



# LICKING COUNTY INFANT MORTALITY REDUCTION PLAN

2016

*Licking County Infant Mortality Task Force*



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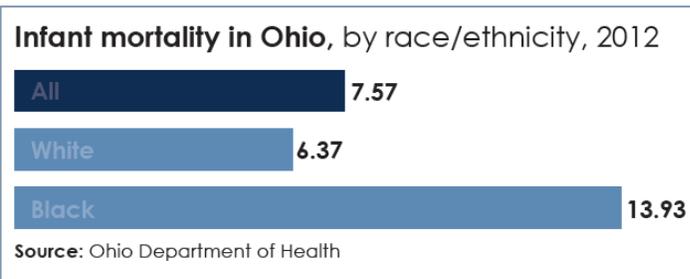
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# LICKING COUNTY INFANT MORTALITY REDUCTION PLAN

## Introduction – What is Infant Mortality? Is it a problem in Licking County?

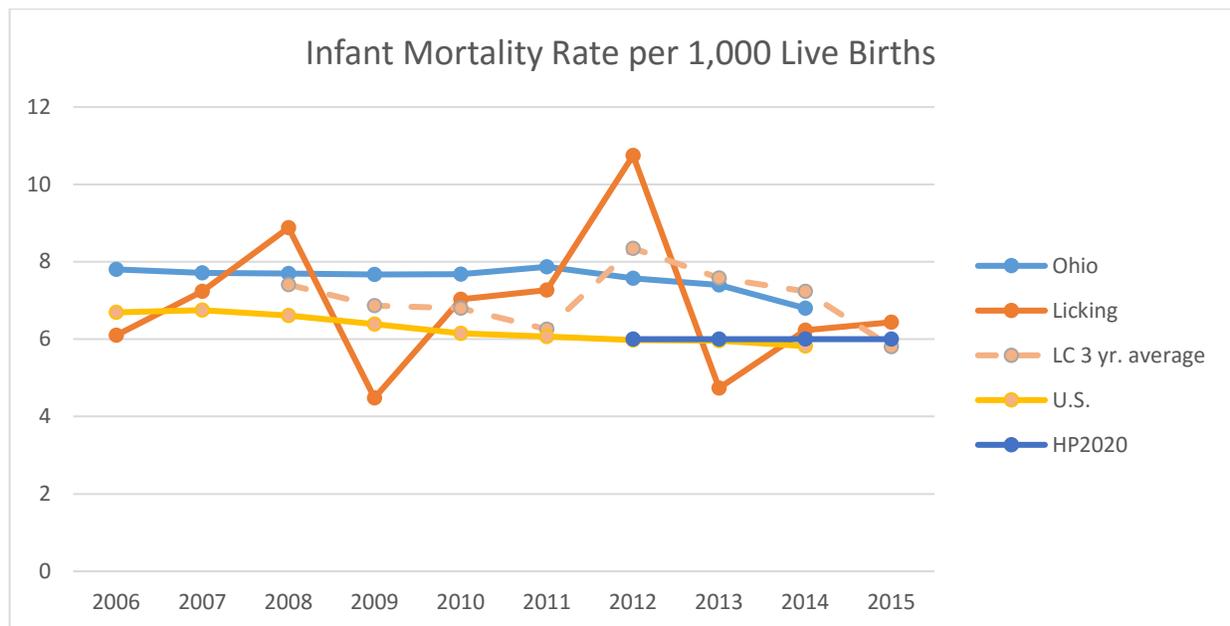
The infant mortality rate is calculated as the number of all live-born infants per 1,000 who die within the first year of life. In 2013 Ohio had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest infant mortality rate in the U.S. Only West Virginia, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi had higher rates for infant mortality. Ohio had the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest Non-Hispanic Black infant mortality rate.

Racial disparity contributes significantly to Ohio's poor ranking, with black babies more than twice as likely to die before their first birthday compared to white babies.

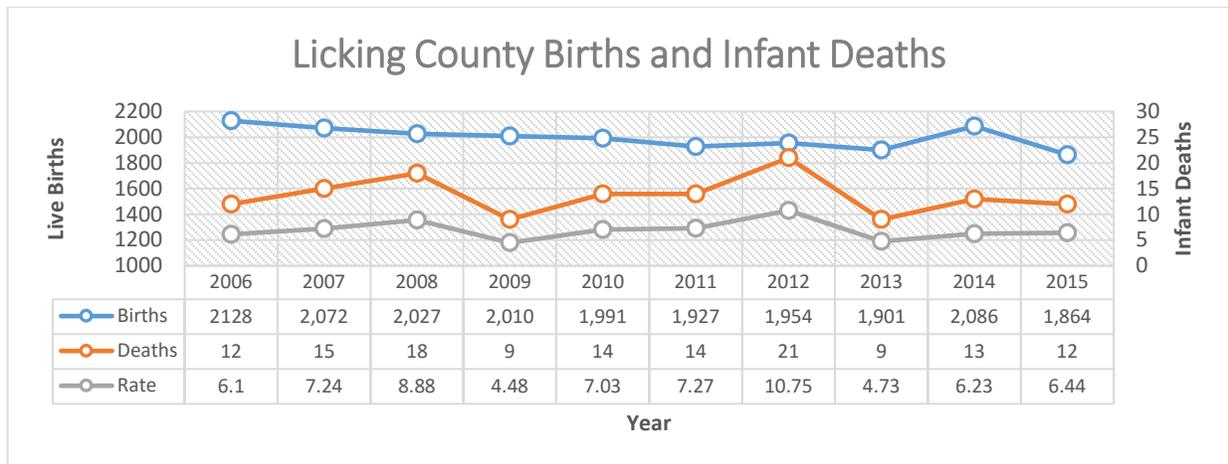


### LICKING COUNTY INFANT MORTALITY

The overall infant mortality rate in Licking County fluctuates each year. With the number of infant deaths in the county ranging from 9 to 21 annually, and an average of around 2,000 live births per year, the rate can also fluctuate significantly from year to year. The chart below includes a 3-year running average line to address this variability in the annual rates.



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## Racial Disparity in Licking County

93% of Licking County residents identify as White, with only 3.7% identifying themselves as Black or African American. While Licking County black infant mortality rate likely reflects the state rates, the number of black infant mortality cases in Licking County is too low to draw valid statistical information. In Licking County, five black infants died out of 435 births during the six year 2007-12 period (11.5/1000).

## Infant Mortality Causes

Most of these babies die because they are:

- Born too small and too early (i.e., preterm birth; birth before 37 weeks gestation).
- Born with a serious birth defect.
- Affected by maternal complications of pregnancy.
- Victims of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Victims of injuries (e.g., suffocation, auto accidents).

## Social Determinants of Health

Social Determinant of Health are the non-medical complex, social structures and economic systems that are the root cause of health disparities.

Socio-economic and racial inequities that contribute to infant deaths require a systems approach beyond the scope of traditional public and private health system capacities. Addressing social determinants requires working with non-traditional partners to increase access to care, child care, employment, housing, educational success and community revitalization.

## Prematurity/Preterm Birth

The highest rates of infant death are for babies who are born too soon and too small. Babies at highest risk of being born prematurely are those whose mothers are non-Hispanic black, had a previous preterm birth or poor birth outcome, delivered within 18 to 24 months of a prior pregnancy, or are low income. Smoking is an important risk factor contributing to babies being born too early and too small. Smoking during pregnancy is most common among low-income women.

## Birth Defects

Birth defects also contribute to babies being born prematurely and a few birth defects are not compatible with life. Some birth defects can be prevented by ensuring mothers are healthy before and during pregnancy; have adequate nutrition; take folic acid supplementation prior to pregnancy; controlling chronic health issues such as diabetes; maintain a healthy weight; achieve healthy birth spacing; and avoid alcohol, tobacco and certain drugs.

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## **Sleep-Related Deaths**

Sleep-related deaths are the most common cause of death for infants from one month to one year of age. Babies are safest when breastfed and when they sleep alone, on their back, and in a crib without blankets, soft bedding, bumpers, stuffed animals and other items. Also, they need to be free from exposure to tobacco smoke. Educating parents and caregivers about safe sleep will help eliminate these preventable sleep-related infant deaths.

## **Infant Mortality Task Force**

The Licking County Health Commissioner called for the formation of the Licking County Infant Mortality Task Force in 2015 to develop strategies to reduce preventable infant deaths in Licking County. This group is made up of public health officials, health advocates, child and maternal health care providers, and other stakeholders. Its mission is to prevent infant mortality and improve the health of women of childbearing age and infants in Licking County by:

- Promoting or providing effective health care for all women before and during their childbearing years.
- Employing evidence-based approaches to the reduction of infant mortality
- Educating Licking County residents about having and raising healthy babies.
- Maximizing the potential of interagency, public-private, and multi-disciplinary collaboration.

### **Task Force Member Agencies Represented**

- Licking County Health Department
- Licking County Health Department WIC Program
- Licking Memorial Hospital and Health System
- Licking Memorial Behavioral Health Services and Addiction Medicine - Shepherd Hill
- Licking County Job and Family Service
- Licking County Children's Services
- Licking County Coroner's Office
- Licking County Child Fatality Review Board
- Pathways of Central Ohio
- CareStar
- Children and Families First Council of Licking County
- The Newark Advocate
- Mental Health America of Licking County
- The Woodlands

## Recommended Strategies

### IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF WOMEN AND GIRLS BEFORE, DURING, AND BEYOND PREGNANCY

It is important for **all women of reproductive age** to adopt healthy behaviors:

- Taking folic acid supplements prior to and during pregnancy.
- Maintaining a healthy diet and weight.
- Being physically active regularly.
- Quitting tobacco use.
- Not drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and using illicit drugs.
- Talking to your health care provider about screening and proper management of chronic diseases.
- Talking with your health care provider about taking any medications.
- Visiting your health care provider at the recommended scheduled time periods for your age, obtaining recommended preventive health screenings, and discussing if or when you are considering becoming pregnant.
- Reducing unplanned pregnancies by using effective contraception correctly and consistently if you are sexually active, but wish to delay or avoid pregnancy.
- Preventing injuries and considering the safety of your home and family (e.g., wear seat belt, take CPR, install and test smoke alarms).
- Promote and facilitate access to health care coverage through Medicaid, CHIP or ACA exchanges.

### BREASTFEEDING PROMOTION

Breastfeeding is associated with a reduction in risk for post-neonatal death. Breastfeeding messages:

- Recommend feeding only breast milk for the first 6 months. Continue breastfeeding in addition to feeding solid foods until your baby is at least 1 year old or older.
- Breastfeeding helps form a special bond with your baby.
- Breast milk helps protect your baby from illness.
- Breastfeeding is also good for you. It lowers your risk for breast cancer and type 2 diabetes.
- Avoid suffocation of the baby by the mom staying awake while breastfeeding

### FAMILY PLANNING

Unintended pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of problems for the mom and baby. If a pregnancy is not planned before conception, a woman may not be in optimal health for childbearing and may delay prenatal care that can affect the health of the baby. Nearly half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned.

- Using effective contraception correctly and consistently if you are sexually active but wish to delay or avoid pregnancy. Reduce Unintended Pregnancies.

### IMMUNIZATIONS

Infants are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases; that is why it is critical to protect them through immunization.

- Immunize On Time, Every Time. The recent trend of delaying or skipping vaccines has put children across the country at risk for diseases like Hib, whooping cough and measles.

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- To protect your new baby and yourself against whooping cough, get a Tdap vaccine in the third trimester of each pregnancy and make sure grandparents, aunts, uncles, mom, dad and anyone else who will come in contact with the baby have been vaccinated.
- Pregnant women or women planning on becoming pregnant during the flu season should get the annual flu vaccine. Pregnant women have a very high risk of serious complications if they get the flu.

## SAFE SLEEP TO PREVENT SUFFOCATION AND SIDS/SUID

Promote prevention and intervention efforts that focus on assuring safe sleeping environments and prevention of suffocation for infants. Protective actions against SIDS include room sharing without bed sharing, breastfeeding, pacifier use, and immunization.

**Alone, on their Back, in a Crib.** A few tips that can be useful to both new and veteran parents are as follows:

- Place infants for sleep flat on the back for every sleep, nap time and night time.
- Use a firm sleep surface. A firm crib mattress is the recommended surface.
- Room sharing without bed sharing is recommended. The infant's crib should be in the parents' bedroom, close to the parents' bed.
- Keep soft objects, loose bedding and bumper pads out of the crib.
- Do not smoke during pregnancy. Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.

## SMOKING CESSATION

Smoking cigarettes during pregnancy has been identified as one of the most harmful activities for your unborn child, and can contribute to things like miscarriage, premature delivery, stillbirth, and low birth weight. Women who make the choice to quit tobacco before or during pregnancy can make a great difference in reducing these risks.

- Make sure that women who smoke have the right tools and resources to help them quit for good.

## CHILD SAFETY SEATS

Proper car seat use reduces the risk for death to infants (aged <1 year) by 71%; and to toddlers (aged 1–4 years) by 54% in passenger vehicles. Birth up to Age 2:

- Rear-facing car seat. For the best possible protection, infants and children should be buckled in a rear-facing car seat, in the back seat, until age 2 or when they reach the upper weight or height limits of their particular seat.

## PROMOTE AND EXPAND HOME-VISITING PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT VULNERABLE WOMEN AND INFANTS.

Families that elect to participate in local home visiting programs receive advice, guidance and other help from health, social service and child development professionals. Through regular, planned home visits, parents learn how to improve their family's health and provide better opportunities for their children.

Current Home Visiting programs in Licking County:

- Help Me Grow Home Visiting
- Help Me Grow Early Intervention
- Early Head Start Home Visiting
- Newborn Nurse Home Visitation

## Existing Programs

### HOME VISITING

#### HELP ME GROW HOME VISITING

Help Me Grow is a program for expectant parents, newborns, infants and toddlers and provides health and developmental services so children start school healthy and ready to learn. To enroll in Licking County Help Me Grow please contact Licking County Central Coordination at (740) 349-6588. Central Intake for all Ohio HMG programs can be accessed at 1-800-755-GROW (4769) or <http://www.helpmegrow.ohio.gov/en/Referrals/Refer%20to%20Help%20Me%20Grow.aspx>

#### Providers

- Pathways of Central Ohio
- CareStar

#### HELP ME GROW EARLY INTERVENTION

Children are evaluated for delays in the areas of adaptive, cognitive, communication, physical, and social-emotional development using appropriate diagnostic tools. Should intervention be deemed necessary, individualized services are provided to the child and family through a Service Coordinator who guides the family through every aspect of the process, from program entry until the child transitions out by age three.

#### Provider

- Licking County Board of Developmental Disabilities

#### EARLY HEAD START

Early head start serves families with children under the age of three whose income is below 100 percent of the poverty level. Their goal is to make sure the children they serve are developmentally on target and the parents have the support and skills they need. Questions and referrals can be directed to LEADS Head Start at (740) 349-8606.

#### Providers

- LEADS Head Start
- Licking County Health Department

#### NEWBORN NURSE HOME VISITING

First-time parents receive home visits from nurses who deliver the support first-time moms need to become knowledgeable and responsible parents, and provide their babies with the best possible start in life.

Hospitals that provide newborn home visits to babies born in their facilities:

- Licking Memorial Health Systems (Introduced in 2015)
- Mt. Carmel
- Riverside
- Fairfield Medical Center (Lancaster)
- Saint Ann's (Westerville)
- OSU Wexner Medical Center (If insured)

The Licking County Health Department began offering newborn home visits in April 2016 to families not covered by a hospital-based home visiting program.

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## SAFE SLEEP

Every agency and provider who has an opportunity to provide safe sleep education to parents and caregivers should be sharing the ABC's of safe sleep message. Pack-n-plays with a bassinet insert are available to families that do not have a crib or bassinet for their newborn.

- Licking County Health Department (Pack-n-Play distribution, At-risk pregnancy program education, safe sleep training for childcare providers)
- Licking Memorial Hospital (Patient education and Pack-n-Play supplies)

## SMOKING CESSATION PROGRAMS

- Licking Memorial Health System (Quit for Your Health) (740) 348-QUIT (7848)
- Licking County Health Department (Baby and Me Tobacco Free) (740) 349-6535
- Ohio Tobacco Quit Line 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) [www.ohio.quitlogix.org](http://www.ohio.quitlogix.org)

## CAR SAFETY SEATS

Car seat distribution, education, and installation safety check programs are recommended to assure all infants are properly secured and to increase restraint use and decrease injuries and deaths to child passengers.

- Licking County Health Department (Distribution, Education, and Safety Checks)
- Licking Memorial Health Systems

## BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

- Licking County Health Department
  - WIC Breastfeeding Peer & At-Risk Pregnancy Nurse
  - Breastfeeding Class
  - Partners in Breastfeeding Support Group
- Licking Memorial Health Systems
  - Breastfeeding Mothers Support Group
  - Breastfeeding Clinic

## FAMILY PLANNING

- Family Health Services of East Central Ohio (Title X family planning services grant program)
- Licking County Health Department (Condoms, Pregnancy Testing, and STD/HIV Screening)

## Action Plan

To address gaps between the recommended activities and the programs currently in place, the Task Force proposes that the following programs or initiatives be implemented or expanded:

### NEWBORN NURSE HOME VISITING

While most Licking County babies are born in hospitals that provide a nurse home visit, some are born at facilities that do not provide this service. These include babies born at Knox Community, Genesis, Grady, and Grant. The Licking County Health Department is considering bringing back their Newborn Visitation program to serve these families that would otherwise not have access to a post-partum visit from a nurse. (Program implemented in April 2016 through a Licking County Foundation grant)

### HOME VISITING PROGRAM

Help Me Grow Home Visiting currently has open slots that are not being filled due to a lack of referral. The Nurses who conduct the newborn visits will be provided with training and information to improve referrals to the HMG and Early Head Start programs.

The Licking County Children and Family First Council (CFFC) has recently awarded a contract to Pathways of Central Ohio to expand Help Me Grow home visits to families that do not meet the Ohio eligibility guidelines for the regular HMG program beginning in July 2015.

### INCREASE COORDINATION

To maximize the potential of interagency, public-private, and multi-disciplinary collaboration, the Licking County Infant Mortality Task Force will meet at least annually to review new data, assess progress and update the Infant Mortality Reduction Plan as needed. Task force recommendations will be distributed to local providers and coalitions that share in the mission of reducing preventable infant deaths in Licking County.

## Resources

[Ohio Infant Mortality Reduction Plan 2015-2020](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Maternal and Infant Health](#)

## Contact Information

Licking County Health Department  
675 Price Rd., Newark OH 43055  
(740) 349-6535  
[www.lickingcohealth.org](http://www.lickingcohealth.org)

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