Lighting the Way

to One.



2023-2024 Impact Report

A Lot Can Happen in One Year

As an organization devoted to ensuring every baby celebrates their first birthday, First Year Cleveland (FYC) knows how critical the first year of life is, with all its incredible growth, milestones, and happy firsts.

A lot can happen in such a short time for our organization as well, and this report sets out to share what we have done over the last year plus. One of the biggest changes for us is the evolution in how we tell our story. Indeed, this is the first Impact Report we've published since the recruitment of FYC's new team, and the first printed report in our 10-year history.

Our community of healthcare providers, maternal and infant support organizations, funders, advocates, mothers, and families work hard every day to combat maternal and infant mortality and the insurmountable loss too many in Cuyahoga County experience. But by focusing on mortality and not the vitality of our families, we were focusing too much on the problem and not the solutions.

Data is such a valuable tool when identifying a problem, but it is the community that is most valuable when it comes to identifying the solutions. Our organization is designed to convene, listen, and respond to our community, serving as a Connector, a Protector, and an Activator. We have a responsibility to lift up the voices of families, invest where there is the greatest need, and pursue policy and system-level changes to ensure every baby celebrates their first birthday.

2025 marks our 10th anniversary. Ten years ago, I had the opportunity to help create First Year Cleveland, and now I have the privilege to serve as its Executive Director. Talk about full circle! If I've learned one thing during this time, it's that we can achieve so much more by working together than we can alone.

Together, we can light the way to one for more families in Cuyahoga County.

Ange a Newman-White Executive Director



Contents

A Community Movement	5			
First Steps: Understanding Why				
Next Steps: What the Data Tells Us				
We Are a Connector	10			
We Are a Protector				
We Are an Activator				
Housing & Infant Mortality: A Collective Impact Case Study				
Honoring Those We've Lost & Caring for One Another				
Aligning Around One Mission				
Our Community Grantee Partners				



Our Mission

To reduce infant mortality—particularly among communities of greatest need.

Our Vision

Ensuring first birthdays and healthy moms for every family in Cuyahoga County.

Our Community

First Year Cleveland takes a place-based approach to collective impact, convening policymakers, nonprofits, philanthropy, service providers, parents, and residents to work together toward our shared vision. We are rooted in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, but our approach and the impact of our work is spreading statewide—and beyond!

Our Home



CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences

In July 2022, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences welcomed First Year Cleveland from the School of Medicine, a move that has allowed the organization to elevate its work in uncovering and addressing societal inequities and promoting understanding across communities.

Founded to serve Greater Cleveland in 1915, the Mandel School's dynamic learning community remains rooted in a commitment to elevating our common humanity and preparing future leaders who will shape a more just society.

-Dexter R. Voisin, PhD, LCSW Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Sciences Case Western Reserve University



A Community Movement

First Year Cleveland is a community movement dedicated to ensuring all babies celebrate their first birthdays. Our 2021-2025 strategic priorities are:

- 1. Reduce prematurity
- 2. Address the leading social factors that contribute to infant mortality
- 3. Invest in community power and solutions
- 4. Build systems of responsive healthcare

We're tackling these priorities in partnership with our community as a:

Connector

We provide direct funding, support, and training to local care providers and organizations that know best what their communities need.

Protector

We center our work by honoring and uplifting the voices and experiences of communities most affected by maternal and infant mortality, building on their strengths and assets to create connections for families to thrive.

Activator

We work in partnership with our community to identify and advocate for policy and system changes to ensure every family is supported through their pregnancy and parenting journey.

First Steps:

Understanding Why

Why is a movement like First Year Cleveland necessary? Too many babies in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are not reaching their first birthdays (see infant mortality data on pages 8-9). To reduce and eliminate infant mortality in our community, we must first understand the factors that prevent more babies from celebrating this critical milestone.

Most of these factors are outside of an individual's control and show up in nearly every facet of their life. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention call these "Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)," defined as "the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, worship, and age." These non-medical factors drive 80% of health outcomes. In essence, those who have good choices available to them can more easily make good choices. In Cuyahoga County, the availability of good choices closely aligns with where a person lives. Areas that have experienced years of disinvestment, primarily neighborhoods in the city of Cleveland, experience more chronic disease and the highest rates of infant mortality.



80% of health outcomes are driven by factors outside the health system.

Social Drivers* of Health

Economic Stability	Education	Healthcare	Housing &	Social/Community
	Access & Quality	Access & Quality	Neighborhood	Network
 Can I find a job that pays enough to support me and my family? Do I have paid time off, family leave, and benefits? 	 Does my public school have the resources to prepare me for success? Can I afford training and education for career pathways? 	 Do I have insurance? Do my providers look like me and understand me? Are healthy groceries accessible and affordable? 	 Is there lead in my house? Is my neighborhood safe from violence? Do I have family support to help with caregiving? 	 Can I drive, afford public transit, or safely walk where I need to get to? Can I afford safe, reliable child care?

*Determinant or Driver?

While both describe non-medical factors that impact health, FYC uses "driver" to emphasize that health outcomes are <u>not</u> predetermined and can be changed.

.....

5 years the average wait time for a Section 8 Housing voucher in Cleveland.²

>1 in 5 Cleveland households don't own a car.¹



58%

of Cleveland is a food desert, where fresh produce is unavailable.³

of Cleveland children live in poverty—the highest rate for any U.S. city with pop. > 300k,⁴

Next Steps:

What the Data Tells Us

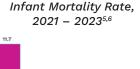
According to the National Institutes of Health, the infant mortality rate (IMR) reflects "the institutional and structural factors affecting the health of entire populations." It is a key indicator of the overall health of a region.

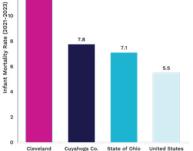
By this measure, Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are experiencing a significant health crisis. The infant mortality rates in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are higher than both the state and national rates. And when disaggregated by race, the numbers are even starker for non-Latinx Black and Latinx babies. For babies to thrive, our community must have adequate resources to nurture healthy infancy and growth.

A Devastating Fact: Cleveland Babies Die at Twice the National Rate

For every 1,000 babies born in the United States, 5.5 die before their first birthday. In Cleveland, that number is 11.7, more than double the national infant mortality rate.

From 2021 – 2023, 300 babies born in Cuyahoga County did not survive to their first birthday, and 145 of them (48%) lived in Cleveland.





WHAT IS INFANT MORTALITY?

Infant mortality is defined as death in children under age one.

The **infant mortality rate (IMR)** is the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

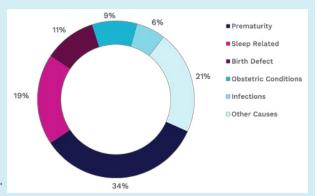
For more infant & maternal health data and FYC's data dictionary, visit *firstyearcleveland.org/data*

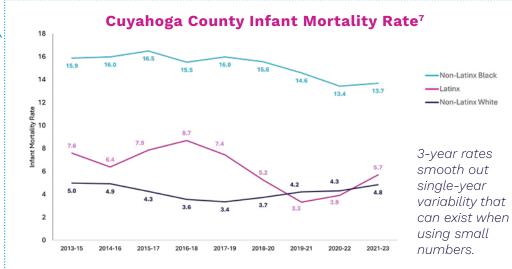
117

Number of non-Latinx Black babies in Cuyahoga County who would have celebrated their first birthdays if racial parity had been achieved between 2021-2023.



of Cuyahoga County's infant deaths (2021 – 2023) were caused by **prematurity**, **sleep-related incidents**, and **birth defects**.⁸ FYC strategies target these leading causes.





More Choices Mean More First Birthdays

The key to more first birthdays lies in putting more choices within reach for all families in our community—and this transformation is at the heart of our work.

We cannot do it alone. First Year Cleveland is building a community movement, working with nonprofits, health providers, funders, and more to connect, protect, and activate everyone who wants a healthier Cuyahoga County. **Join us.**

We Are a Connector

We know our work cannot be achieved in isolation. We provide direct funding, support, and training to local care providers and organizations that know best what their communities need.



Illuminating Impact: Building Community Lactation Support

First Year Cleveland helped us build our lactation trainee program to ensure greater representation of the communities we serve among lactation consultants. We were able to present this work at the Ohio Lactation Consultant Association's annual conference, inspiring others to look at this collaborative effort as a way to build diversity in this profession across the state.

> Lauren Lasko, APRN, IBCLC Director of Lactation Medicine, Neighborhood Family Practice

About the Program

First Year Cleveland awarded a \$17,254 grant to Neighborhood Family Practice to launch a pilot program providing paid training for a community member to pursue certification as a lactation consultant (CLC), increasing breastfeeding support in the community. Through the pilot, trainee Caela became a CLC in February 2025 and will soon host weekly support groups. First Year Cleveland connects service providers and other nonprofits to vital resources, fostering innovation and greater impact. Through grants and sponsorships, we provide critical investment in organizations doing good work.

Since 2016, we've also administered Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) grant funding on behalf of Cuyahoga County that is devoted to supporting coordinated community approaches to reducing the Black infant mortality rate. From 2022-2024, we distributed \$6 million in Medicaid grants to nine organizations. Below are additional investment highlights.

2022-2024 Grants & Sponsorships



Invested through grantmaking and sponsorships, including \$6 million of FYC-administered Ohio Department of Medicaid grants





Connector Milestones

Convening

We are committed to building an ecosystem of support and host four community meetings each year to bring together direct service providers. Meeting topics are community-driven and feature data analysis, local resources, and advocacy opportunities. From 2022-2024, we hosted 10 meetings covering issues such as housing insecurity, workforce development, using data for change, and maternal mental health. Meetings have also driven the formation of new programs and resources, including CoHealing and FYConnects Resource App (see pages 19, 23).

Building Networks and Capacity

In 2024, FYC began hosting a series of open forums with philanthropic partners across the county. These events enable grantmakers to better understand community needs and organizations, while helping nonprofits serving pregnant and parenting families build relationships with funders.

If you're a grantmaking organization and want to get involved, email **firstyearcleveland@case.edu** to join future forums.

We Are a Protector

We center our work by honoring and uplifting the voices and experiences of communities most affected by maternal and infant mortality, building on their strengths and assets to create connections for families to thrive.



Illuminating Impact: Newborn Screening Pilot

Newborn screening (NBS) is considered a great public health achievement because of its success in detecting rare, treatable diseases at birth before symptoms appear. All babies have the same opportunity to undergo NBS but universal screening does not always result in timely diagnoses and access to lifesaving treatments. Working alongside FYC, we partner with providers and families to take action so that all newborns may fully benefit from NBS.



Watch an August 2024 segment from WEWS featuring FYC and Dr. Gerido to learn more about the design and purpose of this pilot project.

Lynette Hammond Gerido, PhD, MPH, MBA Assistant Professor, Department of Bioethics, CWRU School of Medicine



Visionaries, providers and promoters of the film

Toxic: A Black Woman's Story 5th Anniversary Commemoration

In 2019, a group of committed Cleveland visionaries wrote, cast, and directed *Toxic: A Black Woman's Story*, a film that follows one pregnant woman and her family over the course of a devastating day. FYC supported the film's creation and was honored to mark its 5th anniversary in 2024, celebrating those visionaries and reflecting on how the film continues to shine a light on what must change to better care for women and families.



Watch the trailer + learn more: toxicshortfilm.com

Protector Milestones

Awareness

With the Cuyahoga County Board of Health and the Cuyahoga County Office of the Executive, we launched the **Babies Need to Breathe** safe sleep public awareness campaign, focused in ZIP codes where sleep-related deaths are highest.



Advising

We increased our advisory role to demand community voice in research, and we continue to urge payors and providers to support combined mom/newborn well visits that include mental health and blood pressure screenings for moms.

Training

We worked with the Center on Trauma and Adversity at CWRU's Mandel School to design a training series for providers on trauma-informed care and cohealing.

Housing

We launched Healthy Beginnings at Home (HBAH), a supportive two-year housing program for pregnant and postnatal families, with a \$980,218 investment (see page 17 for more details).

We Are an Activator

We work in partnership with our community to identify and advocate for policy and system changes to ensure every family is supported through their pregnancy and parenting journey.



Illuminating Impact: Advocacy Day

I'm so grateful for all the work you did on Advocacy Day. That day jump-started me to do the work I do now.

> Dominique Johnson Policy Associate, Groundwork Ohio

As one of the newer members of this impactful community, we felt an overwhelming sense of welcome and inclusivity, which greatly contributed to the success of the event.

Bryant Youngblood CEO/Founder, Evolve Innovation Center, Youngstown



Infant Vitality Advocacy Day

the Statehouse to

champion policies

babies and families

On September 17, 2024, First Year Cleveland convened partners from around Ohio to present investment and policy priorities to state lawmakers for Infant Vitality Advocacy Day. More than 60 people from 31 organizations from Butler, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Mahoning, and Summit Counties met with lawmakers at

Save the Date!

Join us **September 30. 2025**. for our 3rd Infant Vitality Advocacy Day.

Subscribe to our newsletter at firstyearcleveland.org for updates.





Activator Milestones

Policy Committee

Our Policy Committee, composed of policy leaders and advocates from multiple sectors, drives our policy agenda, which focuses on increased diaper capacity, mental health reimbursement, and expanded paid family leave.

Community Advisory Committee

Through our Community Advisory Committee, community leaders uplift opportunities to increase support for families and activate them for change, training civic leaders and connecting maternal & infant health organizations to resources.

Local Advocacy

FYC collaborated with Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority and Cuyahoga County's Office of Homeless Services to expand the Housing Choice Voucher Program to include expectant parents experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Housing & Infant Mortality

A Collective Impact Case Study

First Year Cleveland applies a collective impact model to its work. Collective impact is a structured, collaborative approach to tackling complex social problems by bringing together diverse organizations and stakeholders with a shared vision, goals, and measurement systems, aiming for systemic change.⁹

What does this look like in practice? Let's take the issue of housing and its connection to infant mortality. Cuyahoga County is plagued by housing shortages and rising housing costs, which are especially challenging for low-income families.

We know from regularly surveying and listening to our partners and clients that these are alarming trends among their patients, who cannot adequately address their health challenges or prioritize their health when unhoused or under stress from housing insecurity. "Moms who come to us ... their number one stress is housing—finding a place to live, affording rent and utilities, worrying about losing their home. And we don't have enough resources to help them."

Tammie S. Jones Senior Director of Programs and Behavioral Health, Birthing Beautiful Communities



Community Snapshot: Housing in Cleveland

52,000

shortage of housing units to meet demand for extremely low-income households¹⁰

1 in 2 Section 8 Housing Voucher holders who cannot successfully secure housing¹¹

20,000 people on the waitlist

people on the waitlist for Section 8 Housing Vouchers¹²

56%

of rental units cost households more than 30% of their income¹³

Here is how FYC has responded.

Connector

Actively building a collaborative of housing organizations in Cuyahoga County to better understand the resources available for pregnant residents and improve referrals.

Hosted community meeting for providers on housing resources for pregnant and parenting families.

Organized forums to connect housing programs with potential funders and encourage relationship building.

Protector

Launched Healthy Beginnings at Home (HBAH) in Cuyahoga County to house up to 30 pregnant or parenting families for two years and provide support and other resources. HBAH started in Columbus and was to expand to Cleveland before funding was cut. FYC invested and recruited Neighborhood Leadership Institute, The Centers and EDEN Inc. to bring the program to Cuyahoga County.

Housing stability when pregnant + postpartum =

better health outcomes, fewer infant deaths, reduced NICU utilization, reduced Medicaid spending¹⁴

Activator

Advocated to include homeless expectant parents as a priority population for CMHA's Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.

Engaged in statewide advocacy with partners calling for additional housing stock, rental assistance subsidies, and capacity for housing focused on pregnant and parenting families.

Hear Alvonta Jenkins, FYC Project Manager, and Amy Reigel, Executive Director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio,



discuss the HBAH program and how it's addressing both housing insecurity and infant mortality in this talk with Groundwork Ohio.

^{\$}59,000

of FYC grants made for emergency rental and utility assistance and appliances

Honoring Those We've Lost

One of the most important things we can do for our community is provide space for the grief that should not be and the hope that heals and motivates us to go on. Here are some of the ways we honor those we've lost and care for one another.



Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Society

Founded with support from FYC in 2018 and led by families who have experienced loss, the PAIL Society supports any family who has experienced a miscarriage or the loss of a baby.

Wave of Light

Sponsored by PAIL, Wave of Light is a worldwide ceremony each October 15th to name and light candles in remembrance of babies lost too soon.

Alexis Whitson Memorial

Alexis was a home health visitor who cared for pregnant moms and new parents. Shortly after her second child was born, she died of a pulmonary embolism on her way to seek care. FYC supported the development of a film and luncheon in her memory.



Alexis was a phenomenal community health worker whom we miss dearly. She exemplified the definition of service, integrity, and humility when working with her clients. Alexis' determination in providing knowledge and advocating for equitable treatment during and after pregnancy lives on. Rest in Paradise!

Tiffany Ashley, colleague and friend of Alexis Whitson

& Caring for One Another



Our Wellness Network (OWN)

Our Wellness Network supports a network of mental health providers trained in grief recovery and who support families and individuals who are navigating grief or loss.

Trauma-Informed Care and CoHealing Continuing Education Cohorts

Led by our partners at the Center on Trauma and Adversity at CWRU's Mandel School, FYC offered two, six-session continuing education cohorts to support care providers who work with pregnant and parenting families. The first offered a deeper understanding of and strategies for providing Trauma-Informed Care. The second cohort on CoHealing addressed secondary trauma that impacts caregivers and offered strategies to expand their window of tolerance.

These six months have been so healing! A safe place to release and share."



Ivan T. Conard, MSSA, CNM, LSW & Michaela Jackson-Smith, MSW, LSW CWRU Mandel School Center on Trauma and Adversity

CoHealing Cohort Participant

Aligning Around One Mission Steering Committee

We extend deep gratitude to these honest and trusted community leaders who are champions of families and the work of First Year Cleveland.

Mitchell Balk

President, Mt. Sinai Health Foundation

Emily Campbell

President and CEO, The Center for Community Solutions

Celina Cunanan, смм

Chief Diversity, Equity & Belonging Officer, University Hospitals

Marcia Egbert

Program Director, Thriving Families and Social Justice, The George Gund Foundation

Kimberly Green, MSN, RN, C-EFM

Vice President, Women and Children Services, The MetroHealth System

Roderick Harris, DrPH

Health Commissioner, Cuyahoga County Board of Health

Domonic Hopson, MPH, FACHE President and CEO, Neighborhood Family Practice

Rev. Frederick Knuckles

Pastor, New Fellowship Baptist Church

Michael W. Konstan, MD

Vice Dean for Translational Research, Director of Community Health Programs, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine

India Pierce Lee, Chair

Executive Vice President, Chief Strategy Officer, Cuyahoga Community College

Jazmin Long, MSSA, MNO CEO, Birthing Beautiful Communities

Frances Mills

Public Health Commissioner, Cleveland Department of Public Health

Sabrina Roberts

Senior Advisor to Executive Chris Ronayne, Office of the County Executive

Amy Stephens, MD

Chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Cleveland Clinic Fairview Hospital

Dexter Voisin, PhD, LCSW

Dean, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University

Former members through 2023 whose investment in FYC made a difference: John Corlett, Hon. Blaine A. Griffin, Iris Harvey, Toni Jones, Jeffery Patterson, June Taylor



Staff

Angela Newman-White Executive Director

Richard Stacklin Senior Director of Community Impact

Stacey Hren Director of Operations

Julie Hewitt Project Manager

Alvonta Jenkins Project Manager

Alaa Altom Fiscal Coordinator

Thank you to the funders that illuminate our work

The Bruening Foundation CWRU Office of the Provost City of Cleveland The Cleveland Foundation Cleveland Housing Network Cuyahoga County The Freeman Foundation The George Gund Foundation Mt. Sinai Health Foundation Ohio Department of Children and Youth Ohio Department of Medicaid Saint Luke's Foundation

And many generous individual and organizational donors.

Help Light the Way to One

One person can make a difference in the lives of babies and families in our community.

You can make a one-time or recurring gift by clicking "Donate" at firstyearcleveland.org or using the QR code.



We are grateful for contracted support provided by:

BrandPivot, Capitol Partners, Courtney Creative, Cuyahoga Community College, Double Sugar Content Studio, F&B Consulting, JG Design, Kamron Khan Photography, Lazarus Forward, SYLOW Group, Urban One/Radio One

Our Community Grantee Partners

Our funded community partners do the vital on-the-ground work of caring for babies and families and improving birth outcomes and the health of our region. FYC is proud to uplift these organizations as we continue to expand our network.

- Achievement Centers for Children
- Beech Brook
- Birthing Beautiful Communities
- Black Child Development Institute
 of Ohio
- Charles Martin Corvi Fund
- Cleveland Clinic Foundation Center for Infant & Maternal Health
- Chagrin Documentary Film Festival
- Circle Health/The Centers for Families and Children
- Collaborate Cleveland
- Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- CWRU Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative
- Diaper Bank of Greater Cleveland
- East Mt. Zion Baptist Church

- Edwin's Family Center
- Friendly Inn
- God's Vision Foundation
- Haven Home
- Hope & Harmony Resource Center
- LA's Traveling Baby Shower
- Lexington Bell
- Lillie's Home
- Mamahood
- Merrick House
- MetroHealth
- Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church
- Motivated and Empowered Inc.
- Neighborhood Family Practice
- Neighborhood Leadership Institute
- NEON Health Services
- New City Cleveland

- New Image Life Skills Academy
- Our Wellness Network (OWN)
- Partnership for Good Health
- Pathways to Purpose
- Phenomenal Free Women
- Pregnancy & Infant Loss (PAIL) Society
- Pregnant With Possibilities Resource Center
- Project Milk Mission
- Project NICU
- Providence House
- Public Health Notebook
- Raven House
- Spanish American Council
- University Hospitals
- Village of Healing
- Zelie's Home

"First Year Cleveland is both a step ahead of and extremely responsive to our needs as a service provider. The FYConnects app helps me connect more families to food, diapers, and critical resources they need to care for themselves and their babies. And when I reached out to FYC following the loss of a baby our staff helped care for, they provided support for our team that led to ongoing training around grief. I'm so glad this community has First Year Cleveland."

> - Hannah Eddinger Family Development Specialist, The Centers

Now Live!

Explore the web-based FYConnects Resource App at firstyearcleveland.org/firstyearconnects

Mobile App coming Summer 2025!



Endnotes

¹ https://www.cleveland.com/data/2023/01/cleveland-andeast-cleveland-top-ohio-cities-with-highest-percent-ofhouseholds-without-access-to-a-car-census-estimates.html

² https://signalcleveland.org/how-to-get-a-section-8-housing-voucher-in-cuyahoga-county/

³ https://www.clevescene.com/news/one-orange-andone-head-of-lettuce-what-we-found-when-we-wentgrocery-shopping-in-the-food-desert-around-woodhillestates-42530238

⁴ https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs

⁵ Ohio Department of Health (ODH), Bureau of Vital Statistics

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CDC Wonder (https://wonder.cdc.gov/)

⁷ Ohio Department of Health (ODH), Bureau of Vital Statistics

⁸ Cuyahoga County Child Fatality Review Board

° https://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-is-collective-impact/

¹⁰ https://nlihc.org/gap/state/oh

¹¹ https://spectrumnews1.com/oh/columbus/ news/2024/01/24/housing-vouchers-section-8

¹² https://spectrumnews1.com/oh/columbus/ news/2024/01/24/housing-vouchers-section-8

 $^{\rm 13}$ US Census (DP04) - 2023 1-year estimates for city of Cleveland

¹⁴ https://cohhio.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/HBAH-1pager-with-logos.pdf



Case Western Reserve University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences

10900 Euclid Avenue Cleveland, OH 44106-7164

Visitors and Deliveries: 11235 Bellflower Road, Suite 375

(216) 368-5017

FirstYearCLE@case.edu

firstyearcleveland.org

- @FirstYearClevelanc
- n First Year Cleveland
- **First Year Cleveland**

This report was developed by the First Year Cleveland team in partnership with Double Sugar Content Studio and BrandPivot.