



www.lsc.ohio.gov

OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
and Drafting

Legislative Budget
Office

H.B. 420
135th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Brewer and Abdullahi

Jason Hoskins, Attorney

SUMMARY

- Establishes the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention within the Department of Children and Youth.
- Requires the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention to administer grant programs to reduce firearm violence in the state and provide technical assistance and training to grant recipients.
- Delays creation of the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention and firearm violence prevention grant programs until January 1, 2025.
- Requires the Department of Medicaid to seek federal approval to establish a team-based model of care system to address trauma recovery from chronic exposure to firearm violence.
- Appropriates \$500,000 in FY 2025 for the establishment of the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention.
- Designates the bill as the “Building Safer Communities for Ohio’s Children Act.”

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Office of Firearm Violence Prevention

Office creation

The bill establishes the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention within the Department of Children and Youth. The Department is required to appoint an executive director of violence prevention to manage the office and to perform or oversee the performance of the duties of the office (see “**Duties**” below). The executive director will serve at the pleasure of the Department and will report the executive director’s actions to (1) the Director of Children and Youth, (2) the Attorney General, and (3) the Governor. The bill specifies that the executive director will receive an annual salary of \$170,000, which will be increased on July 1, 2026, and

annually thereafter, by the lesser of 3% or the percentage increase in the consumer price index for the immediately preceding year.¹ The bill authorizes the Director of Children and Youth to adopt rules as necessary to establish the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention.²

Duties

The Office of Firearm Violence Prevention is tasked with (1) coordinating several firearm violence prevention grant programs established by the bill (see “**Grant programs**” below) and (2) providing technical assistance and training to grant recipients. The technical assistance must include the following:³

- Training on how to provide violence prevention services and other professional development services;
- Management training;
- Training and assistance on how to develop a memorandum of understanding for referral services;
- Sharing lessons learned among other organizations participating in the grant program;
- Technical assistance and training on human resources, grant management, capacity building, and fiscal management strategies.

Grant programs

The bill establishes three grant programs that are to be administered by the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention. Two of these grant programs are available in eligible counties, which the bill defines as the 15 counties in the state with the highest per capita rate of fatal and nonfatal firearm-shot victims, excluding self-inflicted incidents, from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2022.⁴ The remaining grant program is available in counties that are ineligible to participate in the other two grant programs.

Violence prevention organization grant program

The first grant program to be administered by the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention is the violence prevention organization grant program. The bill requires the Office, beginning July 1, 2025, to award grants to violence prevention organizations in eligible counties.⁵ The Office must establish a competitive application process for organizations seeking to participate in the grant program.

¹ R.C. 5180.52(B).

² R.C. 5180.52(C).

³ R.C. 5180.52(A), 5180.53(E), and 5180.54(E).

⁴ R.C. 5180.50.

⁵ R.C. 5180.53(A).

Upon reviewing applications, the Office is required to select two to six violence prevention organizations to participate in the grant program. In selecting organizations, the bill requires the Office to give preference to organizations that provide services in areas of eligible counties most impacted by firearm violence and that demonstrate expertise in all of the following:⁶

- Analyzing and leveraging data to identify the individuals who will most benefit from evidence-based violence prevention services in an eligible county;
- Identifying the conflicts that are responsible for recurring violence;
- Having relationships with individuals who are most able to reduce conflicts;
- Addressing the stabilization and trauma recovery needs of individuals impacted by violence by providing direct services for their unmet needs or referring them to other qualified service providers;
- Having and building relationships with community members and community organizations that provide evidence-based violence prevention services and receive referrals of people who will most benefit from evidence-based violence prevention services;
- Providing training and technical assistance to local law enforcement agencies to improve their effectiveness without having any role, requirement, or mandate to participate in the policing, enforcement, or prosecution of any crime.

Violence prevention organizations selected to participate in the grant program are required to use grant funds to provide the following services:⁷

- Behavioral health services, including clinical interventions, crisis interventions, and group counseling supports;
- Capacity-building services, including administrative and programmatic support, services, and resources;
- Legal aid services (not including advocacy for criminal justice issues), including funding for staff attorneys and paralegals to provide education, training, legal services, and advocacy for individuals serviced by the organization;
- Housing services, including grants for emergency and temporary housing for individuals at immediate risk of firearm violence;
- Workforce development services, including grants for job coaching, intensive care management, employment training and placement, and retention services;

⁶ R.C. 5180.53(B).

⁷ R.C. 5180.53(C).

- Services that assist individuals exiting the state or county criminal justice systems to reintegrate into their communities;
- Victim services, including assessments and screening of victim needs, planning sessions related to assessments, service planning and goal setting, assessing intervention needs, and assisting participants through public assistance processes for victims.

As a condition of participating in the grant program, selected violence prevention organizations are required to enter into a Medicaid provider agreement with the Department of Medicaid to provide services under the team-based model of care system established by the bill (see “**Medicaid coverage of team-based care services**” below).⁸

The bill requires violence prevention organizations within the same county to collaborate. In doing so, the Office is required to designate a lead organization in each eligible county. The lead organization is tasked with (1) organizing and leading monthly meetings of participating violence prevention organizations to improve the effectiveness of evidence-based violence prevention services, (2) attending other meetings in the county that discuss firearm violence and strategies to resolve ongoing conflicts, (3) making recommendations to the Office concerning ways to reduce violent conflict within eligible counties, and (4) sharing knowledge and strategies for reducing firearm violence with youth development organizations participating in the youth development grant program (see “**Youth development grant program**” below).⁹

Youth development grant program

The second grant program to be administered by the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention is the youth development grant program. The bill requires the Office, beginning July 1, 2025, to award grants to youth development organizations in eligible counties.¹⁰ The Office must establish a competitive application process for organizations seeking to participate in the grant program.

Upon reviewing applications, the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention is required to select four to eight youth development organizations to participate in the grant program. In selecting organizations, the bill requires the Office to give preference to organizations that provide services in areas of eligible counties most impacted by firearm violence and that serve the following impacted individuals:¹¹

- Youth who have past involvement with the criminal justice system;

⁸ R.C. 5180.53(B)(3).

⁹ R.C. 5180.53(D).

¹⁰ R.C. 5180.54(A).

¹¹ R.C. 5180.54(B).

- Students who attend or have attended a secondary school where 75% or more of enrolled students have either stopped attending or have failed their courses since entering ninth grade;
- Family members of individuals working with violence prevention organizations;
- Youth living in high-violence areas.

Each youth development organization participating in the grant program is required to reserve a portion of grant funds to provide an individualized needs assessment to each individual the organization serves. The needs assessment must examine the physical and mental condition of each individual based on an individual's connection to family, financial resources, past substance use, involvement in the criminal justice system, and trauma related to chronic exposure to firearm violence. Based on the results of the needs assessment, each individual is required to receive individualized services. The services provided must empower each individual with the social and emotional skills necessary to forge paths of health development and disengagement from high-risk behaviors with the goal of building resilience and the skills associated with healthy social, emotional, and identity development.¹²

Similar to the requirement imposed on violence prevention organizations within the same eligible county, the bill requires participating youth development organizations within the same eligible county to collaborate. The purpose of collaboration between youth development organizations is to (1) build knowledge of the teens and their social organization in the areas in which the organizations serve, (2) coordinate services between organizations and share knowledge and strategies, and (3) meet on an emergency basis with other organizations when conflicts concerning individuals receiving services arise.¹³

Grants to noneligible counties

Beginning July 1, 2025, the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention is required to establish a third grant program to provide grants in counties that are not eligible to receive grants under the violence prevention organization grant program or youth development grant program. The bill requires the Office to select five counties to receive grants distributed using a formula the Office establishes. In selecting the counties, the Office must examine which counties have experienced the largest concentration of firearm violence in the five years since January 1, 2020, including the following factors:¹⁴

- The total number of fatal and nonfatal firearms victims;
- The per capita rate of fatal and nonfatal firearms victims;

¹² R.C. 5180.54(C).

¹³ R.C. 5180.54(D).

¹⁴ R.C. 5180.55(A) to (C).

- The number of children and youth that make up the total number of fatal and nonfatal firearms victims.

Each county selected to receive grant funds under this program must establish a local advisory council. The local advisory council must seek recommendations from the community on how grant funds should be allocated and make recommendations to the Office related to the recommendations received from the community. The bill requires the Office to consider the recommendations of the local advisory council when distributing grant funds within a participating county. If the Office does not adhere to the council's recommendations, the Office must provide the council with written notice explaining why the recommendations were not followed.¹⁵

Annual report

Beginning January 1, 2026, and then annually thereafter, the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention is required to prepare and submit a report to the General Assembly detailing (1) the outcomes of the grant programs administered by the Office, including any reduction in firearm violence that occurs, (2) recommendations that the Office receives from violence prevention organizations to improve program outcomes and reduce firearm violence, and (3) any recommendations the Office has to help reduce firearm violence across the state.¹⁶

Appropriation

The bill appropriates \$500,000 in FY 2025 to the Department of Children and Youth to support the establishment of the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention.¹⁷

Delayed effective date

The bill delays the effective date of the provisions establishing the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention and creation of grant programs until January 1, 2025.¹⁸

Medicaid coverage of team-based care services

The bill requires the Medicaid Director, not later than 90 days after the bill's effective date, to seek approval from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to establish a team-based model of care system to address trauma recovery from chronic exposure to firearm violence.¹⁹ The team-based model of care system must include the following services:²⁰

¹⁵ R.C. 5180.55(D).

¹⁶ R.C. 5180.56.

¹⁷ Sections 3 to 5.

¹⁸ Section 2.

¹⁹ R.C. 5164.97(A).

²⁰ R.C. 5164.97(B).

- Outreach services that recruit trauma-exposed individuals into the system and develop supportive relationships with them based on lived experiences in their communities;
- Case management and community support services that provide stabilization to individuals recovering from chronic exposure to firearm violence and school support services that decrease truancy and involvement with the criminal justice system;
- Group and individual therapy that addresses underlying mental health conditions associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, intermittent explosive disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other mental health conditions resulting from chronic disorder;
- Evidence-based family systems interventions that have proven to reduce anti-social behaviors.

The bill requires the Department of Medicaid to establish a reimbursement methodology for the services described above.²¹

Legislative findings

The bill makes all of the following legislative findings:²²

- Certain areas across Ohio are experiencing concentrated and perpetual firearm violence that is a public health epidemic;
- Within areas experiencing the firearm violence epidemic, violence is concentrated among teens and young adults that have chronic exposure to the risk of violence and criminal justice system involvement and related trauma in small geographic areas where these young people live or congregate;
- Firearm violence victimization and perpetration is highly concentrated in particular areas among a small number of individuals in these areas;
- People who are chronically exposed to the risk of firearm violence victimization are substantially more likely to be violently injured or to violently injure another person. People who have been violently injured are substantially more likely to be violently reinjured. Chronic exposure to violence additionally leads individuals to engage in behavior, as part of a cycle of community violence, trauma, and retaliation, that substantially increases their own risk of violent injury or reinjury;
- Evidence-based programs that engage individuals at the highest risk of firearm violence and provide life stabilization, case management, and culturally competent group and

²¹ R.C. 5164.97(C).

²² R.C. 5180.51.

individual therapy reduce firearm violence victimization and perpetration and can end Ohio’s firearm violence epidemic;

- A public health approach to ending Ohio’s firearm violence epidemic requires targeted, integrated behavioral health services and economic opportunities that promote self-sufficiency for victims of firearm violence and those with chronic exposure to the risk of firearm violence victimization, including services for criminal and juvenile justice-involved populations and crisis response services, such as psychological first aid;
- A public health approach to ending Ohio’s firearm violence epidemic further requires broader prevention investments in the areas that reduce risk factors for youth and families living in areas at the highest risk of firearm violence victimization;
- A public health approach to ending Ohio’s firearm violence epidemic requires empowering residents and community-based organizations within impacted areas to provide culturally competent care based on lived experience in these areas and long-term relationships of mutual interest that promote safety and stability;
- A public health approach to ending Ohio’s firearm violence epidemic further requires that preventive youth development services for youth in these areas be fully integrated with a team-based model of mental health care to address trauma recovery for those young people at the highest risk of firearm violence victimization;
- Community revitalization can be an effective violence prevention strategy, provided that revitalization is targeted to the highest risk areas and revitalization efforts are designed and led by individuals living and working in the impacted areas.

Bill designation

The bill designates its provisions as the “Building Safer Communities for Ohio’s Children Act.”²³

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	02-21-24

ANHB0420IN-135/ts

²³ Section 6.