Wellness on Wheels
OhioHealth

Overview
Since 1993, Wellness on Wheels has provided comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care to women in our community, regardless of their ability to pay. Clinical care is “delivered” to the community via a 54-foot mobile unit, that is essentially a doctor’s office on wheels, with exam rooms, consult rooms, a laboratory and reception area. Wellness on Wheels has successfully addressed the infant mortality crisis in central Ohio and to date, over 3,500 women and children have received services and more than 15,000 clinic visits have been scheduled. Infant mortality is defined as the “death of a baby before his or her first birthday”. Wellness on Wheels addresses this issue through its comprehensive approach to clinical care and the availability of a multidisciplinary healthcare team. Over the course of our history, the infant mortality rate for Wellness on Wheels is 5.2 infant deaths per 1000 live births. This is considerably lower than the city, county, state and the nation. We meet and exceed Healthy People 2020 goals for Infant Mortality, low birth weight, and premature birth. Wellness on Wheels' goal is to provide comprehensive, high quality prenatal and postpartum care and women’s health services to vulnerable and most-at-risk women in Ohio regardless of their ability to pay.

Data/Metrics
Healthy People 2020 targets are used as benchmarks for infant mortality rate, percent preterm birth and low birth weight, prenatal care beginning in first trimester, alcohol use, smoking cigarettes, illicit drug abuse, pre-pregnancy weight status, and breastfeeding. Prevalence of gestational diabetes mellitus and social determinates were also collected and analyzed.

Implementation
The health care team provides both face-to-face and telephone-based consultations with patients throughout the pregnancy and postpartum period. This ensures that patients remain engaged in their own care, obtain needed community services, and are able to report signs and symptoms that could compromise the health of their baby and their own health. The social worker and the nurse visit vulnerable or high risk patients who may need extra teaching and support. The system director, clinical nurse manager and other team members are actively involved in the community. Through this participation in various community groups and activities we ensure we are aware of changing needs in the community. This allows us to adjust our services accordingly to ensure that we are doing everything we can to more fully address the needs of the community. A recent example of this was the addition of a new site for our mobile unit. Careful planning then follows to ensure successful implementation of any changes. Performance improvement for Wellness on Wheels is done monthly. The team led by the medical director, a board-certified OB/GYN physician, discuss clinic operations, and conduct case management for patients who have complex health or psychosocial issues. The medical director consults with the nurses and social worker and provides recommendations. Performance improvement initiatives embarked by the team are discussed with the system director, program evaluator and division leaders.

Results/Outcomes
Historical data from 1994 to 2013 showed that infant mortality rate for Wellness on Wheels is 5.2 per 1,000 live births; percent preterm birth was 5.6%; percent low birth weight was 6.1 percent; and NICU admission rate was 6.8 percent. Wellness on Wheels infant mortality rate, percent preterm birth and low birth weight meet Healthy People 2020 targets. Over 3,500 women and children have received services and more than 15,000 clinic visits have been scheduled. This led to a cost savings of at least $39.8 million.

Barriers/Lessons Learned
One of the most valuable lessons learned is the importance of a comprehensive approach to prenatal care that includes addressing the social determinants of health. Having a multidisciplinary team has allowed them to do that and having a fulltime social worker that is well versed in what resources are available is vital. The health system’s initiative to continuously fund the program as part of its community benefit for more than 20 years and recruit talented and caring team members and leaders has contributed significantly to success. They constantly strive to break down barriers to care. Some of the ways this is done is by taking care into the community where it is most needed, and by providing care regardless of a woman’s ability to pay. Wellness on Wheels has a wealth of experience and sound data and are willing to share. They believe that the best practice model is replicable in other communities and would welcome any opportunity to share experiences and the model. The infant mortality crisis in Ohio may be positively addressed by providing patient-centered care by a multidisciplinary team who are dedicated to serving others. The program must address both health and psychosocial needs in the continuum of care.