

Looking Back, Leaping Forward

Combating Infant Mortality



“She’s an angel living on Earth. I wouldn’t have gotten through this without her.”

- Former Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB client Tanisha Jones on Christine Brown, a community health worker employed by East Toledo Family Center. Three months after moving to Toledo in search of more education and a fresh start, Tanisha found out she was six months pregnant. Christine provided the additional support Tanisha and her family needed to get housing assistance, food, diapers, a pack 'n play and more. After Prince was born, Christine continued meeting with Tanisha to provide health education, help getting financial coaching and employment, and to prepare for furthering her education – and her future.

Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB Five-Year Report: 2016-2020

Looking Back, Leaping Forward: Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB Milestones

The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB (Pathways HUB) is a regional care coordination system that connects low-income residents to needed medical and social services, including insurance coverage, food, housing, transportation, medical homes and career development. The system's community health workers (CHWs) employed by care coordination sites throughout the region assisted approximately 9,400 pregnant women, women of childbearing age, adults with chronic diseases and other vulnerable residents from 2005 through 2020. The Pathways HUB focuses on serving African American families to reduce health disparities, and more than half of clients are African American.

Over the last 5 years, the Ohio Department of Medicaid and its managed care partners awarded the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio (HCNO) a total of nearly \$5.5 million for projects to combat infant mortality throughout Lucas County. Some of this funding was targeted to train CHWs and expand care coordination through the Pathways HUB, which is coordinated by HCNO. The majority of the funding was contracted to community partners, including the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, to carry out the work.

By building on a firm foundation that was created with the help of the Greater Toledo Community Foundation, the Stranahan Foundation, the Ohio Commission on Minority Health and other funders, the Pathways HUB utilized the Ohio Department of Medicaid funding to leverage additional resources to meet the needs of African American women who are pregnant or of childbearing age. The Pathways HUB's braided funding approach helps fill community gaps, such as housing and transportation, and allows the care coordination system's 36 CHWs to focus on client needs. This report looks at the Pathways HUB's foundation and focuses on strides made from 2016 to 2020.

2005

- Lucas County Initiative to Improve Birth Outcomes adopts Pathways Community HUB model. The model is recognized by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs as a data-driven approach to identifying and addressing risk factors at the individual and community levels.

2005-2009

- Grants provide all funding for care coordination outcomes.

2010

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB begins contracting with Medicaid managed care plans to provide care coordination to pregnant clients.

2013

- Toledo-Lucas County Getting to 1, the Ohio Equity Institute team in Lucas County, is formed; the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department and the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB serve as the coalition's co-leads.



2014

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB becomes one of the nation's first three certified Pathways Community HUBs.

- Healthy Start grant awarded to Toledo-Lucas County Health Department assists in expanding Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB services.

- The Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio (HCNO) works with the University of Toledo Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Partnership for Community Health Workers to secure MEDTAPP Healthcare Access (HCA) Initiative funding from the Ohio Department of Medicaid to train and certify 151 community health workers.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention awards grant to HCNO to help expand to serving adults with chronic diseases, proving that the care coordination system can be used for other populations.

2016

- Ohio Department of Medicaid and its managed care plans begin funding to provide care coordination to women of childbearing age to improve preconception, prenatal and interconception health; training community health workers; and other projects.

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB expands beyond Lucas County to other northwest Ohio counties.

- Getting to 1 Diaper Bank opens to serve clients of Lucas County home-visiting programs.

2015

- Ohio Commission on Minority Health begins funding to enhance and replicate Pathways Community HUB model throughout Ohio.

- Getting to 1 project begins to assess child-bearing age women in physician offices and refer African Americans and others with identified risks to the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB.

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB begins providing care coordination to Susan G. Komen Northwest Ohio clients.

2017

Lucas County Department of Job & Family Services begins providing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding to buy clients beds and pay for care coordination not covered by other funding sources.

2018

- Baby and Me Ride Free program launches in partnership with TARTA to provide clients a free annual bus pass and access to paratransit door-to-door services.

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB partners with both Lucas Metropolitan Housing to begin prioritizing housing choice vouchers for pregnant women and the City of Toledo for tenant-based rental assistance.

- The Ohio Department of Health begins funding a Best Babies Zone approach project called the Getting Healthy Zone. The project works with residents in central city Toledo neighborhoods to determine what they need to improve health and well-being, as well as recruit pregnant women into home-visiting programs.

- Centene Corp.'s Buckeye Health Plan study shows high-risk mothers without Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB care coordination were 1.55 times more likely to deliver a baby needing a special care nursery or neonatal ICU. Second study of Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB data shows that using a Pathways Community HUB produces a 236% return on investment.

2020

- The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB goes virtual in response to the pandemic, assisting clients with basic needs and education to protect their families from being exposed to COVID-19.

- Principle Family Action Fund funds training and certification for CHWs.

- Ohio Department of Health begins funding a pilot project to assist homeless youths with housing by funding deposits, application fees and other costs.

- Bowling Green State University receives Ohio Department of Higher Education grant to begin conducting a participant-based impact assessment of the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB.



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Looking Back, Leaping Forward: Focusing on Clients As A Team

Helping babies reach their first of many birthdays takes an entire team. Various players are needed to support clients who are pregnant or of childbearing age – CHWs and care coordination agencies, funders, community partners, and the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB staff and advisors – to improve birth outcomes and fill community gaps.

Assessing and Referring Childbearing-Age Women

Women were assessed for risks of poor birth outcomes at 33 OB/GYN offices and other sites in Lucas County. All African American women and others with identified risks were referred to the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB. Staff at the Pathways HUB connected eligible women to a community health worker for care coordination services or referred them to other applicable programs and services.

Enrolled in Pathways HUB or other home visitation: 4,012
32%
Unable to be contacted: 3,557
29%
Declined: 2,930
24%
Referred to another program: 1,071
8%
Pending: 356
3%
Miscarried after being referred: 124
1%
Referral not eligible: 343
3%

CHWs and Care Coordination Agencies

Community health workers (CHWs) serve as “boots on the ground,” enrolling and assisting clients with multiple barriers to care. These CHWs work at care coordination sites throughout the community, including healthcare providers and social service organizations.

Community Partners

Doctors, emergency rooms and other medical providers refer clients to the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB. A project that uses the Best Babies Zone approach, called the Getting Healthy Zone, works with residents in central city Toledo neighborhoods to determine what they need to improve health and well-being.



Focusing on Clients

Women who are pregnant or of childbearing age work one-on-one as a team with their CHWs to address their greatest needs. Not only are clients connected to the medical and social services they need to have healthy pregnancies and infants – including a medical home, food, housing and transportation – they receive health education and other support to improve their lives. The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB is especially focused on serving African American families to reduce health disparities.

Infant Mortality		Pathways HUB 2016-2019 Births	Pathways HUB 2016-2019 Deaths	Infant Mortality Rate	Lucas County 2016-2019 Births	Lucas County 2016-2019 Deaths	Infant Mortality Rate
The goal is having no infant deaths. But Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB client families, most of whom live in Lucas County, have fared better than their neighbors in having their infants reach their first birthdays.	African American	1,095	12	10.9	6,203	94	15.1
	White	820	2	2.4	14,639	83	5.6
	Other Race	84	1	11.9	865	5	5.7
	Total	1,999	15	7.5	21,707	182	8.3

Please note: Infant mortality data for 2020 was not available.

“CHWs are very down to earth, and since they have gone through similar situations, I could tell they understood what I was going through.”

~ Former Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB client who previously worked with two community health workers, one of whom helped her start a cleaning company.

Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB

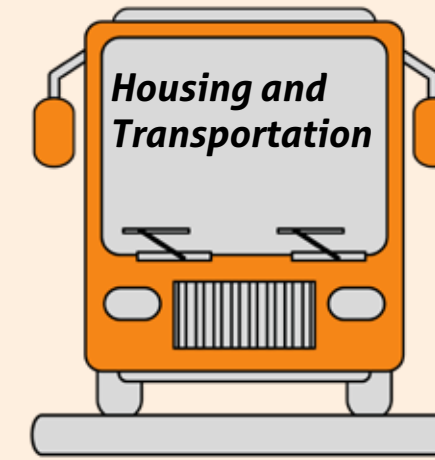
Staff at the Pathways HUB secures funding to fill community gaps, train CHWs, track data and perform other tasks. Members of the Pathways HUB Advisory Committee help advise staff and assist with quality improvement.

Funders

A braided funding approach is used to pay for care connection outcomes, such as for connecting clients to a medical home, housing, transportation and other needs. A mix of federal, state, managed care, local and philanthropic funding is used to pay outcomes, train CHWs, cover Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB coordination and for other costs.

“Mary was my shining light, and when the bottom fell out of my life, Mary was there to boost me up.”

~ Former Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB client about her community health worker, Mary Peavy of ProMedica.



Time after time, CHWs and clients identify the lack of quality housing and reliable transportation as the biggest barriers. The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB has formed partnerships and received grant funding to address these gaps in community resources from 2018 to 2020, including:

- Fifty-five women were housed through housing choice vouchers or other projects, with 36 receiving Lucas Metropolitan Housing vouchers. Families with vouchers pay the difference between the actual rent charged by a landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

- Two Ohio Department of Health grant projects, one for the Getting Healthy Zone and another for homeless youths, have assistance funds to help clients pay for housing-related costs.

- The Baby and Me Ride Free program has had 1,384 riders, including 975 unique enrollments with 409 program renewals. Clients and infants are provided free transportation for a year so they can get to the doctor, work, school, church, store and loved ones.



Low birth weight is the leading cause of infant mortality in Lucas County and elsewhere statewide. Preterm birth is another key infant mortality indicator, and it often coincides with low birth weight. African American babies are twice as likely to be born low birth weight and/or born preterm than white babies.

Birth Outcomes

	Low Birth Weight 2016-2020		Preterm 2016-2020	
	Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB client for 120+ days	Lucas County	Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB client for 120+ days	Lucas County
African American	11%	14.2%	10.4%	14.6%
White	10.8%	8%	11%	9.9%
Other Races	5.5%	9.5%	7.3%	8.9%
Total	10.7%	9.9%	10.5%	11.2%



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A Case Study In Teamwork

Background: In early 2020, an African American mother with two sons, including a 6-month-old infant, was a Medicaid managed care plan beneficiary receiving care coordination services through the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB. The family was living in Section 8 housing and using a Department of Housing and Urban Development utility allowance to pay back charges from prior residences. The client was unaware that she needed to put the apartment’s electricity account in her name and pay the bill until she received an eviction notice.

Team approach: As soon as her client told her about the eviction notice and impending court date just days away, Mercy Health Community Health Worker Antoinette Gover pursued several avenues to cover the charges and get the eviction dismissed. Both women tried getting funding from churches – including Antoinette’s – and various charities and agencies, but either the client did not qualify for utility assistance or none was available. Antoinette contacted Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE) and the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB about her client’s plight. The Pathways HUB determined the client qualified for a housing assistance fund established by an Ohio Department of Health grant and worked with Antoinette to process the paperwork. A check for \$530.49 to cover the utilities bill, late fees and court costs was hand delivered by Pathways HUB Housing Coordinator Holly Pappada before ABLE Attorney Monica Hoskins represented the client in court.

Results: The client and her sons were not evicted.

Care Coordination Connections

Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB community health workers (CHWs) work one-on-one with each client to develop and complete a care coordination plan based on individual needs. CHWs track the number and type of connections each client makes, many of which address social determinants of health. In 2020, the average client who is pregnant or of childbearing age needed 7.3 care coordination

connections, a number that has increased in recent years as CHWs concentrate on assisting those with the highest needs. This chart compares completed connections for 10 key categories in 2016 to those completed in 2020. While the number of clients served between 2016 and 2020 increased by 63%, the total number of completed care coordination connections increased by 318%.

Key Care Coordination Connections (Completed Pathways)	Number Completed		Increase in completions between 2016 and 2020
	2016	2020	
Adult Education to Advance Job/Career Prospects	3	18	500%
Breastfeeding	85	312	267%
Behavioral/Mental Health	1	66	6500%
Employment	2	104	5100%
Healthcare Coverage	40	146	265%
Housing	28	145	418%
Medical Referral, such as for Specialty Medical Care	349	1,001	187%
Social Service Referral, such as for Food and Baby Items	1,070	5,630	426%
Transportation	84	235	180%
Family Planning	69	323	368%

Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB community health workers (CHWs) traditionally meet one-on-one with clients, but in-person visits were suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, more than 800 clients were enrolled in care coordination services since the pandemic began, and CHWs:

- Completed more than 10,000 wellness checks with clients over the phone.
- Conducted more than 6,500 virtual visits with clients.
- Documented more than 450 education sessions related to COVID-19.
- Helped connect clients to more than 4,000 community resources, including emergency diapers, food, baby items, pack 'n plays and personal care items.

Additionally, staff at the Pathways HUB advised CHWs to complete a learning module on respiratory viruses with every client, and they secured \$750 for masks for clients and an additional 1,500 masks to distribute to clients. Staff also began piloting electronic signatures for legal documents, adjusted forms to fillable PDFs when applicable, and began COVID-19 tracking.

"I've also noticed a lot of emergency things happening with clients as they're losing their jobs, as money is getting tighter. There is an absolute lack of available resources within the city to be able to extend to everyone."

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB community health worker on client needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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"Because of the pandemic, there are landlords ... that are reluctant to show apartments or houses at this time out of fear... They're unable to find housing. It's already hard to find housing as it is."

- Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB community health worker on housing challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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2020 Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB Care Coordination Agencies



2020 Pathways HUB Funding Partners



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