

# Focusing for Impact



2025 Impact Report

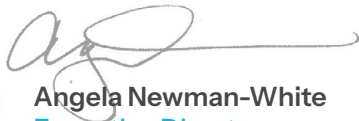
# Focusing for Impact

First Year Cleveland is a **connector**, a **protector**, and an **activator**. These words define who we are and what we do, but what does our work look like in action and what is the impact?

Our 2025 Impact Report aims to answer these questions. We hope the stories on the following pages make the intangible a little more real and effectively showcase how our community of providers, nonprofits, funders, advocates, mothers, and families effect change together. Nowhere will you find a group more committed to ensuring every baby celebrates their first birthday.

Our work is possible because of the focus on this shared goal. First Year Cleveland is there through it all, **aligning diverse efforts**, **amplifying community voice**, and **achieving systems change**. This is how we make messy, complex work more manageable. This is how we make an impact.

As we celebrate our own big birthday this year—#10!—we are focused on how we continue to make an impact going forward. With the adoption of a new strategic plan for 2026-2029 and the full support of our growing community, we are equipped to tackle the challenges in front of us. If you aren't a part of our work yet, we invite you to learn more and engage. Together, we can light the way to one for more babies and families in Cuyahoga County.



Angela Newman-White  
Executive Director

# About First Year Cleveland

## Mission

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

## Vision

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

## Our Community

First Year Cleveland convenes policymakers, nonprofits, philanthropy, service providers, and families across Cuyahoga County to work toward our shared vision—a place-based approach driving change statewide and beyond.

## Our Home

First Year Cleveland is housed at Case Western Reserve University's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

## Our Team

**Angela Newman-White**  
*Executive Director*

**Richard Stacklin**  
*Senior Director of  
Community Impact*

**Stacey Hren**  
*Managing Director*

**Julie Hewitt**  
*Project Manager*

**Alvonta Jenkins**  
*Project Manager*

**Alaa Altom**  
*Grants & Contracts  
Specialist*

**Deyshanna Birch**  
*Intern*

## Celebrate with us!

Save the date of **November 7, 2026**, to celebrate our 10th birthday with us. Sign up for our newsletter at [firstyearcleveland.org](https://firstyearcleveland.org) to receive more details on the celebration.

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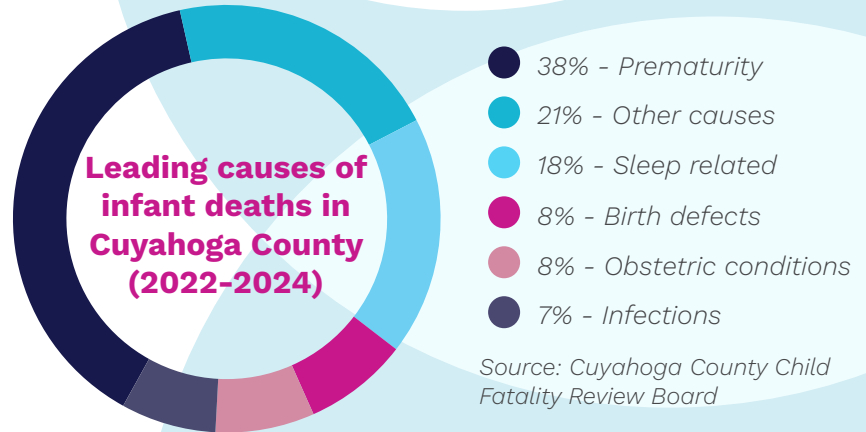
## FOCUSING ON DATA

# Tracking Infant Mortality

A community's vitality is linked to the well-being of its youngest and most vulnerable members. When families have the support and resources they need to grow, they are better situated to unlock their potential and realize a vibrant, healthy environment. We track infant mortality and infant and maternal health trends in Cuyahoga County to better understand the greatest threats to babies and our community's health overall. We then focus our efforts and resources where there is the biggest need.

### Data: A Lens for Action

In 2025, several key data points drove our priorities. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) for Black infants in Cuyahoga County is more than three times higher than for white infants, and the rate within the Hispanic community was the highest in more than a decade. We also know that the leading causes of infant mortality are prematurity and sleep-related incidents.

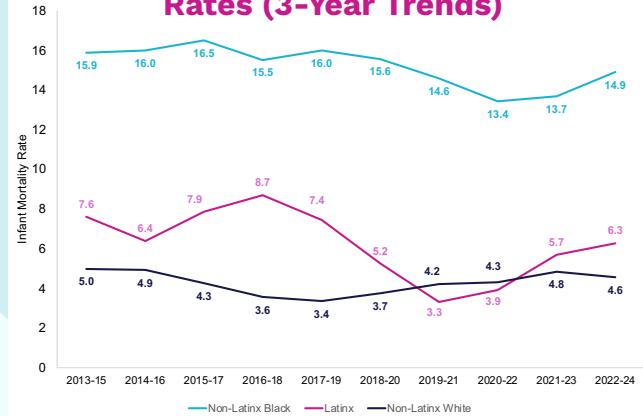


## Terminology

**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 visit [firstyearcleveland.org/data](https://firstyearcleveland.org/data)

## Cuyahoga County Infant Mortality Rates (3-Year Trends)



Source: Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH)

## Focusing on Maternal Well-being

While we have always recognized that the well-being of an expectant mother has a significant impact on outcomes for infants, 2025 marked the concerted expansion of First Year Cleveland's efforts to define and address a key underlying factor of infant mortality: maternal health.

Read on for a case study about a statewide effort focused on improving maternal health. >>



*“Each and every member of the community has their own unique individual experiences, both positive and negative, and wisdom regarding what their community needs that can be captured and formulated into action when designing sustainable solutions to create positive change. ... Our families are strong, resilient, and have overcome many challenges. [They] deserve to exist in a community where they feel connected and a sense of safety, belonging, and a nurturing environment to raise their babies.”*

– **Nailah Muhammad, A.A.** CCHW  
Manager of Community Health Initiatives,  
Neighborhood Family Practice, and Coordinator  
of Queens Village Cleveland (pictured above,  
second from left)

PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

## A Data-centered Model to Reduce Infant Mortality

In April of 2025, Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio Department of Children and Youth announced funding to support the expansion of a highly effective model to improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality, pioneered by Cradle Cincinnati. Through a two-year \$750,000 grant, First Year Cleveland is implementing the effort in Cuyahoga County in partnership with Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Better Health Partnership and Neighborhood Leadership Institute.

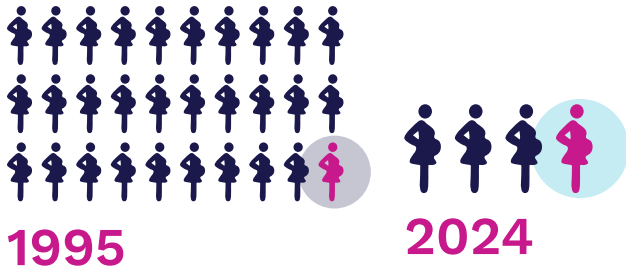
In many ways, the model reinforces the connector, protector, and activator roles of First Year Cleveland, centering on improved data access and analysis, the establishment of a healthcare learning collaborative, and implementation of Black-led community solutions.

≤5.9

*The goal of Partners for Change is to reduce infant mortality in Cuyahoga County from 8.2 to 5.9 (or less) per 1,000 live births by December 2030.*

## Connector: Building shared understanding

Partners for Change brings together parents, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and community members to support moms and babies. Input from these partners drove us to explore prematurity, one of the leading causes of infant mortality. Hypertensive disorders during pregnancy and a lack of prenatal care are primary reasons babies are born early. We learned that more than a quarter of pregnant women in Cuyahoga County had a hypertensive disorder during pregnancy in 2024—an astounding **733%** increase over 30 years.



*In 1995, one in 30 pregnant women was diagnosed with a hypertensive disorder during pregnancy in Cuyahoga County. In 2024, more than one in four women were.*

Source: CDC Wonder 2024

## Protector: Engaging those most impacted

Partners for Change uses the Queens Village model to elevate Black women’s expertise. By engaging women most impacted by infant mortality alongside healthcare systems, we gain a better sense of what needs to change to improve outcomes.



## Activator: Driving a system-wide change

Given the work on understanding hypertension, all major health systems and community health providers in Cuyahoga County now universally prescribe baby aspirin in pregnancy to address the high levels of hypertension in our community.

Partners for Change grantees from Franklin, Lucas, [redacted], Montgomery, and Cuyahoga County with Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, First Lady Fran DeWine (to his right), and Director of the Ohio Department of Children and Youth Kara B. Wentz (far right)



## FIRST YEAR CLEVELAND AS A CONNECTOR

# Aligning Diverse Efforts

Our work is rooted in connection. To achieve more first birthdays, we bring together diverse stakeholders to tackle issues with improved focus, shared resources, and holistic understanding. We provide funding, support, and training, connecting partners to vital tools and capacity to do their work more effectively.

We ...

**Convene stakeholders** to find and expand opportunities to collaborate

**Create an aligned network** working toward the same goals

**Build shared understanding** through data, meetings, and resources

## Community Meetings & Forums

In 2025, we hosted four quarterly community meetings and facilitated three Funders Forums to help foundations and nonprofits work together to build capacity for infant and maternal health. Over 300 care providers, students, policymakers, funders, and community leaders engaged with us throughout the year to learn more and take action.



## Provider Capacity

We build our community's capacity through funding, access to training, and connections to networks. In 2025, we supported the training of 26 health care providers on newborn screening and vaccines. This training was provided in response to increasing misinformation about vaccines contributing to hesitancy among patients and the stark disparities that exist in who receives these life-saving interventions. We also distributed \$2.4 million of resources from the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to nine organizations, which served 1,773 individuals. Additionally, we allocated more than \$109,000 in rapid-response basic needs grants to 22 organizations in support of women and babies.

**\$2.4 million**  
of ODM funding  
distributed to

**9**

organizations in  
Cuyahoga County,  
serving

### 2025 Snapshot: Investing in Our Network

**1,773**

individuals receiving  
services to promote  
perinatal well-being

**\$109k**  
grant funding  
from other  
sources  
distributed to

**22**

organizations to  
serve women  
& babies

**71%**

**of First Year Cleveland's total  
income in FY25 was invested  
in the community.**

**Support More First Birthdays:**  
Make a tax-deductible  
donation at  
[firstyearcleveland.org](https://firstyearcleveland.org)

## Stay Connected to Our Work

Sign up for  
our monthly newsletter to keep a pulse  
on what's happening in the First Year  
Cleveland community.  
Visit [firstyearcleveland.org](https://firstyearcleveland.org) to sign up.

## FIRST YEAR CLEVELAND AS A PROTECTOR

# Amplifying Community Voice

Community voice is a powerful driver of change. First Year Cleveland prioritizes the input of our community in everything we do. From health care providers who share trends they're seeing and challenges they face in their work to the families who've lost a baby too soon, First Year Cleveland centers its work on the experiences of those indirectly and directly impacted by infant mortality.

It takes courage, conviction, and commitment to share your story with the intent of making outcomes better for others. We're grateful for our community and those who help foster brighter, healthier futures for Cuyahoga County babies and their families through the power of their voice.

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*First Year Cleveland's policy priorities and community partner meetings consistently reflect the community's lived experiences and respond to community needs by centering their voice and stakeholder-driven solutions.*

– **Michelle Wilcox**, MPH, HPM, Policy Analyst, Cleveland Dept. of Public Health, and member of FYC's Policy Committee



We ...

Ensure **community voices** drive decisions

**Build platforms** for affected families to influence systems

Position community members as **experts and changemakers**

## 2025 CoHealing Cohorts

First Year Cleveland supported more than 40 healthcare providers through two CoHealing cohorts, a monthly group intervention to support a more resilient network of trauma-informed perinatal healthcare providers. Developed and led in collaboration with community partners in response to what providers told us they need, the program was created by our colleague Dr. Jenny King at the Center on Trauma and Adversity at CWRU's Mandel School and is led by Michaela Jackson-Smith.

Indirect trauma, including burnout and secondary trauma, is inevitable for professionals who work with pregnant and postpartum families.

This six-month guided and supportive program aims to reduce secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and isolation by providing self-regulation tools, relational connection as a coping resource, and education on causes and symptoms of indirect trauma.



### Join Our Community Advisory Committee

Share your voice and help steer our work! Our Community Advisory Committee, which includes perinatal providers, parents, and community members, has catalyzed and informed vital efforts such as funder forums, civic engagement training for home visitors, and more. Contact Al Jenkins at [axj448@case.edu](mailto:axj448@case.edu) for more info.

To learn more about bringing CoHealing to your workplace, contact [firstyearcleveland@case.edu](mailto:firstyearcleveland@case.edu). Continuing Education is available for nursing, social work, family therapy, and counseling.

## FIRST YEAR CLEVELAND AS AN ACTIVATOR

# Achieving Systems Change

Our work brings together data, mission alignment, capacity, and community voice with the intent of driving change at the systems level. We want better outcomes for all babies and families, and the way to advance and sustain those outcomes is through activating champions, building proof points, scaling what works, and influencing policy.

We ...

Enable **statewide impact** through catalytic partnerships

Invest **strategically** to create ripple effects

Leverage aligned network for **policy and systems wins**

## Little Lights Cleveland

In 2025, our activated network grew to include Little Lights Cleveland, founded by six Case Western Reserve University undergraduate students who rented a car to travel to the Statehouse for Infant Vitality Advocacy Day. Inspired by the experience, the club grew to 50+ undergraduate and graduate students across majors and from a variety of backgrounds. Members meet monthly to help light the way to one for more babies through education, advocacy, and volunteering projects, from making felt NICU isolette pads to holding infants at crisis and women's shelters to lend support to new moms.



Follow *littlelightscle* on Instagram to learn more



## Healthy Beginnings at Home

Healthy Beginnings at Home is a three-year research project, funded by the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, The Bruening Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation, aimed at measuring the impact of stable housing on birth outcomes. The goal is to provide up to 30 pregnant women in high-risk ZIP codes with rental assistance, social service support, and guidance from a housing support specialist starting in pregnancy for up to 24 months. First Year Cleveland funded The Centers, EDEN Inc. and the Neighborhood Leadership Institute to serve pregnant women in 2025. With 29 total expecting families served (19 through housing & services, 10 receiving services only), preliminary outcomes show a significant impact.

First Year Cleveland is using lessons from this effort to advance systems change, establishing a Cuyahoga County housing policy subcommittee and convening housing providers to explore opportunities to champion local and state housing policies that support pregnant and parenting families.

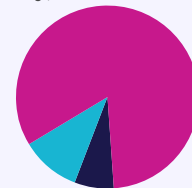


### PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

#### *Healthy Beginnings at Home: Year 1 (2025)*

**29** expecting families served (19 housing + services, 10 services only)

**24**  
*full-term & healthy weight births (83%)*



**3**  
*pre-term and/or low-weight births (10%)*

**2** *miscarriages (7%)*

# Infant Vitality Advocacy Day

On September 30, 2025, more than 75 partners and advocates gathered at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus for the third annual Infant Vitality Advocacy Day, organized by First Year Cleveland and founding partners Cradle Cincinnati, Ohio Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality (OCPIM), and CelebrateOne Columbus. Attendees had the chance to network with fellow advocates, meet with legislators, and honor infant vitality champions. In 2026, we are responding to a call for more resources and opportunities to advocate throughout the year.



## Lighting the Way to One

ILLUMINATING HOPE  
FOR OHIO FAMILIES



### Save the Date!

Join us for Infant Vitality Advocacy Day on September 29, 2026.

[lightingthewayto1.org](http://lightingthewayto1.org)



OCPIM Executive Director Stacey Scott with Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig (Dist. 15)

## By the Numbers

### Who Attended

- 75+ people
- Representing 11 Ohio counties
- 30+ supporting and partner organizations

### Meetings & Conversations

29 meetings with legislative offices in the state Senate and House of Representatives.

### Policy & Progress

- Two policy priorities elevated: Maternal Mental Health and Economic Stability.
- Six state leaders recognized for their ongoing efforts to support these issues.



Queens Village Council

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine & First Lady Fran DeWine



First Year Cleveland team & partners

*First Year Cleveland is a movement of organizations, families, and individuals who give of their time, talent, and treasure to ensure all babies celebrate their first birthdays. We're grateful to all those who contribute to this work.*

## **Steering Committee**

**Emily Campbell, Co-chair**  
*President and CEO,  
The Center for Community  
Solutions*

**Amy Stephens, MD,  
Co-chair**  
*Chair, Dept. of Obstetrics  
and Gynecology,  
Cleveland Clinic Fairview  
Hospital*

**Mitchell Balk**  
*President,  
Mt. Sinai Health Foundation*

**Celina Cunanan, CNM**  
*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**  
*VP, 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, Dir. of Community  
Health Programs, CWRU  
School of Medicine*

**Jazmin Long, MSSA, MNO**  
*CEO, Birthing Beautiful  
Communities*

**Frances Mills**  
*Commissioner of Health,  
Cleveland Dept. of Public  
Health*

**Sabrina Roberts**  
*Sr. Advisor to the Executive,  
Office of the Cuyahoga  
County Executive*

**Dexter Voisin, PhD, LCSW**  
*Dean, Jack, Joseph and  
Morton Mandel School of  
Applied Social Sciences,  
CWRU*

## **Our Funders**

The Bruening Foundation  
CWRU Office of the Provost  
City of Cleveland  
Cleveland Foundation  
Cleveland Housing Network  
Cuyahoga County  
The Freeman Foundation  
The George Gund Foundation  
Mt. Sinai Health Foundation  
Ohio Dept. of Medicaid  
Ohio Dept. of Children and Youth  
The Woodruff Foundation

***And the many individuals  
and organizations who  
give generously at  
[firstyearcleveland.org](http://firstyearcleveland.org).***



*We are grateful for contracted partnerships with BrandPivot, Cap Square Advisors, Community Speaks Consulting, Courtney Creative, Cuyahoga Community College, Double Sugar, Juggle Creative, and Stream 9. This report was developed by the First Year Cleveland team in partnership with Double Sugar and BrandPivot.*

## **Get in Touch**

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