Ohio Funding Six Projects in Dayton Area to Combat Infant Mortality

Collaborative efforts aim to improve birth outcomes and reduce the racial and ethnic disparities in infant mortality

The Ohio Department of Medicaid has announced a $3,610,000 grant to help reduce the number of babies who die before their first birthday. The grant includes investments in four key areas: Community Health Workers, Home Visiting, CenteringPregnancy® and Community Based Interventions. These initiatives involve innovative projects that will connect women and infants to quality health care and care management.

The grant will be managed through a partnership with Ohio's managed care providers including; Buckeye Health Plan, CareSource, Molina Health Care, Paramount and United Health Care.

“I want to thank Governor DeWine and the Ohio Department of Medicaid for providing $3.6 million in grant funding to Montgomery County’s EveryOne Reach One Infant Mortality Task Force, so that we can continue our work to reduce infant mortality, enhance maternal health care, and improve birth outcomes for families,” said Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman. “This money will go a long way to helping us continue this important work, because even one death is too many.”

In 2018, 44 babies died before their first birthday, and Montgomery County’s infant mortality rate overall was 6.8, compared to 2017’s rate of 7.8. This reduction was made possible in part with the help of a previous grant from the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

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“As a nurse, I know investments in clinical care and community-based services are critical to reduce infant mortality and its racial disparity,” said Maureen Corcoran, Ohio’s Medicaid Director. “The Ohio Department of Medicaid and its managed care plan partners remain committed to funding collaborative local efforts in areas with the greatest racial disparities in infant outcomes; ensuring that African American babies have the same chance to thrive in their first year of life as all other infants.”

The leading causes of infant deaths are due to premature births, birth defects, and safe sleep practices. Also, there is a historical disparity in the number of deaths, with Black babies dying at a rate 2x more than White babies.

“How to see a meaningful reduction in infant deaths we will continue our community-wide collaborative effort that touches on all aspects of the problem,” said Office of Health Promotion Director and EveryOne Reach One Task Force co-lead, Terra Williams. “Through our partnerships, we will see new and expanded services to help both mother and child before, during and after the pregnancy.”

Through the EveryOne Reach One Infant Mortality Task Force, Ohio Medicaid has awarded funding to support the following projects:

**Community Health Workers**
- **Public Health - Dayton & Montgomery County’s Neighborhood Navigators**
  Neighborhood Navigators will facilitate access to services and act as liaisons between health and social services and the community to reduce disparities and birth outcomes. During this grant period, the Neighborhood Navigators will identify and engaged over 400 at-risk women within priority areas outlined in Montgomery County’s CHIP (45402, 45405, 45406, 45414, 45415, 45417, and 45426).
- **Public Health - Dayton & Montgomery County’s Every Parent Matters**: Every Parent Matters is a home visiting program that encourages fathers’ participation by offering separate home visits as well as joint home visits with the mothers; assigning home visitors (male Community Health Worker) who best fit the father’s needs; and tailoring the content of activities to be hands-on and specific to the father’s needs.
- **Five Rivers Health Centers**: Community Health Workers/Doulas will provide a one-on-one partnership with African-American women to help them through their pregnancy, be a resource after they deliver, and help to empower them to achieve their goals for themselves and their children.
Catholic Social Services of Miami Valley: The Family Wellness Community Health Worker Project at Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley team will work collaboratively with partner agencies to identify gaps in services and create stronger links to identify pregnant women earlier in pregnancy, provide information on available prenatal health care, encourage scheduled appointments with prenatal providers in the first trimester, engage African American women in prenatal and postnatal home visits and supports, and increase the availability of resources to reduce the barriers created by the social determinants of health.

Home Visiting

- **Help Me Grow Brighter Futures**: Help Me Grow Brighter Futures (HMGBF) will continue the implementation of the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) and the Healthy Families America (HFA) home visiting programs in Montgomery County as a collaboration. Home visits will continue to include evidenced based NFP and HFA curriculums.

- **Wesley Community Center**: The Wesley Community Center Infant Mortality Program will utilize a Community Health Worker program model to provide new and expectant African American women with information, support, and referrals to community resources and services, promote good maternal and child health, home safety, food security, and positive parenting.

CenteringPregnancy®

- **Five Rivers Health Centers**: With the development of CenteringPregnancy® group prenatal care, pregnant women are now able to receive prenatal care in groups as well as attend childbirth education classes.

Community Based Intervention

- **Five Rivers Health Centers**: Five Rivers Health Centers will be training Community Health Workers to be Doulas. A doula is a professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and educational support to a mother who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. The doula's purpose is to help women have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience.

- **Miami Valley Organizing Collaborative**: Community Hope Project (CHP) is a program in which faith-based organizations will use their influence to improve the community’s health. The goal is to establish health ministries that would include infant mortality reduction as a primary focus. Congregants will be recruited to participate in a Peer Health Leadership training program to become Health Ambassadors.

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• Wesley Community Center: The Wesley Community Center will provide a neighborhood African American women-led peer support group for mental health. Wesley Community Center will partner with schools of Professional Psychology and Medicine at local colleges and universities.

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