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Ohio Medicaid to Fund Four Projects to Combat Infant Mortality in the Akron Area

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

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) has announced new investments in four community initiatives aimed at addressing infant mortality in Summit County.

Recently [released data](#) from the Ohio Department of Health showed slight improvement in Ohio's infant mortality rate, down from 7.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013 to 6.8 in 2014. However, Ohio's rate – especially the black infant mortality rate – remains too high and exceeds the national average.

As part of last year's Executive Budget, ODM is investing \$26.8 million over two years to support community-driven proposals to combat infant mortality at the local level and enhance coordination among various agencies that provide care for women and infants at risk. Together with its five contracted managed care plans, Ohio 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.

"This is a new approach to combatting infant mortality in Ohio," said John McCarthy, state Medicaid director. "Rather than pursuing one-size-fits-all remedies that lack results, we are looking to initiatives that address the specific needs of individual communities. The feedback and expertise from organizations in the Akron community proved critical in this process."

The four projects in Summit County awarded funding include:

- **Mount Calvary Baptist Church/Minority Behavioral Health Group:** Funds will support extensive community outreach in the 44320 and 44307 zip codes. Efforts will include educational opportunities to churches through nursing outreach.
Total Funding Amount: \$299,800
- **Fame Fathers/Charisma Community Connection:** Fame Fathers is a local fatherhood initiative aimed at promoting parental responsibility and involvement among fathers. The new Medicaid investment will enable Fame Fathers to partner with local organizations to ensure that fathers are playing an active role in the fight against infant mortality in the community.
Total Funding Amount: \$250,000
- **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.:** Funding will support existing local efforts aimed at establishing a Pathways Community HUB model to improve access to primary care and social services for women and families. It is anticipated that an additional 250 women will be served through this award.
Total Funding Amount: \$566,983

- **Project Ujima/Summa Center for Health Equity:** Various projects will be supported to address infant mortality in the Akron area. Initiatives will include the facilitation of weekly wellness circles for expectant and new parents; the coordination of facilitators' training for racism dialogues through Everyday Democracy; and coordinating and facilitating support for pregnancy centering circles for the Summa Center for Health Equity.
Total Funding Amount: \$438,394

Total Medicaid investment across the four projects is \$1,555,177.

The Ohio Department of Medicaid serves more than 2.9 million residents across Ohio. More than 80 percent of all Medicaid beneficiaries are served through the five contracted Medicaid managed care plans – Buckeye Health Plan, CareSource, Molina Healthcare, Paramount Advantage, and United Healthcare Community Plan.

More information on Medicaid managed care can be found [here](#).

