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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research  
and Drafting

Legislative Budget  
Office

H.B. 7\*  
135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

## Bill Analysis

[Click here for H.B. 7's Fiscal Note](#)

**Version:** As Reported by Senate Finance

**Primary Sponsors:** Reps. White and Humphrey

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### SUMMARY

#### Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

- Requires the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood to include in its annual report an evaluation of the outcomes of recommendations made by the Commission, and to submit the report to the General Assembly.

#### Infant vitality supports

- Requires the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to conduct a study regarding the reimbursement of evidence-based peer-to-peer programming that supports infant vitality.

#### Help Me Grow

- Revises the law governing Help Me Grow, including by requiring the Department of Children and Youth (ODCY) to streamline its central intake and referral system to ensure that services are received from home visiting programs that are appropriate to each family's level of needs, such as the Early Head Start Home-Based Option.

#### WIC enrollment

- Requires the Department of Health (ODH) to investigate and determine the services and tools available at the federal level and implemented in other states that could be used in Ohio to increase access to and use of the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

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\* This analysis was prepared before the report of the Senate Finance Committee appeared in the Senate Journal. Note that the legislative history may be incomplete.

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- Requires ODH to submit a report to the General Assembly detailing the results of its investigation and establishing a plan to increase WIC access.
- Requires ODH to submit quarterly reports to the General Assembly for two years detailing progress on implementing its plan to increase WIC access.

### **Early childhood mental health services**

- Requires the Medicaid Director, by June 30, 2026, to evaluate and update the Medicaid program's coverage of evidence-based mental health and dyadic family therapy services for young children and their caregivers.
- Requires the Medicaid Director to develop policy and billing guidance for Medicaid providers regarding the coverage.
- Requires the Medicaid Director to submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with specified information about the coverage.

### **Head Start and Step Up to Quality**

- Requires ODCY to rate each licensed child day-care center and family day-care home operating a Head Start or Early Head Start program or a program accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the Step Up to Quality tier that ODCY has determined corresponds with minimum Head Start or NAEYC standards.

### **Parenting programs**

- Requires ODJFS to develop strategies for state agencies to use in informing parents, caregivers, and child care providers about evidence-based parenting education programs, and to promote their benefits.

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## **DETAILED ANALYSIS**

### **Ohio Commission on Fatherhood**

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood is currently required to prepare an annual report identifying resources available to fund fatherhood-related programs, exploring the creation of initiatives related to fatherhood, and describing the Commission's expectations for the outcomes of fatherhood-related programs and initiatives. H.B. 7 additionally requires the Commission to include in that report an evaluation of the number of fathers and children served and the number and types of additional services provided as a result of recommendations made by the Commission to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director. It also requires the Commission to submit a copy of the report to the General Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. 5101.342(B)(3).

## **Infant vitality supports**

The bill requires the Department of Medicaid (ODM) to study how evidence-based peer-to-peer programming that supports infant vitality can be reimbursed through the Medicaid program. The results of this study must be submitted to the General Assembly one year after the bill's effective date.<sup>2</sup>

## **Help Me Grow**

The bill modifies in several ways the law governing Help Me Grow, Ohio's evidence-based parent support program to encourage early prenatal and well-baby care and to provide parenting education to promote the comprehensive health and development of children. Each change is described below. Beginning January 1, 2025, Help Me Grow program administration transfers from the Department of Health (ODH) to ODCY, so the bill refers only to ODCY.

### **Interagency agreements**

The bill requires, rather than authorizes as under current law, ODCY to enter into interagency agreements with one or more state agencies, including ODJFS, the Department of Developmental Disabilities, ODM, the Commission on Minority Health, the Ohio Fatherhood Commission, and the Children's Trust Fund Board to implement Help Me Grow and to ensure coordination of early childhood programs. The bill also directs that the interagency agreements be entered into to maximize reimbursement for Help Me Grow from any federal source.<sup>3</sup>

### **Comprehensive screening and connection program**

The bill supplements Help Me Grow's existing central intake and referral system, by requiring ODCY to ensure there is a consistent comprehensive screening and connection program to support the coordination of home visiting services across the state, including through ODH, ODJFS, ODM, the Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Commission on Minority Health. ODCY must annually evaluate this program.<sup>4</sup>

### **Central intake and referral system**

With respect to the Central Intake and Referral System, the bill requires ODCY, in its oversight of system operators, to streamline the system to ensure families and children receive services from home visiting programs that are appropriate to their level of needs. The bill specifies that such programs may include those that provide services using the Early Head-Start Home-Based Option or within a Pathways Community HUB certified by the Pathways Community HUB Institute.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Section 4.

<sup>3</sup> R.C. 5180.21(D).

<sup>4</sup> R.C. 5180.21(D).

<sup>5</sup> R.C. 5180.22(A) and (B)(3).

## Priority recipients

The bill specifies families in the child welfare system as priority recipients of home visiting services under Help Me Grow,<sup>6</sup> in addition to families residing in urban and rural communities specified in rules adopted by the Director under existing law.

## Annual reports and evaluation

The bill requires the ODCY Director to include in its currently required annual report an evaluation of all of the following:

- The number of families and children served by Help Me Grow;
- The number and types of services provided;
- Health and developmental outcomes for participating families and children; and
- Variation in outcomes between the provider types outlined in the bill.

Continuing law requires the report to be made available on ODCY's website, and the bill requires the ODCY Director to submit the report to the General Assembly.<sup>7</sup>

## Workforce capacity

The bill requires ODCY, in collaboration with ODJFS and ODM, to propose strategies to increase the workforce capacity of home visiting service providers and parenting support professionals, including efforts to incentivize and retain those providers and professionals.<sup>8</sup>

## WIC enrollment

The bill requires ODH to investigate and determine the services and tools available at the federal level and the services and tools implemented in other states that could be implemented in Ohio to increase access to and use of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The results of this investigation must be reported to the General Assembly within 60 days of the bill's effective date and include a plan for increasing WIC access and use.

For two years after the bill's effective date, ODH is required to submit quarterly reports to the General Assembly detailing progress towards implementing the plan. This report must include expenditures, changes made to the WIC program, the total number of women and children served, any other relevant outcomes, and opportunities to increase the number of women and children served.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> R.C. 5180.21(H)(1)

<sup>7</sup> R.C. 5180.21(F)(3).

<sup>8</sup> R.C. 5180.21(I).

<sup>9</sup> Section 3.

## Medicaid coverage of early childhood mental health services

The bill requires the Medicaid Director, by June 30, 2026, to evaluate, clarify, and update the Medicaid program's coverage of evidence-based and evidence-informed mental health and dyadic family therapy services for young children and their caregivers, to improve outcomes from birth through age five. Additionally, the Medicaid Director must develop policy and billing guidance for Medicaid providers to improve the use of mental health and dyadic family therapy services and to encourage use of specified diagnostic tools and billing codes.<sup>10</sup>

### Report

By June 30, 2027, the Medicaid Director must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with both of the following:

- Information about how ODM has engaged stakeholders to develop the necessary guidance, manuals, training, and billing code procedures associated with the Medicaid coverage of the early childhood mental health services described above; and
- An evaluation of the coverage including (1) the number of families and children served, (2) the number and types of services provided, and (3) outcome metrics for families and children served.<sup>11</sup>

## Head Start and Step Up to Quality

The bill requires ODCY to periodically review Head Start program performance standards and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards and determine which Step Up to Quality ratings tier corresponds with minimum Head Start and NAEYC standards.

It further requires ODCY, beginning July 1, 2025, to rate each licensed child care center and family child care home operating or under contract to provide a Head Start or Early Head Start program, or accredited by NAEYC, in the Step Up to Quality tier that ODCY has determined corresponds with minimum Head Start or NAEYC standards. ODCY is to prescribe the manner in which a program may demonstrate that it meets these requirements.<sup>12</sup>

## Parenting programs

The bill requires ODCY to develop strategies for state entities to use in (1) informing parents, caregivers, and child care providers about evidence-based parenting education programs, and (2) promoting the benefits of such programs, including their parenting, caregiving, and educational resources.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Section 5(A).

<sup>11</sup> Section 5(B).

<sup>12</sup> R.C. 5104.291

<sup>13</sup> R.C. 5180.40.

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## HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	02-15-23
Reported, H. Families and Aging	06-07-23
Re-referred to H. Finance	06-13-23
Reported, H. Finance	05-22-24
Passed House (72-20)	06-12-24
Reported, S. Finance	----

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