



## **Dayton police team up with local organization to reduce infant mortality**

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The Dayton Police Department is now part of a new partnership to help protect our most vulnerable citizens.

In 2015, Chief Richard Biehl was inspired by a presentation by Dr. Arthur James at the Thinking for Two conference illustrating racial disparity in birth outcomes. Chief Biehl felt the disparity was unacceptable in any community and realized that police may have an opportunity to improve outcomes through public health and/or community partnerships.

Data analysis revealed that the majority of infant deaths in Dayton are related to pre-term births and that infant mortality is alarmingly high for African-American babies in Dayton and Ohio. Major Wendy Stiver of the Dayton Police Department (DPD), in collaboration with Wright State University Master of Public Health Program and Public Health-Dayton & Montgomery County epidemiologists Dr. Sara Paton and Sylvia Ellison, conducted a data project to identify where police interacted with families of infants who died, in order to leverage police contacts with parents and connect them to needed resources.

Data revealed that in a majority of infant mortality cases in the city of Dayton, a police officer comes into contact with the mother at some point during her pregnancy, with more than half of those contacts being enforcement-related, mainly traffic stops.

Dayton police are now trying to use citizen contacts as a means to help expectant or new mothers. DPD partnered with Help Me Grow Brighter Futures (HMGBF), an evidence-based home visiting program that is not only shown to improve birth outcomes but also helps to build healthy families and communities and decrease criminality in youth.

Project Officer A. Woody receives referrals from fellow officers who come in contact with moms-to-be or new parents who may benefit from prenatal and postnatal

health services. Officer Woody then shares the referrals with HMGBF, and the families are screened for eligibility for services for mothers and children. Officer Woody spends at least one shift a month conducting follow-up visits with an HMGBF home visitor to help connect moms to the program. Officer Z. Fehrman, who holds a Master of Public Health degree from Wright State University and studied under Dr. Paton and Ms. Ellison, assists Officer Woody.

The program began in February 2018 and to date there have been 27 referrals, with five enrollments into services.

"This program is an example of our department's commitment to community policing partnerships to address serious, complex issues within our community," Major Stiver explains. "To truly serve the community means to try everything we can to improve lives through our partnerships. It just makes sense to give our officers every possible resource when they encounter an expectant or new mom who might benefit from some support to make sure our newest community members are healthy."

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**Media: Major Stiver is available for an interview on the Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative upon request. She is presenting the initiative at the Center for Evidence Based Policing Symposium at George Mason University on Thursday, June 21.**

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