

Overview

Founded in 1878 as City Hospital, Parkview Hospital is one of the oldest – and only remaining – nonprofit hospitals in northeast Indiana. Over the years, Parkview has grown from a single hospital in Fort Wayne to a system of hospitals and other medical facilities in several counties in Indiana, with physician offices throughout northeast Indiana and northwest Ohio, serving a population of more than 875,000. Parkview has a long history of community engagement based on reaching out and collaborating with community leaders and nonprofit agencies to deliver services, increase access, and address the social determinants of health.

The Maternal and Infant Outreach initiative is offered in partnership with multiple social services agencies aimed at reducing infant mortality by providing resources to expectant and new mothers, including Healthy Families, Associated Churches, A Hope Pregnancy Center, Beds and Britches, Etc., SCAN, and the Neighborhood Health Clinic. Programs include:

- **CenteringPregnancy® (CP):** Established in 2014, this program serves up to 120 women per year and provides low-income women with a culturally appropriate centering model of prenatal care. The program includes health assessments, group support, and educational seminars aimed at reducing premature birth and low birth weight.

- **Breastfeeding Program:** Implemented in 2015, this program provides certified lactation specialists and breastfeeding support groups for pregnant and nursing moms to encourage and support the decision to breastfeed. The program serves approximately 200 women per year with home visits and support groups.

- **Safe Sleep Program:** Implemented in 2009, this program provides safe sleep education to new parents and caregivers, as well as a free portable



Parkview staff members participate in a community outreach event for the Period of PURPLE Crying program.

crib to those who otherwise would not have a safe bed for their baby. Recently, Parkview partnered with Three Rivers Ambulance Authority to teach first responders how to recognize if there is an infant in the home and provide education on safe sleep. The program serves approximately 400 families per year with group and individual education.

- **Period of PURPLE Crying:** Established in 2014, this outreach program serves more than 5,000 families per year and teaches parents and caregivers about the normal patterns of infant crying, the dangers of shaking an infant, and strategies to soothe a crying infant to reduce the incidence of shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma and infant physical abuse. Most recently, program leaders have been able to extend its reach with more community presentations, particularly focusing on men and adolescent boys, as those family members are usually not participants in the prenatal medical care process.

• **Community Health Worker Program:** This is Parkview's newest Maternal and Infant Outreach initiative, offered in conjunction with the Indiana State Department of Health. In this program, community health workers (CHWs) visit the homes of new and expectant mothers to assess their needs and help them access resources they may need. One way the workers have been able to encourage parents and caregivers to schedule a visit is through the Safe Sleep classes.

"Most of these programs overlap," says Erin Norton, R.N., director of community outreach for the women's & children's service line. "Parkview's



Parkview staff community health workers promote the Period of PURPLE Crying program at a community celebration.

community nurses teach Safe Sleep classes, and a community health worker is there to assist and connect with families. At the conclusion of the class, the families schedule a time with the CHW for a home visit and crib delivery. At this visit, the CHW reinforces the education, ensures that the crib is set up in a safe place, and also assesses if the family has additional concerns, such as food insecurity."

Impact

Sixty-four percent of expectant mothers in the CP Program increased their fruit and vegetable intake, while 53 percent increased their water intake. In addition, 47 percent of those participants reported

an increase in perinatal knowledge. For the Period of Purple Crying, all parents of the approximately 4,300 infants born in the Parkview Health system received educational information from a trained nurse. Approximately 3,400 people of all ages received educational information at a variety of community events. The Breastfeeding Program has had great success, with 68 percent of moms attempting breastfeeding for those visited at home and 23 percent still breastfeeding at 6 months and another 10 percent exclusively breastfeeding at 6 months.

Lessons Learned

Matters involving the care of infants are, to a large extent, heavily dependent on culture and tradition. Not only do providers need to meet clients "where they live," but to have the hospital's message heard, it must be delivered and/or endorsed by those members of the community being served.

"When working with families, we always need to ask them first," Norton explains. "Don't assume you know what's best for them. These young women are experts in their own lives, their problems, and how to solve them."

For example, when planning the breastfeeding support groups, community nurses trained in lactation support talked to expectant and new mothers to learn about when and where the programs should be held and what they should include. This directed their selections regarding where and when to provide the community support groups.

Future Goals

The overarching goal of this initiative is to significantly reduce infant mortality. Doing so requires increasing awareness of the high rate of infant mortality in the region (7.5 in Indiana, 8.4 in Allen County, and 18.7 in the African-American community in the northeastern hospital region) and ensuring consistent messaging regarding the importance of early prenatal care, breastfeeding, safe sleep, and prevention of shaken baby syndrome. For effective delivery by members of the community, Parkview has hired community peer advocates (community health workers) to deliver

programming and engage further with community members and leaders.

Meanwhile, Parkview was recently awarded a Safety PIN (Protecting Indiana's Newborns) grant, as part of a state program to reduce infant mortality. While the initiatives primarily have been focused on the southeast side of Fort Wayne, which has the highest infant mortality rate in the county, the organization plans to use grant funding to expand programs to the rest of Allen County and beyond. Parkview is currently reaching out to county leaders to learn more, and will then meet with young families and other residents in those areas to learn what is needed.


Another upcoming program is Footprints Fort Wayne, a program based on Cradle Cincinnati, a collective impact initiative that has succeeded by identifying and targeting three issues that improve

infant mortality: increasing the time between pregnancies, reducing tobacco use during pregnancy, and promoting safe sleep. Parkview's program is in its early stages. They currently are bringing together a collaborative team that includes community stakeholders such as faith leaders, school leaders, librarians, and others to begin narrowing the three focus areas to rally the community around.

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