

The Cuyahoga County Child Fatality Report
Twentieth Edition

Protecting Our Future

Child Fatalities 2016



The Cuyahoga County
Child Fatality Review Board
Armond Budish, Cuyahoga County Executive



The Cuyahoga County
Office of Early Childhood
Invest in Children

Community Actions 2016–2017

The following community actions represent ongoing efforts to reduce preventable deaths in children, while others represent new initiatives that build and strengthen existing outreach, education, and service delivery systems.

Prematurity and Infant Mortality

- Beginning with prenatal care through an infant's second year of life, the Cleveland **MomsFirst** project is designed to improve birth outcomes and ensure a healthy start for babies by providing support to high-risk pregnant women and teens. Core services include outreach, case management, health education, and interconception care. The project also provides screening and referral for perinatal and postpartum depression, substance/alcohol abuse, toxic stress, and intimate partner violence.
- The goal of MomsFirst is to reduce disparities in infant mortality. The participants are primarily high-risk African American pregnant women and teens. Cleveland's preliminary 2016 overall infant mortality rate (IMR) was 10.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births with a white IMR of 5.4 and a black IMR of 13.5. MomsFirst's IMR for participants in 2016 was 5.4. Given that MomsFirst participants are reflective of those women at the highest risk for poor birth outcomes, these data provide strong evidence of a successful program to reduce infant mortality.
 - All MomsFirst sites hold neighborhood consortia meetings to educate the community at large about the following topics: preterm labor, safe sleep, smoking cessation, substance abuse, family planning, STD/HIV/AIDS prevention and testing, intimate partner violence, and perinatal depression.
 - The women served by MomsFirst are at an elevated risk for depression due to both pregnancy and socioeconomic factors. Depression can affect a pregnant woman's functional status and her ability to obtain prenatal care, eat properly, and avoid dangerous behaviors. Untreated depression during pregnancy is associated with spontaneous abortion, preterm delivery, and other adverse effects. The **Cleveland Regional Perinatal Network** developed a system-wide approach to screen and refer women identified as at risk for perinatal depression by establishing universal screening and referral protocols at several health care institutions and community agencies. As a result of these protocols, there has been a significant increase in referrals to perinatal mental health providers.
 - MomsFirst also has protocols to address toxic stress, intimate partner violence, and substance abuse among their participants, and refer to appropriate agencies.
- The mission of the **March of Dimes** is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. The campaign focus is to improve health equity, reduce the preterm birth rate, address the health of women before and between pregnancies, advance perinatal quality improvement, and expand preterm birth research. Additionally, March of Dimes grants are awarded to programs and research that focus on this mission.
 - In 2017, the Ohio March of Dimes provided funds to expand CenteringPregnancy® at MetroHealth Medical Center, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, and University Hospitals MacDonald Women's Hospital.
- **Invest In Children** funds organizations that work with pregnant parents to improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality. They also provide newborn visits to low income families. Messages for parents are woven throughout all of their programs, including information about prenatal and interconception health, safe sleep, and environmental tobacco smoke.
- The **Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH)** provides training sessions for MomsFirst clients on the topics of infant mortality, preterm labor, prematurity, and safe sleep.
- CCBH provides presentations about health, equity, and infant mortality to staff at hospitals in the county in order to highlight the link between population health, policy, medical care, and the community.



Community Actions 2016–2017

Sleep Related Deaths

- In 2016-2017, the **Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH)**, as outreach for the Child Fatality Review Board, continued to provide safe sleep education for medical and nursing staff at maternity and pediatric hospitals throughout the county.
- The **WIC Program** continues to provide safe sleep information to their clients and has incorporated documentation of the education in the client's chart.
- The **Rainbow Injury Prevention Center** designed a safe sleep postcard that is given to new parents at University Hospitals MacDonal Women's Hospital as a part of the hospital's child safety rounding project. During 2016, the staff visited over 2,500 new mothers. Portable cribs were also distributed to needy families.
- **MomsFirst** provides safe sleep education to all participants in the program, with over 1700 families served in 2016. The project continues to assist families in need of a safe sleep environment in obtaining a pack-n-play.
- Safe sleep fliers continue to be included with birth certificates mailed to parents.
- **Bright Beginnings (formerly Help Me Grow)** staff provides safe sleep education and materials to their clients.

Unintentional Injuries

- The **Rainbow Injury Prevention Center** is dedicated to preventing unintentional injuries.
 - As Greater Cleveland's child passenger safety experts, the staff operates free Car Seat Inspection Stations; provides low-cost car seat distribution for income-qualified families; offers infant car seat consultations for expectant parents; develops educational campaigns to keep children rear facing until at least 2 years of age; conducts free car seat checkup events; leads booster seat promotion efforts; and designs seat belt promotion and driver attention campaigns aimed at tweens and teens.
 - The Center develops programs to address unintentional injuries with topics about bicycle, sports, pedestrian, and home safety.
 - The Rainbow Injury Prevention Center also uses Facebook and Twitter to spread safety messages to a wide audience.

Homicide

- The **Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** incorporates many programs to best serve their clients.
 - DCFS uses neighborhood collaboratives to support children and families who struggle with social and economic challenges. Services offered include food pantries, emergency rent assistance, budgeting classes, parent support groups, and after school programs. These partnerships play a vital role in prevention efforts that allow children and families to be served safely in their home.
 - The Special Investigation Unit at DCFS, in conjunction with the Practice Evaluation Unit, continues to perform a comprehensive record review for all fatalities in which the deceased child was involved with the agency at the time of the fatality, and/or during the previous 12 months. Lessons learned from investigations contribute to ongoing staff development throughout the agency, particularly in the areas of safety planning and prevention.
 - DCFS uses Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy to help children and families that have been impacted by abuse or violence in the home or community. DCFS utilizes a trauma screening to determine if a child or family could be best served through the program. The most common types of violence reported were sexual abuse and domestic violence.
 - The **Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care** is designed for children and youth with severe emotional, behavioral, or mental health difficulties and their families. It is a team-based planning process intended to provide individualized and coordinated family-driven care. The focus is on building a team of natural and formal supports in the community to "wrap around" the family and develop a plan of care.
- The **Cuyahoga County Witness/Victim Service Center (WVSC)** is one of eight communities under the US Department of Justice's **Defending Childhood Initiative**. This project seeks to not only prevent violence, but also to identify and treat children who are experiencing trauma as a result of exposure to violence in their homes, schools, or communities. More than 150 professionals have been trained to assess for trauma in children and over 35,000 children have been screened to determine if services for evidence-based treatment are needed.



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- WVSC manages the **Children Who Witness Violence** program, which provides immediate crisis stabilization to children in the aftermath of exposure to violence.
- WVSC promotes child and family safety by being an application assistant for **Safe at Home**, which is an address confidentiality program. It allows victims of crime, violence, and abuse to apply for a confidential address, in order to shield their residence address from public records due to safety concerns.
- WVSC is the lead agency for the **Family Justice Center (FJC)** which is a partnership between Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland. The FJC provides collaboration of services to victims of crime, violence, and abuse in a single location through multiple partnerships.
- The **Cleveland Division of Police** has made it a policy to refer all children who witness any violent situation to the Children Who Witness Violence program.
- **Northern Ohio Trauma System, MetroHealth Medical Center**, and the **Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance** started a pilot program to use violence interrupters in the hospital to provide conflict resolution, case management, and referrals to outreach workers.
- MetroHealth Medical Center has received funding to collaborate with the **May Dugan Center** to initiate a victim of crime advocacy and recovery program.
- The **Cuyahoga County Family Drug Court** works with parents whose children are alleged to be abused or neglected and who are at risk of losing their children because of drug dependency. This intensive program is designed to reduce the time that a child may spend in placement while the parent receives treatment.
- In concert with the Defending Childhood Initiative, the **Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County** has a network of adolescent treatment agencies specializing in services to teenagers, in addition to its school-based and community prevention programming.
- The **Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court** has many interventions and programs to assist youth who are in their system.
- The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative is a nationwide program that is being used in Cuyahoga County to develop options other than the use of a detention center for court-involved youth.
- Effective Practices in Community Supervision is a new intervention method used by probation officers to help offenders make positive changes in their thinking and behavior so they will be less likely to commit a new crime.
- Juvenile Court has a School-Based Probation Unit. In this partnership with the schools, school-based probation officers provide control, supervision, and incentives that delinquent youth often need to attend school regularly and comply with school rules.
- The CALM program is an assessment and referral service for youth that are low-risk domestic violence offenders. It provides an alternative to detention. In 2017 this program was expanded to all of the Cleveland police districts.
- The Gun Prevention Program is a means to reduce recidivism and gun violence among youth. It offers discussion of state and federal laws, strategies for decision making, and selection of alternative choices.

Suicide

- The **Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County** is the lead agency for the coordination of school-based mental health and prevention services. The social-emotional needs of the students are addressed with services and referrals as needed.
- **Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court** has a Mental Health Court that is designed for youth who have been identified as having mental health issues. These children are provided intensive supervision and service coordination.
- The **Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice** program provides an intensive level of community supervision for youth diagnosed with mental illness or chemical dependence.



Community Actions 2016–2017

Interagency Actions

As a result of the Child Fatality Review Program, interagency communication and collaboration have been strengthened.

- The partnership between **Bright Beginnings (formerly Help Me Grow)** and the **Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** continues to strengthen protocols with DCFS. This includes strategies for engaging families who have had a case of substantiated abuse and neglect, as well as improve communication and coordination between the DCFS caseworker and the Bright Beginnings worker. An outreach initiative includes the looping of the Bright Beginnings video in the DCFS waiting room.
- The **Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH)** centralized system is a cooperative effort with Bright Beginnings, the **Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County, Invest in Children, the Educational Service Center,** and DCFS. This serves as a single point of entry for children, from birth to 6 years, who may be experiencing emotional, behavioral, or social problems.
- **MetroHealth Medical Center (MHMC)** hosts a quarterly meeting with DCFS to improve collaboration between the two agencies and to update policy information.
- Children in foster care are often survivors of abuse or unsafe living arrangements. To meet the needs of these special youngsters, MHMC and DCFS initiated a Medical Home for Children in Foster Care program. Children are seen by MHMC staff and enrolled in a coordinated tracking program designed to improve their current and long-term health and well-being.

