

Skilled Nursing Care for Children in Northeast Ohio: What’s Available for Individuals Under 18

When people hear “skilled nursing facility,” they usually picture a nursing home for older adults. But a smaller, separate system exists for children under 18 with complex medical needs — kids who depend on ventilators, feeding tubes, tracheostomies, or other intensive daily medical care. In Northeast Ohio, that system looks different from the adult version in an important way: most pediatric skilled nursing happens in the child’s own home rather than in a facility, supported by a distinct set of Medicaid programs built specifically for children.

Why Pediatric Care Looks Different From Adult Nursing Homes

Ohio has relatively few standalone nursing facilities that accept children long-term. Federal and state policy over the last several decades has deliberately pushed in the opposite direction — toward keeping medically complex children at home with family whenever possible, and funding private duty nursing in the home instead of institutional placement. As a result, families searching for “pediatric skilled nursing” in Northeast Ohio are more likely to end up looking at in-home nursing agencies and Medicaid waiver programs than a facility directory.

That said, a small number of residential options do exist for children whose needs go beyond what a family can manage at home.

Facility-Based Option: Hattie Larlham

The most prominent facility-based provider of long-term pediatric skilled nursing in the region is **Hattie Larlham**, headquartered in Mantua (Portage County), roughly between Cleveland and Akron.

- The **Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities** is a licensed Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) providing long-term medical and residential care for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including ventilator management and complex nursing care around the clock.
- The Center accepts ICF Medicaid funding as well as private pay, and it also operates several smaller group homes throughout Northeast Ohio for residents with less intensive medical needs.
- Contact: (330) 274-2272, or the Hattie Larlham Foundation main line at (800) 233-8611.

Beyond Hattie Larlham, dedicated long-term pediatric nursing facilities are uncommon in the region — most other “skilled nursing” capacity for children is delivered through home-based private duty nursing rather than a residential campus.

In-Home Pediatric Skilled Nursing Agencies Serving Northeast Ohio

For families whose child can be cared for at home with nursing support, several agencies provide skilled pediatric nursing (RN/LPN-level care for trach and vent management, feeding tubes, medication administration, and related needs) in the Cleveland, Akron, and surrounding areas:

- **Truly Pediatric Home Care** — a CHAP-accredited, Ohio-based agency specializing in skilled private duty nursing for medically complex children statewide, including ventilator management and tracheostomy care. Phone: (937) 397-3600.

- **First Day Homecare (3 C's Ohio)** — provides pediatric private duty nursing across Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati for children with conditions such as muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, seizure disorders, and ventilator or feeding-tube dependence.
- **BrightStar Care** — several Northeast Ohio locations (including Cleveland West) offer in-home pediatric nursing, including neonatal care, tracheostomy and ventilator care, and complex IV therapy.

Because private duty nursing agencies vary in which counties and insurance plans (including specific Medicaid managed care plans) they accept, it's worth confirming current coverage directly with an agency before assuming availability.

Pediatric Hospital Systems Coordinating Complex Care

For acute care, transitional care after a hospital stay, and coordination of ongoing complex-care needs, Northeast Ohio's three major pediatric hospital systems play a central role even when the day-to-day nursing happens at home:

- **Akron Children's Hospital** — the region's largest pediatric health system, with campuses in Akron and Boardman (serving the Mahoning Valley).
- **Cleveland Clinic Children's**
- **University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital** (Cleveland)

These systems typically have complex care or care-coordination teams that help families navigate the transition from hospital to home nursing, connect with Medicaid waiver case managers, and identify a private duty nursing agency with availability.

The Medicaid Programs That Actually Pay for This Care

Because pediatric skilled nursing — whether in a facility or at home — is expensive, most families rely on one of the following Medicaid pathways. Unlike adult Medicaid long-term care, several of these programs count only the child's own income and resources, not the parents', which is what makes them available to many middle- and higher-income families.

- **Ohio Home Care Waiver (OHCW)** — Ohio's primary Medicaid waiver for people from birth through age 59 with a nursing-facility level of care need. It covers personal care aide services, home care attendant services, and waiver nursing services, and it's specifically designed to keep medically fragile children and adults at home instead of in an institution. Applications go through the local County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS).
- **DODD Waivers (Individual Options, Level One, and SELF)** — Administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities through county boards of developmental disabilities, these waivers serve children and adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities and can include nursing services alongside other supports. Like OHCW, eligibility is based on the child's own income, not the parents'.
- **Katie Beckett / TEFRA Option** — A Medicaid eligibility pathway (referenced by some Ohio-based home care agencies as available to families in the state) that lets a child who needs a hospital, nursing facility, or ICF level of care qualify for Medicaid based only on their own income and resources — even when family income would normally make them ineligible. Because implementation details can change, it's worth confirming current Ohio eligibility rules directly with the Ohio Department of Medicaid or a county caseworker.

- **State Plan Home Health Nursing (EPSDT benefit)** — Standard Ohio Medicaid coverage for home health nursing in shifts of four hours or less. Children under 21 can receive more than the standard 14-hours-per-week cap when it's medically necessary, under Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.

Where to Start

Because eligibility for children's Medicaid programs runs through different doors than the senior-focused Area Agencies on Aging system, families in Northeast Ohio generally start in one of these places:

Need	Where to Start
Home nursing hours through Medicaid (OHCW, state plan home health)	County Department of Job and Family Services
Developmental disability waiver services (IO, Level One, SELF)	County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Residential/facility-based skilled nursing	Hattie Larlham (Mantua)
Private duty nursing agency for in-home care	Truly Pediatric Home Care, First Day Homecare, BrightStar Care, or a similar CHAP-accredited agency serving your county
Discharge planning or complex care coordination after a hospital stay	Akron Children's Hospital, Cleveland Clinic Children's, or UH Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital

This article reflects publicly available information as of 2026. Medicaid waiver rules, enrollment caps, and agency service areas change over time, so families should confirm current details directly with the Ohio Department of Medicaid, their county Department of Job and Family Services, or county Board of Developmental Disabilities before making care decisions.