

# MAHONING COUNTY

## Addressing Infant Mortality through Positive Youth Development Opportunities for Adolescent Girls



## INTRODUCTION

In 2016, 1,024 Ohio babies died before their first birthdays. Ohio mothers age 15-17 were twice as likely to lose their baby compared to mothers age 30 to 34. Supporting adolescent girls through positive youth programming is a long-term strategy for infant mortality prevention.

Guided by research and state-level data, The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) partnered with local Ohio Equity Institute (OEI) entities to host and facilitate forums aimed at addressing and reducing risks for infant mortality and improved access to positive youth development (PYD) activities for adolescent girls. A diverse group of Mahoning County stakeholders participated in a community forum, where they assessed local capacity, examined local data, and designed interventions to reduce infant mortality and related inequities for adolescent girls. Stakeholders examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of their community related to adolescent girls ages 10 to 14. The community forum began with stakeholders examining state-level data to guide, inform, and understand the position of the state in relation to risks for infant mortality. The summary also educated and informed stakeholders about the link between maternal risk factors and opportunities for PYD. Highlights from the data are presented below and on page 3.

## THE FACTS ABOUT INFANT MORTALITY



**In 2016, 1,024 Ohio babies died before their first birthdays.<sup>1</sup>**



**In 2016, Ohio mothers age 15-17 were twice as likely to lose their baby compared to mothers ages 30-34.<sup>1</sup>**

### Leading causes of infant deaths

- Birth defects
- Low birth weight
- Pregnancy complications
- Preterm birth
- Sudden infant death syndrome
- Accidents

### Prevalence of maternal risk factors known to contribute to infant mortality



#### **Chronic health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension**

- 26% of Ohio females (7th–12th grade) are overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup>
- Only 39% of high school females report being physically active for at least 60 minutes on five or more days a week.<sup>5</sup>
- Only 20% of high school females report eating five servings of fruits and vegetables per day in a week.<sup>5</sup>



#### **Teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections**

- In 2016, Ohio teens age 15-19 accounted for 6% of the State's births.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 17% of teen mothers will have a repeat birth between the ages of 15 and 19.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2013, Ohio females age 15-24 accounted for 73% of all reported cases of Chlamydia and 59% of all reported cases of Gonorrhea.<sup>2</sup>



#### **Tobacco and alcohol use**

- 22% of Ohio adolescents report having used some form of tobacco during the past month.<sup>5</sup>
- 27% of high school females report having at least one drink of alcohol within the past month.<sup>5</sup>
- Approximately 76,000 of Ohio adolescents ages 12–17 (8%) report using illicit drugs within the past month.<sup>7</sup>



#### **Healthcare utilization**

- Only 46% of pregnant girls ages 15-17 in Ohio receive prenatal care in their first trimester.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2016, 43% of Ohio Medicaid eligible youth receive a well-care visit.<sup>9</sup>



#### **Other sociocultural factors such as race, age, poverty, and psychosocial stressors**

- 25% of Ohio youth are food insecure.<sup>7</sup>
- 22% of children in Ohio under the age of 18 live in poverty.<sup>8</sup>
- Of all Ohio births to girls under the age of 20, 63% belong to White Caucasian mothers and 28% belong to African American mothers.<sup>6</sup>

## PROMOTING HEALTHY BEHAVIOR

Adolescent girls can make healthy choices both before and during pregnancy:

- Preventing chronic health conditions (obesity, diabetes, hypertension)
- Reaching a healthy weight through proper nutrition and physical activity
- Going to a healthcare provider to receive an annual, preventive well-care visit
- Making positive choices in relation to their health and well-being
- Staying on course to be college and/or career ready

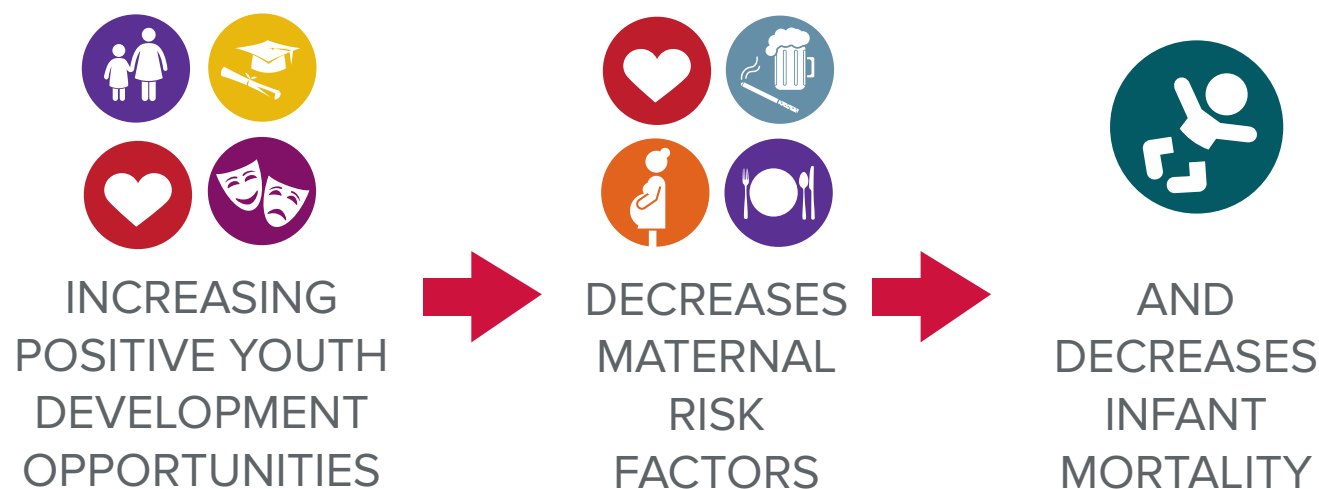


Provide girls with positive youth development (PYD) opportunities:

- Extracurricular activities
- Mentoring programs
- After-school programs
- Faith-based activities
- Sports and recreational activities
- College preparation programs
- Work experiences and internships

## HOW ARE THEY CONNECTED?

*Supporting adolescent girls through positive youth development (PYD) programming is a strategy for reducing risk behavior and promoting health and wellness.*



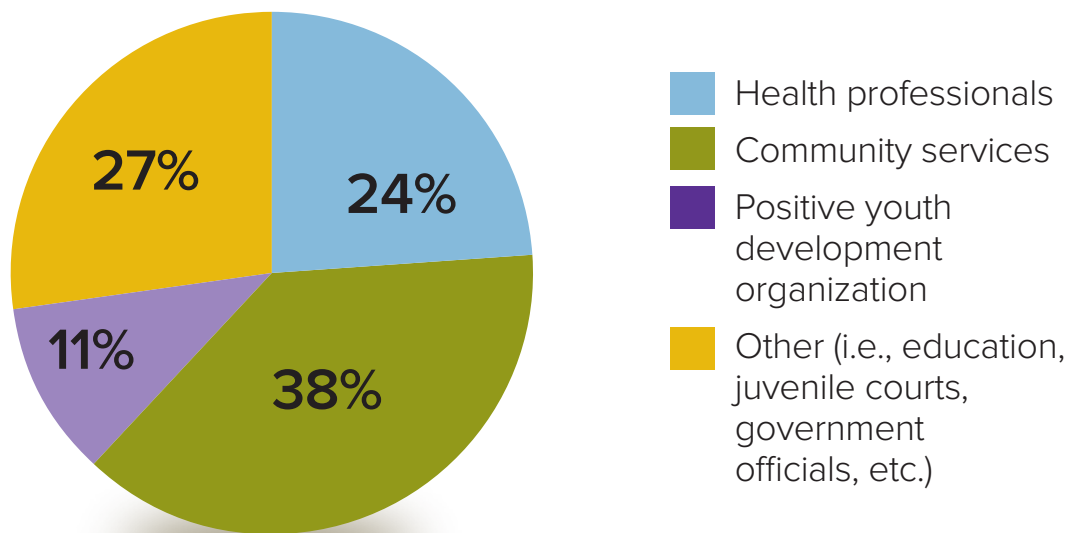
1. Ohio Department of Health. (2016). Bureau of Vital Statistics.  
 2. Ohio Department of Health. (2016). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Surveillance. Columbus, OH.  
 3. Ohio Department of Health. (2016). Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey Data.  
 4. Ohio Department of Health (2016). Maternal & Child Health: Women & Infants Health. Columbus, OH.

5. Ohio Department of Health. (2013). Youth Risk Behavior Survey Executive Summary. Columbus, OH.  
 6. Office of Adolescent Health. (2017, May 30). Ohio Adolescent Reproductive Health Facts.  
 7. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Behavioral Health Barometer: Ohio, 2015.  
 8. United States Census Bureau. (2016).  
 9. Ohio Department of Medicaid. (2016).

## METHODS

The method used in Mahoning County to explore strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats was a SWOT analysis. Please note a SWOT analysis is an analytical framework that assesses what a community can and cannot do for factors both internal and external within their immediate control and influence. Internal factors are strengths and weaknesses and external factors are opportunities and threats.

On May 15, 2018, partners from OSU College of Social Work, Envision EdPlus, and the Working through Obstacles Reaching True Height (WORTH) Foundation hosted a half-day Adolescent Girls Community Forum in Mahoning County. Thirty-seven stakeholders gathered to discuss local policies and programming that impact the holistic well-being of adolescent girls. Stakeholders attended from various organizations and agencies in the community. See the graph below in relation to the percent of participation among different stakeholder groups.







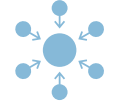
The SWOT analysis was guided by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) Whole Child Tenants. The ASCD's Whole Child Tenants are an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children. As such, each group of stakeholders who attended the forum identified the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to adolescent girls being "safe, supported, challenged, healthy, and engaged." These are the five tenants.

Finally, stakeholders used the results of their SWOT analysis to brainstorm policies and programming needed to positively impact the health of adolescent girls in Mahoning County. Strategies discussed at the forum were consolidated into state and local calls to action and can be used by local and state level stakeholders to guide future priorities, programming and funding. Findings from the SWOT analysis in Mahoning County are presented on page 5 and 6.

## RESULTS

### Results from the SWOT Analysis in Mahoning County

In total, the 37 stakeholders who attended the community forum listed 71 strengths, 54 weaknesses, 50 opportunities and 52 threats related to the health and well-being of adolescent girls in Mahoning County. The following table summarizes the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each ASCD Whole Child Tenant, as identified by forum participants.

 Safe	<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Multiple afterschool options available to community members</li> </ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of preventative healthcare and early intervention</li> </ul>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct more research and collect data on needs of girls</li> </ul>	<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of awareness of mental health issues and available resources</li> </ul>
 Supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Strong faith-based network</li> <li>■ Community organizations exist and focus on youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of communication among agencies</li> <li>■ Difficulties recruiting and retaining youth in programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating a database of existing programs</li> <li>■ Need for more education programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Barriers related to technology and social media</li> </ul>
 Challenged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Community support for positive health and educational outcomes for youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of focus on meeting basic needs (housing, food, emotional support)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Greater dialogue about adolescents and their needs</li> <li>■ Offer more parent/family supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Greater drug misuse and violence</li> </ul>
 Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Engagement of volunteers in the community is strong</li> <li>■ Resources exist for youth and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of focus on addressing bullying</li> <li>■ Lack of assistance to parents/families</li> <li>■ Challenges in obtaining funding for programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer more early childhood education options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ New avenues via social media to influence youth – peer pressure, suicide, exposure to information</li> </ul>
 Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ County offers numerous sports, afterschool, and volunteering opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of weekend programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer more programs and camps in the summer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Greater violence and crime in the community</li> </ul>

### What do the data tell us?

Youth organizations and agencies to support adolescent girls exist in Mahoning County. There appear to be a large number of resources and agencies that have strong reputations in this community, yet there seems to be challenges in relation to offering preventative health services, meeting youth and families' basic needs, and communication among youth programs currently in the county. Opportunities for collecting data, creating additional programs and services for youth in middle school, and offering more programs in the summer and in the early childhood years were common themes. Stakeholders also explored the idea of creating a database of existing programs in the community and collectively addressing threats related to drug misuse, suicide, violence, and crime. Results from the SWOT analysis were used by stakeholders at the forum to create the following strategies and ideas to improve outcomes for adolescent girls in Mahoning County.

## STRATEGIES AND IDEAS

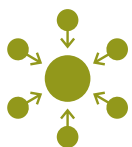
The following ideas were identified as direct, actionable next steps designed to improve PYD opportunities for adolescent girls. All strategies presented below are intended to positively and holistically impact adolescent girls.

- Generate an awareness campaign to engage local leaders and businesses to prioritize and invest in youth programs



- Create and offer family fun nights on weekends and in the summer to support youth and their families

- Develop collaborative relationships among youth agencies and organizations and local schools



- Offer a resource bank where all entities can update their information and keep other agencies, as well as youth, families, and schools informed about opportunities in the community

- Identify funding opportunities and coalitions focused on sustainability and prevention to advocate for youth in the community

- Develop a central help hotline for community members to access via phone or apps

- Offer community hubs housed in schools where health, PYD, education, and life skill programs are offered



- Offer additional opportunities for community members to volunteer and become more involved with youth

- Identify and leverage existing agencies to integrate additional supports into their programs to address food insecurity, dental, eye, and physical health exams, and college and career readiness activities



- Offer additional forums and local town hall meetings where providers and stakeholders can network to learn more about what programs, organizations, and services exist in the community

- Offer more mentoring, specifically targeting the middle school and adolescent age group

## OVERALL SUMMARY

The data collected via the SWOT analysis support a continued focus and priority to improve access, services, and supports for adolescent girls. There are numerous strengths and opportunities that can be leveraged, as well as weaknesses and threats that warrant further attention in Mahoning County. It is critical to assure programming and resources be made available to adolescents and communities at higher risk for factors that contribute to infant mortality. The strategies and actions noted in this report can be used by local and state agencies, community organizations, schools, hospitals, recreation centers, etc. to engage, support and challenge youth and foster healthy and safe behaviors through the implementation of effective programs and policies. As leaders begin to develop plans, it is imperative to ask adolescents about their interests and needs and thoughtfully engage them in the planning and implementation process.