

STARK 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 Stark 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.¹



In 2016, Ohio mothers age 15-17 were twice as likely to lose their baby compared to mothers ages 30-34.¹

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.³
- Only 39% of high school females report being physically active for at least 60 minutes on five or more days a week.⁵
- Only 20% of high school females report eating five servings of fruits and vegetables per day in a week.⁵



Teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections

- In 2016, Ohio teens age 15-19 accounted for 6% of the State's births.¹
- Approximately 17% of teen mothers will have a repeat birth between the ages of 15 and 19.⁴
- In 2013, Ohio females age 15-24 accounted for 73% of all reported cases of Chlamydia and 59% of all reported cases of Gonorrhea.²



Tobacco and alcohol use

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



Healthcare utilization

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



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

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

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

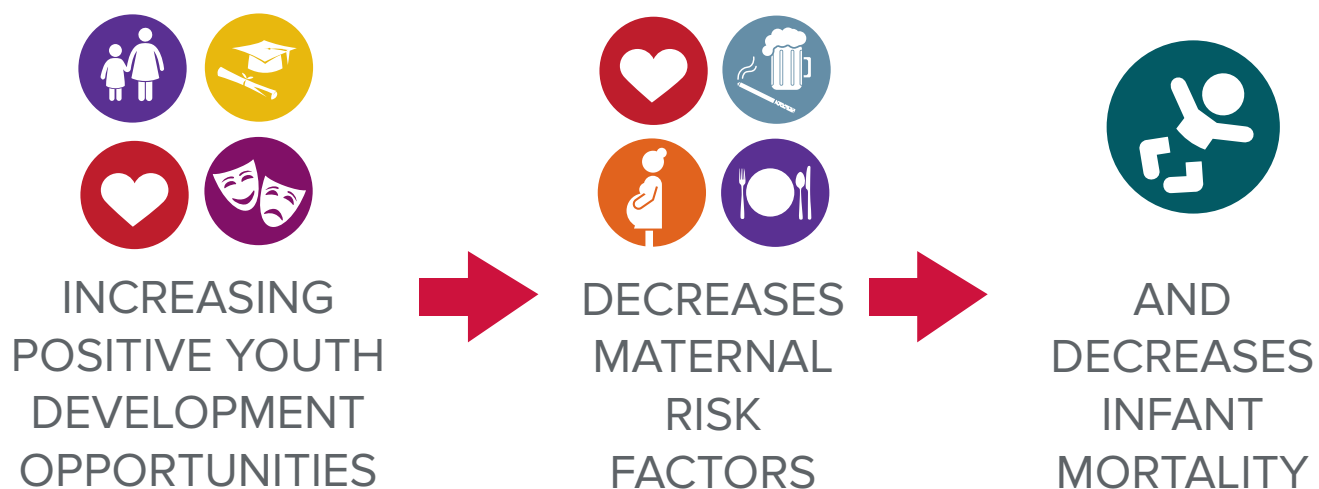


Provide girls with positive youth development (PYD) opportunities:

- 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.



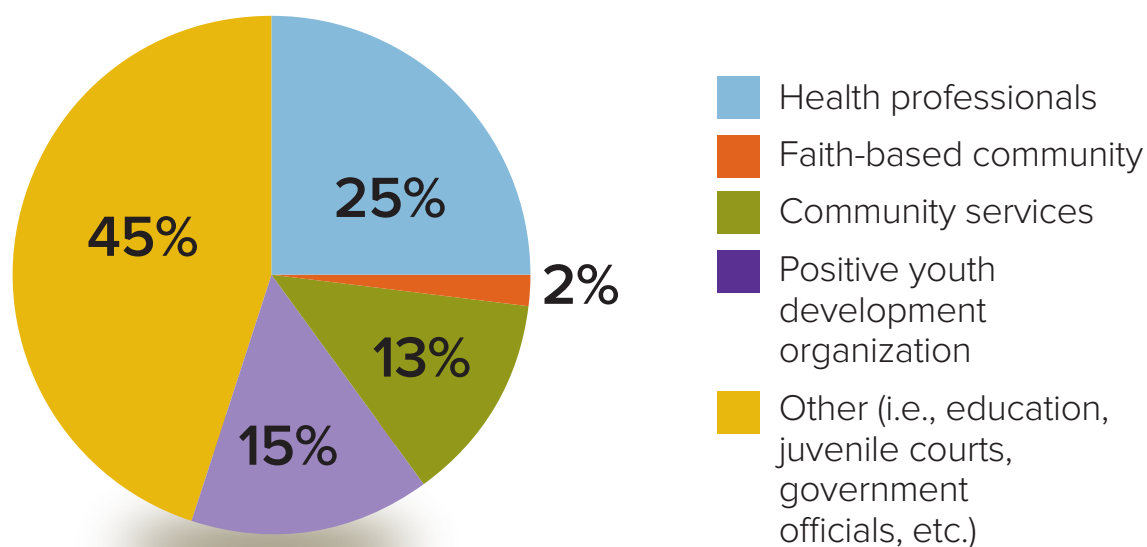
1. Ohio Department of Health. (2016). Bureau of Vital Statistics.
 2. Ohio Department of Health. (2016). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Surveillance. Columbus, OH.
 3. Ohio Department of Health. (2016). Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey Data.
 4. Ohio 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 Stark 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 16, 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 Stark County. Forty-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.







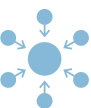
The SWOT analysis was guided by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) Whole Child Tenants. The ASCD's Whole Child Tenants are an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children. 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 Stark 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 Stark County are presented on page 5 and 6.

RESULTS

Results from the SWOT Analysis in Stark County

In total, the 47 stakeholders who attended the community forum listed 55 strengths, 57 weaknesses, 45 opportunities, and 45 threats related to the health and well-being of adolescent girls in Stark County. The following table summarizes the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each Whole Child Tenant, as identified by forum participants.

 <p>Safe</p>	STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Afterschool and in-school focused on healthy relationships exist for youth 	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Difficulty engaging some parents/guardians 	OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offer more mentoring ■ Improving relationships among youth and law enforcement 	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring sustainability and funding
 <p>Supported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supports exist for families in their homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of awareness and communication among programs in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential levy to increase availability of mental health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Challenges associated with family stability and transiency
 <p>Challenged</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased emphasis on career exposure in collaboration with local business ■ Lots of new school-based initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of focus on addressing stigmas associated with service use ■ Lack of collective action following community gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase youth-led programming ■ Offer youth leadership programming in summers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Challenges with uptake of social media and advanced technology
 <p>Healthy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programs focused on health and fitness are offered and empower girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of school-based education on healthy living ■ High costs associated with youth sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offer free healthcare options and work on accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Challenges associated with providing sex education ■ Barriers related to politics
 <p>Engaged</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ School-based mental health is supported by local districts ■ Teen leadership and summer camp opportunities exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of available jobs ■ Lack of cultural competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Utilize existing programs to increase number of youth served in afterschool, early childhood, and sport settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Challenges associated with intergenerational poverty ■ Racism

What do the data tell us?

Youth organizations and agencies to support adolescent girls exist in Stark County. There appear to be a large number of resources and agencies that have strong reputations in this community, yet there seem to be gaps in knowledge about what programs exist and a focus on collective action to improve conditions for adolescents. Additional funds to support more mental health services, offering more mentoring in the community, and increasing the number of youth in existing programs were opportunities voiced by stakeholders in Stark County. Stakeholders also explored the idea of improving relationships among youth and law enforcement, as well as providing more PYD programs, such as youth leadership opportunities, during the summer. 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 Stark County.

STRATEGIES AND IDEAS

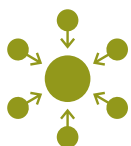
The following ideas were identified as direct, actionable next steps designed to improve PYD opportunities for adolescent girls. All strategies presented below are intended to positively and holistically impact adolescent girls.

- Offer content-based out-of-school programs that include family education and focus on life skills



- Build capacity with local college and universities to partner and focus on supporting adolescents in the community

- Create a collaborative focused on hosting forums and connecting providers and youth programs in the community with one another to avoid duplication and strength communication



- Offer professional development activities to support greater cultural competence among youth workers and to help them focus their efforts on building trust with youth and families

- Create a youth advisory board to provide input on the needs and gaps influencing adolescent girls

- Develop social media and outreach campaigns focused on positive self-esteem and the beauty of diversity in the local community; market and engage the schools in this campaign



- Create a summer middle school leadership program focused on connecting youth with mentors, civic engagement, and career development in conjunction with local universities and businesses

- Conduct a community-wide survey to inform investments for adolescent girls

- Engage in conversations with local school officials and boards about opportunities to offer evidence-based health and sex education



- Collect data from parents/guardians, schools, and community programs about gaps in services

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 Stark 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.