledo and other organizations, to offer more resources and investment for expecting mothers. The state's Partner for Change initiative will provide grants to nonprofit organizations to replicate a Cincinnati-based model for reducing infant deaths. That model was begun by the nonprofit Cradle Cincinnati, which brings together parents, caregivers, health care providers and community leaders to support mothers and babies. Total funding for Ohio's Partner for Change initiative is \$3 million, broken out as \$1 million per year, from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth infant vitality program.



To help improve health outcomes for infants, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Continue to focus on educating and modeling safe sleep practices for NICU families.
- Continue to focus on opioid-use disorder in pregnancy and post-delivery through collaboration with the New Beginnings program at the Mercy OB-GYN Franklin office to help support expecting mothers with substance disorders.
- Have the NICU team meet with expectant mothers to educate on the care that will be given to their baby post-delivery.

Community Partners

Getting Healthy Zone

Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio Hub

Lucas County Family and Children First Council

Lucas County Health Department

Mercy Health

4. Chronic Disease

Description:

Diabetes and harmful childhood conditions negatively impact children in Lucas County. In fact, diabetes has remained a challenge for youth in Lucas County and a clinical focus since the 2022-2024 Nationwide Children's - Toledo Community Health Needs Assessment and 2022-2024 Implementation Strategy.

According to the *2022/2023 Lucas County Community Health Assessment*, 32% of Lucas County parents reported their child had more than one health condition. Children who are overweight or obese may be at higher risk for diabetes and other health conditions. Areas of focus under chronic disease include:

- Diabetes
- Harmful childhood conditions – Asthma

DIABETES

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about one-third of American youth are classified as either overweight or obese. Risk factors for diabetes include weight, heredity and lifestyle habits. The *2022/2023 Lucas County Community Health Assessment* reports that 20% of Lucas County youth were classified as obese and 16% of youth were classified as overweight. Twenty-seven percent of youth described themselves as being slightly or very overweight.

In 2022, Nationwide Children's - Toledo employed a single diabetes health care provider. As the need for diabetes care continued to grow, the hospital expanded access to care and increased the number of patients served by hiring more providers and opening outreach clinics.

Increase access to pediatric patients with diabetes by hiring a second provider

A second pediatric endocrinologist was hired, supporting additional patients with diabetes. A second dietitian was also hired and plays an important role in providing education on long-term maintenance for patients with diabetes. These hires contributed to an increase in patients seen at Nationwide Children's - Toledo endocrinology locations, rising from 1,521 in 2022 to 4,255 by the end of 2025. Additionally, 81% of patients were able to see a provider within 14 days of scheduling in 2025, up from 47% in 2022.

Open additional outreach clinics in Lucas County to provide care closer to home and improve compliance

Nationwide Children's - Toledo has identified a greater need for access to diabetes care in the rural communities surrounding Toledo. Pediatric endocrinologists provide care directly in Tiffin, Defiance and Fremont. Since 2022, two sessions have been added at the Defiance Primary Care Center and one has been added at ProMedica Memorial Hospital in Fremont. These additions reflect a continued goal of increasing access to diabetes care for those who face barriers to care such as increased travel time or access challenges. Future goals include expanding services and satellite locations for endocrinology.

Analyze opportunities to implement diabetes education in the community and identify community partnerships

To obtain best outcomes, it is important to partner with community organizations to support patients outside of a health care setting. Nationwide Children's - Toledo has partnered with Diabetes Youth Services (DYS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing education and support for children and families with type 1 diabetes living in the Toledo area. As part of the partnership, DYS visits the inpatient unit when a patient is newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, providing support alongside the nursing staff and offering education about living with diabetes.

Additionally, Nationwide Children's - Toledo helps support DYS's annual Hot Shots Camp, where kids aged 5-17 enjoy fun summer activities while learning more about diabetes management and independence.



To improve the quality of life for patients with chronic pediatric diabetes, allowing children to live as normal a life as possible, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Expand services and satellite locations for endocrinology.
- Establish a healthy weight clinic.

HARMFUL CHILDHOOD CONDITIONS – ASTHMA

Four percent (4%) of Lucas County parents reported their child had been diagnosed with asthma. Parents reported their child uses long term “maintenance” medications to control persistent asthma at the following frequencies: daily (2%), seasonally (1%), and only uses a rescue inhaler (1%). Lucas County had a lower percentage of children ages 0-11 who were diagnosed with asthma compared to both Ohio and the U.S.

Asthma is the most common chronic childhood illness and can significantly impact quality of life with missed school days, difficulty with physical activity and exacerbations resulting in emergency department visits and/or hospitalization. Nationwide Children's - Toledo is focusing on access to asthma care, education and community resources to improve control of asthma for the affected children and families.

Increase access to clinic visits by 10%

To increase access to outpatient asthma care, Nationwide Children's - Toledo has hired a nurse practitioner and a contingent pediatric pulmonologist, while continuing to recruit an additional pulmonologist. Outreach visits have also been expanded in Defiance and Tiffin. These additions to the staff contribute to more availability for asthma visits for children throughout the community. Total outpatient pulmonology visits have risen from 1,848 in 2022 to a projected 3,283 in 2025, demonstrating a commitment to allowing more families access to convenient outpatient asthma care. Nationwide Children's - Toledo hired a nurse practitioner and a part-time physician to develop a more proactive approach for educating families related to asthma.

Offer pulmonary function tests as part of pulmonary visits to get live results/information

Nationwide Children's - Toledo began offering pulmonary function tests (PFTs) in August 2024. PFTs are a non-invasive way to test lung capacity, volume, flow rates and gas exchange. They can be ordered as needed by a respiratory therapist and assist in the assessment of asthma and other chronic lung diseases. In the first year of offering PFTs, 37 tests were ordered, and 21 were completed.

Decrease hospitalizations related to asthma

Proactive asthma education and increased connection to asthma services have been the focus in reducing asthma hospitalizations. An asthma education tip sheet was created to ensure patients know who to contact for asthma concerns. This includes connecting patients to the 24/7 on-call pediatric pulmonologist and helping guide families to the most appropriate level of care for asthma. Preventive guidance is also provided on common asthma concerns such as smoke exposure, pets and dust allergies. Additionally, a new policy expedites patient triage to the appropriate care regimen by requiring the inpatient team and local emergency departments to refer suspected or newly diagnosed asthma patients for a follow-up visit within 30 days.

The focus on preventive care and asthma education has contributed to fewer hospitalizations at Nationwide Children's - Toledo in which asthma was the primary diagnosis. In 2022, there were 100 asthma-related admissions, but dropped to 12 admissions from January through September 2025.

Continue to grow asthma education in the community, including in schools and day care centers

Education and outreach are essential to ensuring long-term asthma management for children. Nationwide Children's - Toledo will continue to partner with school nurses to support students with asthma during the school day, helping families navigate care plans and medication adherence.

To further increase access, both of Nationwide Children's - Toledo's pediatric pulmonologists travel monthly to rural communities in Defiance and Tiffin, providing direct care and asthma education to patients and families closer to home. These efforts reflect a commitment to meeting families where they are and removing barriers to care.

In addition, Nationwide Children's will continue to expand its homecare services to northwest Ohio and is accepting new patients in Lucas, Hancock and Wood counties, including the Asthma Express program. This initiative provides in-home education, medication support and care coordination to help families manage asthma more effectively and reduce preventable hospitalizations.

Identify community partnerships

Nationwide Children's - Toledo partners with school staff and administration from several schools within Lucas, Seneca and Defiance counties, as well as several daycares throughout Lucas County. The pulmonologists work closely with school nurses to pursue best outcomes for asthma patients while they are at school.

To improve the quality of life for patients with harmful childhood conditions like asthma, allowing children to live as normal a life as possible, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Decrease hospitalizations due to asthma.
- Increase access to clinic visits by 10%.

Community Partners

Diabetes Youth Services

5. Health Behaviors

Description:

Establishing healthy behaviors early in life lays the foundation for long term well being, shaping how children grow, learn and thrive. Regular physical activity and nutritious eating habits not only support healthy development in childhood but also help prevent chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease as individuals age. Local data from Lucas County underscores how urgent this work is.

Many young people report struggling with healthy habits, while some increase exercise or fruit and vegetable intake, others resort to skipping meals or going without eating for 24 hours or more to manage their weight. These patterns highlight how early lifestyle choices can influence health trajectories across a lifetime. By promoting movement, balanced nutrition and supportive environments from childhood onward, communities can reduce preventable disease and foster healthier futures for all.

Areas of focus under health behaviors include:

- Obesity
 - Nutrition
 - Physical Activity
-

OBESITY

The Healthy People 2030 target for Nutrition and Weight Status (NWS) is to reduce the proportion of children and adolescents aged 2 to 19 years who are considered obese to 16%. According to the *2024-2027 Lucas County CHIP*, in 2022, 20% of Lucas County 6-12 graders were considered obese. This has increased from 17% of Lucas County youth being considered obese in 2019.

Sixteen percent of Lucas County children ages 0-11 were classified as obese, while 19% were classified as overweight.

Establish Healthy Weight Clinic via ECHO Collaborative

Nationwide Children’s - Toledo is working toward establishing a Healthy Weight and Nutrition Clinic within the Endocrinology department. The clinic’s mission is to empower children and families to build a foundation for healthy lifestyles, and this will be accomplished through nutrition counseling, education on lifestyle changes, healthy eating habits and access to healthy foods. Through Project ECHO, the program will also improve care for children with obesity by training providers on best practices. In 2024, with FDA approval for pediatrics, the center began offering GLP-1 medications to help achieve best outcomes for some patients.

NUTRITION

Youth Nutrition in Lucas County

	Five or more servings	Three to four servings	One to two servings	Zero servings
Fruit	12%	19%	55%	14%
Vegetables	4%	15%	60%	21%
Sugar-sweetened beverages	10%	19%	53%	18%
Caffeinated beverages	4%	11%	41%	44%

Source: 2022/2023 Lucas County Community Health Assessment

In 2022, 11% of Lucas County youth reported that they went to bed hungry because there was not enough food in their home. If access to healthy foods is a barrier, Nationwide Children’s - Toledo can connect families to community resources dedicated to food insecurity assistance.

Connecting Kids to Meals

Nationwide Children’s - Toledo is committed to improving the health and well-being of children even beyond clinical care. As part of population health efforts, Nationwide Children’s - Toledo continues to partner with organizations like Connecting Kids to Meals, which plays a vital role in addressing food insecurity among families in northwest Ohio. Through this partnership, Nationwide Children’s - Toledo is helping expand access to nutritious meals and essential resources, ensuring children have the nourishment and stability they need to grow, learn and thrive.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Lucas County 6-12th graders participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity at the following frequencies:

- 54%: Three or more days
- 35%: Five or more days
- 21%: Every day
- 29%: Zero days

On an average school day, Lucas County youth spent 4.4 hours on a cell phone, 2.3 hours playing video games, 2.2 hours watching TV and 2.1 hours on a computer/tablet.



Glass City Marathon Kids Run

Nationwide Children's - Toledo is proud to be part of the annual Glass City Marathon Kids Run weekend to support the families and young athletes that participate. The annual run is for kids aged 2 to 12 and Nationwide Children's - Toledo sports medicine team is there to promote nutrition, injury prevention and physical activity.

To help improve health behaviors for Lucas County youth, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Establish healthy weight clinic.
- Continue partnership with Connecting Kids to Meals.
- Continue partnership with Glass City Marathon Kids Run.

Community Partners

Connecting Kids to Meals

Glass City Marathon

6. Access to Care

Description:

Two percent (2%) of Lucas County parents reported their child did not currently have health insurance. Twenty-three percent (23%) of parents reported their child did not get all the prescription medications they needed in the past year. Ninety-four percent (94%) of parents had taken their child to the doctor for preventive care in the past year.

Preventive health care helps people stay healthier for longer by focusing on checkups, screenings and immunizations. It shifts the focus from treating illness to maintaining wellness, by catching problems early, reducing serious disease risks, improving quality of life and lowering long-term costs.

Areas of focus under access to care include:

- Local access to health care services
- Primary and preventive care

LOCAL ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

While 94% of parents in Lucas County reported taking their child to the doctor for preventive care, access remains challenging for some people. Barriers to access come in many forms:

- **Financial barriers:** High costs and/or insurance coverages gaps
- **Geographic/Logistical barriers:** Transportation issues and time constraints
- **Systemic barriers:** Discrimination/bias, provider shortages, long wait times, lack of culturally competent or culturally responsive care
- **Personal barriers:** Fear of judgment, personal or cultural stigma, language barriers, health literacy, childcare challenges

Improving access to health care services

Nationwide Children's - Toledo continues to find innovative new ways to improve access to care for families and youth across Lucas County and northwest Ohio. Endocrinology clinics were added to expand access to suburban areas. Primary care offices now offer same-day appointments, expanded weekend and evening hours to reach more working and school-aged families. Non-traditional primary care visits such as

telehealth help families who may have transportation or childcare access barriers. A school-based health clinic opened in Oregon City Schools, offering services to students during school hours.

Improving the no-show disparity among primary care clinics

Another key initiative was finding ways to decrease the no-show rate at Franklin Avenue Primary Care Clinic from 34% to 29% (5% reduction) by July 2025 and sustain for 6 months. Key drivers to patient no-shows included transportation, lack of patient/provider continuity, patient access to technology for appointment reminders, adherence to scheduling, documentation accuracy, language barriers and ability to address social determinants of health. To help reduce the number of no-shows and open daily appointments, Nationwide Children's - Toledo now offers walk-in hours for all existing patients. Other changes include ensuring patients have access to public transportation and creating/refining processes for connecting patients to social work/community resources based on identified needs in social determinants of health screening.

PRIMARY AND PREVENTIVE CARE

Nationwide Children's - Toledo Resource Fair

Nationwide Children's - Toledo offers community education and outreach focused on primary care and prevention. This includes education through community events such as the annual Nationwide Children's - Toledo Resource Fair. Local organizations come together to connect with families for a day of fun, family resources, networking and more. Resource and service providers are onsite to speak with parents and caregivers and provide helpful information for children of all ages and abilities.

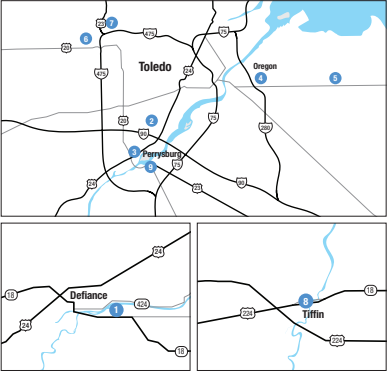
WTOL11 Wellness Wednesdays

Nationwide Children's - Toledo participates in WTOL11 Wellness Wednesdays, where pediatric experts share preventive tips on seasonal health topics with the community.

Expanding pediatric health care across the region

Nationwide Children's - Toledo has expanded to offer WITH from five to nine primary care locations throughout the Toledo area. In addition to making pediatric primary care more accessible, ongoing recruitment efforts are part of the plan to expand specialty pediatric health care access in the region. Nationwide Children's - Toledo continues expansion into specialties including:

- Neurology
- Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics
- Ophthalmology
- Primary Care
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Hospitalist
- Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)
- Pulmonology
- Sleep Medicine
- Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU)



The map shows the Toledo, Ohio area with major highways and several primary care centers marked with numbered blue circles. The centers are distributed across the region, including Defiance, Maumee, Navarre, Oregon, and Tiffin.

- 1 Defiance Primary Care Center**
1400 E. Second St., Suite 100
Defiance, OH 43512
Contact: (419) 783-3226
- 2 Franklin Avenue Primary Care Center**
2213 Franklin Avenue
Toledo, OH 43620
Contact: (419) 251-2415
- 3 Maumee Pediatric Associates**
500 The Boulevard, Suite 504
Maumee, OH 43537
Contact: (419) 389-1444
- 4 Navarre Primary Care Center**
2702 Navarre Avenue, Suite 202
Oregon, OH 43616
Contact: (419) 696-6336
- 5 Oregon City Schools Primary Care Center**
5665 Seaman Road
Oregon, OH 43616
Contact: (419) 696-5533
- 6 PediatriCare Associates - An Affiliate of Nationwide Children's Hospital - Toledo**
7629 Kings Pointe Rd.
Toledo, Ohio 43617
Contact: (419) 841-6202
- 7 Sylvania Primary Care Center**
4126 Holland-Sylvania, Suite 220
Toledo, OH 43623
Contact: (419) 517-7658
- 8 Tiffin Primary Care Center**
500 W. Market St.
Tiffin, OH 44883
Contact: (419) 455-8150
- 9 Village Square Primary Care Center**
1103 Village Square, Suite 202
Perrysburg, OH 43551
Contact: (419) 872-3243

To help improve access to care for Lucas County youth, over the next three years Nationwide Children's - Toledo will:

- Offer Lyft to transport patients to/from appointments to reduce the no-show rates at the FCC.
- Implement walk-in clinic idea with providers to reduce the no-show rate at the FCC.
- Implement a social determinants of health screening process to connect patients to social work.
- Roll out education process to employees and include follow-up process when social needs are identified.
- Continue to evaluate where to expand primary care centers.
- Continue to grow primary care access across the region

Community Partners

WTOL 11

Oregon City Schools

Oregon City Schools (Clay High Schools)

Conclusion

To address the community needs identified by community representatives and the *2024-2027 Lucas County Health Improvement Plan*, Nationwide Children's - Toledo will commit to the implementation strategies identified in this document. In addition, the mission of the hospital will continue to guide Nationwide Children's - Toledo in its daily efforts to create best outcomes and provide the highest quality of care to every child and family with which it comes in contact.

Nationwide Children's - Toledo will maintain its inclusive endeavors for improving care and serving the community by taking a considered and detailed approach to addressing community conditions, mental health and addiction, maternal and infant health, chronic disease, health behaviors and access to care.

