

Lucas County Efforts to Address Infant Mortality Awarded \$288,800
Ohio Commission on Minority Health Renews Commitment

To help ensure African American babies are born healthy and reach their first of many birthdays, the Ohio Commission on Minority Health is investing \$288,800 for Lucas County efforts of the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB. The care coordination system is organized by the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio.

From 2017 to 2018, Lucas County's infant mortality rate among African Americans was 15.2 per 1,000 births, nearly three times higher than the county's rate of 5.7 per 1,000 white births, according to Ohio Department of Health statistics. There were 47 deaths of African American babies younger than 1, 42 deaths of white babies, and three deaths of babies of other races for an overall Lucas County infant mortality rate of 8.5 per 1,000 births from 2017 to 2018, according to the statistics.

The Ohio Commission on Minority Health grant provides the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB with support for training, evaluation, outreach services and project management. Key to the community-wide system are community health workers employed at 11 care coordination agencies, who help connect women to needed medical and social services.

"This funding from the Ohio Commission on Minority Health is absolutely vital to our community's efforts to prevent African American babies from dying at nearly three times the rate of white babies," said Jan Ruma, Director of the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB and Vice President of the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio. "Our system's community health workers are making in difference in Lucas County."

Community health workers working through the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB serve women at highest risk for having low birth weight and preterm births, which are leading causes of infant mortality. From 2017 to 2018, the infant mortality among the system's African American clients was 8.7 per 1,000 births, which was significantly lower than the Lucas County rate of 15.2 per 1,000 African American births, statistics show.

The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB has received funding from the Ohio Commission on Minority Health to combat infant mortality since 2016, and other funders include the Ohio Department of Medicaid, Medicaid managed care plans and the Ohio Department of Health. Care coordination agencies employing the system's community health workers are Adelante, Baby University, Compassion Health Toledo, East Toledo Family Center, La Posada Family Emergency Shelter, Mercy Health, Neighborhood Health Association, ProMedica Toledo Hospital, Toledo/Lucas County CareNet, University Church and YWCA of Northwest Ohio.

About the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio

The Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio (HCNO) is a regional hospital association that represents and advocates on behalf of its members while providing collaborative opportunities to improve community health. HCNO coordinates several community health initiatives, including the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB and the Healthy Lucas County coalition. For more information, please visit hcno.org.

