Creating a Healthier Ohio

All Ohioans, regardless of status, wealth, or circumstances, should have the opportunity to achieve their fullest health potential. To reach that potential, people need to have access to care as well as resources to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Since 2000, The HealthPath Foundation of Ohio's Strengthening Ohio's Safety Net initiative has helped lay the groundwork for enhancing access to health care in our 36-county service area. Because access to care is only a part of achieving overall good health, HealthPath has chosen to focus on creating a healthier Ohio.

Healthy Ohioans

There are several health conditions that can be prevented and managed with timely and effective care, thus increasing quality of life and avoiding early death. These include heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and some cancers, among others. Nearly 11,000 Ohioans die every year from these preventable conditions, one of the highest rates in the country. Although the U.S. health care system is slowly moving to a more proactive, preventive care system where people are encouraged to go for regular checkups and focus on early intervention and healthy lifestyles, there's still work to be done.

To ensure that Ohioans have access to the resources they need to be healthy, The HealthPath Foundation of Ohio has selected Healthy Ohioans as one of our result areas for 2017–2021.

23% **1 in 4** deaths of Ohioans ages 74 and younger could be prevented each year through timely access to care and changes toward a healthier lifestyle.

What Influences Health

Access to care, diet, and exercise play a role in preventing and managing many health conditions, but access to care is often seen as the largest factor. The health care workforce is not evenly distributed around the state. This is true for primary care providers as well as behavioral health, oral health, specialty care, and other providers, all of which are important in helping people achieve good overall health. There are also cultural and language barriers to accessing care. Even if people have insurance, the providers closest to their home or work may not accept that insurance. Or, copays and high deductibles may be too high for people to afford. Other barriers to accessing health care include lack of transportation or the inability to take time off work or school for appointments.

Lifestyle issues also play a big role in a person's health. Diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and other conditions can be prevented or managed by a healthy diet and regular exercise. Because a healthy diet is important for overall health, food insecurity is a health care concern. In many parts of Ohio, individuals and families find it difficult to buy and consume sufficient amounts of affordable, nutritious food. Fresh foods may not be available or they may be more expensive than processed foods.

6% The amount of Ohioans who are considered food insecure has risen by almost **6%** since 2002.
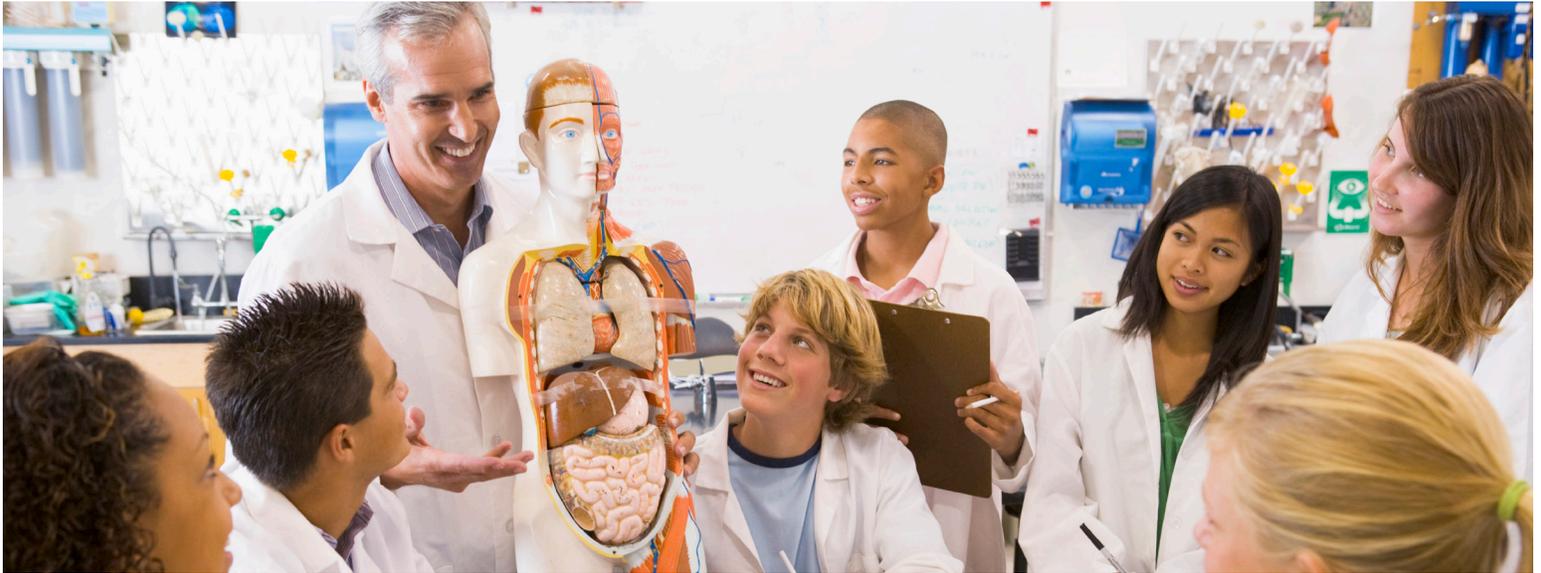
What HealthPath Will Fund

To help Ohioans access the resources they need to be healthy, HealthPath will offer funding through three initiatives: Workforce Development, Direct Service, and Community Connections. HealthPath will consider projects that align with the following strategies:

Workforce Development
(funded in 2017, 2019, 2021)

- Engage middle school, high school, and college students to explore solutions and introduce them to health careers
- Provide cultural competency training

Direct Service
(funded in 2018, 2020)

- Use community health workers to coordinate client care
- Plan and implement integrated care within health care sites
- Bring affordable, healthy foods to food deserts

Community Connections
These will be community-driven projects that could include:

- Health promotion programs that encourage families and community residents to talk about and engage in healthy behaviors
- Programs to bring fresh, healthy foods to food deserts
- Programs that teach parents about how to talk with their children about health
- Programs that provide youth with hands-on, problem-based learning around health and health issues

For additional information about
The HeathPath Foundation of Ohio
visit www.healthpathohio.org.