



Department of Medicaid

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Ohio Invests in Columbus Area to Combat Infant Mortality

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

COLUMBUS – As part of the State of Ohio’s efforts to help more Ohio babies reach their first birthdays, the Ohio Department of Medicaid and its five contracted managed care plans have awarded \$3,616,464 to community initiatives in Franklin County aimed at reducing infant mortality.

The number of Ohio infants who died before their first birthday in 2016 was 1,024, according to data released by the Ohio Department of Health. While Ohio’s infant mortality rates are all trending downward over time, Ohio’s rate – especially the black infant mortality rate – remains too high and exceeds the national average.

The current state budget commits almost \$50 million in general revenue funding and federal grants to improving birth outcomes and reducing racial and ethnic disparities, and builds on almost \$87 million in investments made during the past six years. Specifically, the Ohio Department of Medicaid is dedicating \$26.8 million over the next two years to support community-driven proposals with proven track records that will help combat infant mortality at the local level.

Together with its five contracted managed care plans and the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Medicaid has engaged local leaders in nine Ohio communities – Butler, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, Stark, and Summit counties – to identify innovative projects that will connect women and infants to quality health care and care management.

“It’s promising to see the local community coalitions that have been formed in recent years to bring local coordination and leadership to addressing infant mortality,” said Barbara Sears, Director of the Ohio Department of Medicaid. “We realize this is a complex issue that will take all of us working together at the state and local levels to help more Ohio babies reach their first birthdays.”

Ohio Medicaid and its five contracted managed care plans awarded funding to support proposals through CelebrateOne, Heart of Ohio Family Health Center and Men for the Movement. Funded programs include the expansion of CenteringPregnancy services, the hiring and retention of additional community health workers, the expansion of home visiting services and staff, and the expansion of group setting pregnancy services. The department will continue to work with its Franklin County community partners to invest in programs to lower African American infant mortality statewide.

The Ohio Department of Medicaid serves more than 3 million residents across Ohio, with nearly 90 percent of all Medicaid beneficiaries served through a Medicaid managed care plan.

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