

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF OHIO

As the seventh largest state, Ohio is very diverse, with 11 million residents and 1.3 million poor people in 88 counties. Ohio is a state of great heterogeneity. It has more urban areas than most states, with seven urban centers and many smaller cities. It also includes large areas of farmland, and isolated rural areas typical of Appalachia.

A. Demographic Overview

The 2000 Census revealed some interesting facts about Ohio and its people: Ohio ranked seventh among the 50 states in population with 11,353,140 people; Columbus is the state's largest city with a population of 711,470; Cleveland follows at 478,403 and Cincinnati at 331,285; Ohio land area, in square miles: 40,948; Persons per square mile: 277.3; Percent of males in population: 48.6; Percent of females in population: 51.4; Percent of Ohioans who speak a language other than English at home: 6.1; Percent who are high school graduates: 83; Percent who have earned a bachelor's degree: 21.1; and, the average travel time to work, in minutes, for commuters in the Buckeye State: 22.9. (This demographic overview was obtained from the State of Ohio's Secretary of State Web Site, *Ohio's Historical Landmarks*, <http://www.oplin.lib.oh.us/products/ohiodefined/facts.htm>).

B. Geographic Overview

Because of its varied historical, geographic, economic, and political structure, public agencies, and private and business organizations, Ohio is divided into numerous different districts and services areas. There are 88 counties, each with a county court system and often several municipal court systems. There are seven major metropolitan areas: Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, Akron-Canton, and Youngstown-Warren. There are 12 state court of appeals districts. The federal court is divided into the northern and southern districts, each with an eastern and western division. Ohio has 99 districts for its House of Representatives and 33 State Senate seats. The Ohio State Bar Association has nine districts. The Ohio Department of Human Services has 12 regions, which report to 5 District Offices. The Ohio Commission on Aging has 11 regions. Each county has a local housing authority. There are 661 local school districts.

Northeast Ohio has large industrial cities (e.g., Cleveland, Akron, and Youngstown). This region, as part of the “rustbelt,” has suffered losing jobs and populations for the past several decades. Northwest Ohio is tied closely to the deep Midwest with large farms and seasonal migrant workers. It has small towns and one medium-sized city (Toledo) whose economy is closely tied to the auto industry.

Southwest Ohio is the historic gateway to the west. Its economy, which centers on metropolitan Cincinnati, includes Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana, and is a mix of service and industry. This area of the state has been largely recession-proof. Southeast Ohio is part of Appalachia with very small towns, abandoned coalfields, and a paucity of jobs, both skilled and unskilled. Poverty is high in Appalachia, and the remoteness and terrain of the area make travel difficult. A recent American Cancer Society and Ohio Department of Health study shows more residents of Ohio’s Appalachian counties are sickened and die of lung, colon, and cervical cancers than those who live elsewhere in the state (*Cancer Rates Higher in Appalachia*, Columbus Dispatch, November 18, 2003). As the article states, this area is plagued by poverty, limited medical resources, lack of education, and a higher incidence of unhealthy lifestyle choices such as smoking - all of which helps explain why these cancers are more common and deadly in Appalachia.

Central Ohio is dominated by the state capital, Columbus, one of the few large cities outside of the Sunbelt to increase its population in the recent past. Columbus has a strong service economy, which includes insurance, banking, academic, health care, and state government.

C. Issues Affecting The Client-Eligible Population

1. Public Benefits and Employment Opportunity

Ohio's public benefits system is state-run and county-administered. This means that the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) is the single state agency for federally-funded programs, but it delegates substantial responsibilities to the counties to administer these programs. This delegation to the counties results in substantial discrepancies of service and policy among counties. Also, unemployment rates differ widely in the state, ranging from 2.2 percent and 2.4 percent in Madison and Franklin Counties, respectively, to 13.2 percent and 12.5

percent in Mercer and Morgan Counties. These differences call for a variety of strategies to assist clients who are part of the workforce.

2. *Medicaid*

As Ohio has implemented Medicaid managed care, it has done so in different ways, with some counties remaining fee-for-service, some counties having voluntary managed care, others having preferred option, yet other counties having mandatory enrollment in Medicaid managed care. This means that each county may be at a different stage of implementation in Medicaid managed care, and faces different issues for access, quality, and covered services.

3. *Health Care*

Ohio is a leader in the provision of health care, with world-class hospitals in Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. Patients travel to Ohio from around the world to receive care. Despite this status as a health care magnet, Ohio does not meet the health needs of its Medicaid recipients and uninsured residents. There are medically underserved areas in both urban and rural areas throughout the state. Uniform access to health and dental care remain a problem for many low-income Ohioans, especially in rural areas.

4. *Housing*

Our older cities and towns have low-income and rental housing, some of which are over 100 years old. These housing units often have significant structural or environmental flaws, which put tenants at risk. Segregated housing also keeps minorities and low-income people from certain communities and school systems, which may be able to provide better services for their children. In rural areas, many low-income people live in mobile homes, which are lightly regulated. Park owners have tremendous power over owner/residents and legal services lawyers have had a big impact in redressing this power imbalance.

5. *Fair Housing*

Fair housing issues abound in our state, though they take on different complexions depending on the location. Urban areas, such as Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati, have

significant areas with minority housing, but minorities may be discouraged from moving into traditionally white neighborhoods or suburbs. Conversely, in rural areas and small towns, minorities may have a difficult time finding any housing at all. Discrimination against families with children is a major problem.

6. *Utilities*

Utility issues are a common problem for Ohio clients. They differ substantially among communities. Rural residents have propane delivery and cost concerns; urban dwellers may have more concerns about the cost of utilities and lifeline rights.