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## News Release

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John R. Kasich/ Governor  
Richard Hodges/ Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **“Centering Pregnancy” Care Model to Combat Infant Mortality Through 4 Community Health Center Demonstration Projects** *Approach Complements Infant Mortality Initiatives in New State Budget*

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has selected four community health centers across the state to pilot an evidence-based healthcare delivery model for pregnant women called “Centering Pregnancy” which integrates maternal care, education and support to improve birth and infant health outcomes in high-risk communities.

Ohio’s infant mortality rate, measured based on the number of live-born babies who die before their first birthday, is among the worst in the nation. The state’s black infant mortality rate is twice the white infant mortality rate.

The Centering Pregnancy program complements initiatives in Ohio’s new two-year state budget that target infant mortality by focusing resources where the need is greatest, including by supporting enhanced care management for women in high-risk neighborhoods and engaging leaders in those neighborhoods to connect women to care; creating a process to identify communities with the highest rates of infant mortality in order to prioritize and surge resources into those areas; using evidence-based tobacco cessation programs for pregnant women in areas with high infant mortality rates since smoking is linked to poor birth outcomes; and continuing to raise public awareness about infant safe sleep practices since about 15 percent of infant deaths are sleep-related. Click [here](#) for a broader list of infant mortality initiatives in the new state budget.

The four community health centers selected to participate in the two-year Centering Pregnancy Demonstration Project are sharing \$900,000 from the Ohio Health Transformation Innovation Fund awarded by the Governor’s Office of Health Transformation:

- Columbus Neighborhood Health Center (Columbus)
- Five Rivers Health Centers (Dayton)
- Muskingum Valley Health Centers (Muskingum County)
- Neighborhood Health Association (Toledo)

In the Centering Pregnancy program model, eight to 12 women with similar gestational ages meet together, learn care skills, participate in facilitated discussions and develop a support network with one another. The program provides a safe place for expecting mothers to share life experiences with other women who understand their situation, build a community of support, and provide positive peer encouragement to make healthy choices during their pregnancy.

(MORE)

“Through this supportive model of care, women become empowered to choose health-promoting behaviors,” said ODH Medical Director Mary DiOrio, M.D. “Birth outcomes, specifically increased birth weight and gestational age at delivery, attest to the effectiveness of this care delivery model.”

The board of directors of the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) voted to designate prenatal care as a targeted priority for the association and its 44 member centers for 2015 given Ohio’s infant mortality rate.

“Ohio’s Community Health Centers are advanced primary care practices already located in areas of high-need, high poverty, and higher than average infant mortality rates, which makes them uniquely positioned to be on the ground floor of this pilot project, well positioned to make a significant impact,” said OACHC Chief Operating Officer Julie DiRossi-King.

For more information about the Centering Pregnancy model of care, go to “[centeringhealthcare.org](http://centeringhealthcare.org).”

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