Overview

The number of babies born in Ohio’s Stark County in 2017 was 4,126. Of those births, 2,614 were delivered at Aultman Hospital. Ohio is ranked 48th in the nation in overall infant mortality and 49th in infant mortality for African-American babies. Stark County has one of the highest disparity rates in birth outcomes. Aultman has collaborated with the Canton-Stark County THRIVE initiative to reduce the infant mortality rate (IMR) and the disparity rate.

Aultman is an active participant on state and local committees including the Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative (OPQC), Ohio Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality (OCPIM), Stark County THRIVE, CenteringPregnancy®, Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR), Collaborative Improvement & Innovation Network (COIIN), and the Breastfeeding Task Force. Additionally, Aultman has targeted education on infant safe sleep practices, breastfeeding, birth spacing, tobacco cessation, and the importance of early prenatal care to identified high-risk areas reaching approximately 6,500 people throughout Stark County.

Impact

The collaboration to fight infant mortality is making a real difference. The IMR for African-American babies in 2017 was 17.5 deaths for every 1,000 births, an improvement over the rate of 21.0 from 2016. In a five-year average of IMR in Stark County, overall infant mortality has decreased. The overall IMR in 2008-2012 was 6.6 compared with 6.3 from 2013-2017. There also was a significant change in the racial disparity. From 2008-2012, the racial disparity between white and black infant mortality was 3.8. From 2013-2017, the racial disparity gap decreased to 2.5.

Along with collaboration with local health departiments, area hospitals and physician practices, Aultman has been involved in the following to efforts to reduce IMR:

- Prematurity Prevention – Since 2008, Aultman has participated on several OPQC projects focused on reducing premature births. Michael Krew, M.D., the medical director of the Aultman Birth Center, co-authored The OPQC Progesterone Project, whose goal is to decrease
premature births in Ohio before 32 weeks by 10 percent by identifying women with increased risk early in pregnancy and starting treatment with progesterone. In the first three years (2014-2017), the project has reduced repeated early preterm births before 32 weeks by 20 percent and all Ohio births before 32 weeks by 6.6 percent. These pre-32 week births account for more than half of infant mortality in Ohio.

- **CenteringPregnancy** – In 2004, Aultman was the first hospital in Ohio to receive site approval from the nationally recognized Centering Healthcare Institute. More than 1,000 families have received care through the CenteringPregnancy program, which has been shown to decrease preterm births and racial disparities in preterm birth.

- **Promoting Safe Sleep and Safe Baby** – Aultman Birth Center has partnered with the Health Department and THRIVE to implement efforts to improve community awareness on the importance of infant safe sleep. Nurses have educated more than 10,000 community members on efforts to decrease infant mortality, including infant safe sleep, tobacco cessation, birth spacing, breastfeeding, and infant safety. Aultman’s Birth Center also partnered with the Health Department Cribs for Kids to conduct safe sleep education and distribute Safe Sleep kits before patients leave the hospital.

### Lessons Learned

Collaboration with focused strategies and resources have greater impact for improvement. Aultman focused outreach and educational efforts on identified zip codes and census tracts whose residents are most at risk for poor birth outcomes and to evaluate use of technology for better outcomes.

“Our goal is to provide families the tools they need in order the keep their infants healthy,” says Melinda Wiles, M.S.N., R.N., C.P.L.C., outreach and bereavement coordinator for Aultman’s Birth Center. “Everyone can learn and promote infant safe sleep, not just the parents. We believe that this is the responsibility of everyone in our community, and to that end, we will continue to raise awareness so that infants in our community have a better chance at leading a healthy life.”

### Future Goals

Aultman is collaborating with THRIVE to provide an educational app that will be offered at no cost to the community so that pregnant moms and families can have access to evidence-based prenatal and postnatal education.

### CONTACT

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