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## **Ohio Funding Six Projects in Canton 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 Kasich Administration’s efforts to combat infant mortality, the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) has announced new investments in six community initiatives in Stark County aimed at reducing infant mortality.

The [2014 Infant Mortality Data Report](#) 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.”

Through the Canton-Stark County THRIVE coalition, Ohio Medicaid awarded funding to support the following proposals:

- Stark County will partner with the Akron Summit County Healthy Connections Network (HCN) Certified Pathways HUB and establish formal partnerships with care coordinating agencies in Stark County to provide intake, assessment, and care for pregnant women in high-risk communities.  
*Total Funding Amount: \$318,460*
- Nine Community Health Workers will be recruited from targeted neighborhoods to support at-risk pregnant women and work together towards a healthy pregnancy and baby.  
*Total Funding Amount: \$926,285*
- Onsite childcare will be provided at the centering pregnancy program currently serving Canton and Massillon residents, and two additional centering programs will be established at St. Paul’s Square Health Center and the Alliance Family Health Center.  
*Total Funding Amount: \$87,820*

- A full-time fatherhood coordinator will be employed through the Stark County Fatherhood Coalition to connect with expecting and young fathers about responsible parenting, economic stability, healthy marriage and family strategies, and parenting time assistance.  
*Total Funding Amount: \$437,039*
- Funding will be used to help faith-based organizations, grassroots agencies and community groups in targeted neighborhoods foster awareness of infant mortality and connect residents to resources.  
*Total Funding Amount: \$542,500*
- Keep our Babies Alive, Canton City and Alliance City Health Departments, and Aultman Hospital will expand or implement new home visiting programs focusing on at-risk pregnant women.  
*Total Funding Amount: \$488,040*

Total Medicaid investment across the six projects is \$2,968,154.

The Ohio Department of Medicaid serves more than 3 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](#).