

Final Recommendations

Children are the future of Appalachian Ohio. We need to act now to ensure that they grow and develop into productive adults who will be the region's future community and business leaders, workers, teachers, health care providers, and parents. To accomplish this, businesses, policymakers, community groups, educators, faith leaders, and families must unite and work together as partners in creating change for children. Specifically, we recommend that Appalachian Ohio:

1. End the cycle of child poverty in the region and help families achieve economic stability.

- Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties should join the Rural Impact County Challenge (RICC) to reduce poverty.
- Implement two-generation strategies to launch thriving families.

2. Improve maternal health before, during and after pregnancy.

- Reduce infant mortality rates through improving prenatal care systems and supports.
- Reduce infant mortality rates through lowering the rates of maternal and household smoking.
- Focus on the neonatal abstinence syndrome crisis in Appalachian Ohio.

3. Make high-quality early childhood education possible for every child in Appalachian Ohio.

- Early learning and public school systems must work in unison.
- Build an early childhood education hub.
- Improve financial sustainability of early childhood education and invest in its workforce development.

4. Improve educational outcomes for primary and secondary students in Ohio's Appalachian region through collaborations among key partners, better use of data, and strategies that help students connect learning to their futures.

- Strengthen connections between early childhood programs and the school districts to support children's readiness for learning.
- Use multiple data points such as growth and achievement data to understand the performance and progress context.
- Focus on place-based strategies that provide value to students and their future.
- Pursue collaborative solutions through collective action.

5. Increase children's access to health care using creative approaches that ensure better and more frequent delivery of services throughout the Appalachian region.

- Assist providers and health systems as Patient Centered Medical Home transformation continues.
- Integrate use of community health care workers into health care systems.
- Expand the reach of health care at existing facilities.
- Modernize the dental care workforce to expand access in Appalachian Ohio.
- Overcome barriers to telehealth and utilize its services more widely.

6. Reduce hunger and food insecurity in the region.

- Increase participation in Summer Food Service programs.
- Ease the cost burden for summer feeding sites.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to overcome food deserts.
- Expand food education programs.

7. Build much-needed philanthropic capital that can be used to provide long-term, sustainable investments in children, the future of Ohio's Appalachian region.

- Increase the permanent philanthropic assets dedicated to Appalachian Ohio's communities.