

STARK COUNTY CHILD FATALITY REVIEW & FETAL INFANT MORTALITY REVIEW

2025 Annual Report





*"Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community."*

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PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the Child Fatality Review (CFR) and Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) process is to reduce the incidence of preventable infant and child deaths. In Stark County this is done through a detailed comprehensive local review of the circumstances surrounding the deaths to all infants and children in our community. These reviews are completed by a multidisciplinary team made up of representatives from the local agencies listed on page 4 and 5. It's our hope that through this process of reviews and recommendations we can raise community awareness about the circumstances surrounding preventable child deaths and ultimately eliminate or decrease these deaths from continuing to occur. The CFR team was chaired by the Stark County Health Department and reviewed the deaths of children under 18 years of age. The FIMR team was chaired by Canton City Public Health and reviewed deaths that occurred between 20 weeks gestation through the age of one.

After a review of the infant and child deaths that occurred to Stark County children during 2025, the Stark County Child Fatality Review Board and the Stark County Fetal Infant Mortality Review Team would like to provide the community with their 2025 Recommendations for the prevention of future deaths.

The Stark County Child Fatality Review Board and the Stark County Fetal Infant Mortality Review Team completed reviews of 60 deaths. There were 17 cases reviewed by CFR and 41 cases reviewed by FIMR. The deaths that were reviewed occurred between 2023 through 2025. CFR has one case from 2021, one case from 2022, and six cases from 2025 that are pending and will be reviewed in the future. FIMR has one fetal case from 2024, 15 fetal cases from 2025 and 28 infant cases from 2025 that are pending and will be reviewed in the future.



MEETING FREQUENCY AND STRUCTURE

Frequency of Meetings

Child Fatality Review meetings are held on an annual basis or more often if necessary to review data and individual cases. Two meetings were held in 2025. Fetal Infant Mortality Review meetings are held on a monthly basis.

Structure

The county commissioners appointed the Stark County Health Commissioner to establish the CFR committee. ORC 307.622 states, "The review committee shall consist of the following:

1. A county coroner or designee;
2. The chief of police of a police department or the sheriff that serves the greatest population in the county or region or a designee of the chief or sheriff;
3. The executive director of a public children services agency or designee;
4. A public health official or designee;
5. The executive director of a board of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services or designee;
6. A physician who holds a license issued pursuant to Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code authorizing the practice of medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine and surgery, specializes in pediatric or family medicine, and currently practices pediatric or family medicine.

REQUIRED CFR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kirkland Norris, R.E.H.S, M.P.H
Health Commissioner

Ronald Rusnak, M.D.
Stark County Coroner

Eric Weisburn
Stark County Sheriff's Office

Suzanne Petricini, MSW
Stark County Job and Family Services

Amanda Uhler RN, MPH
Public Health Official

Anju Mader, MD
Chief Health Integration Officer
Health and Addition Recovery

Dr. Maureen Ahmann, D.O.
Physician



ADDITIONAL PARTNER AGENCIES THAT ARE INVITED

Canton City Public Health

Canton City Police Department

Stark County Educational Service Center

Alliance for Children and Families

Plain Township Fire and Rescue

FETAL INFANT MORTALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Canton City Public Health- Maggie Bradford, Melanie Hartong, Dawn Miller, Diane Thompson, Cade Harmon, Shannon Byers

Stark County Health Department- Stephanie Hann, Aubrey Neuenschwander, Amanda Uhler

Akron Children's Maternal Fetal Medicine at Aultman- Dr Michael Krew

Community Health Care, Pediatrics- Dr Erin Weber

Aultman Hospital- Christine Powell

Stark County Coroner's Office- Kayla Horner, Kristin Alexander

My Community Health Care- TaLisa Ellis, Ashley Hutchinson

Stark County Job and Family Services- Tricia Mayle

REVIEW PROCESS AND DATA SOURCES

The review boards are focused on all childhood decedents who resided in Stark County. For each death, the boards collect demographics including age, sex, race, ethnicity, the year the death occurred, the location of the death, the cause of death, factors that contributed, medical records and any other pertinent information.

The cases reviewed in this report were deaths that occurred from 2023 through 2025. Each case review is discussed among the team to gather a comprehensive understanding of the context of the decedent's life and the events and actions that led to the fatality. The discussions highlight potential contributing factors, intervention implications and recommendations for systemic improvements.

Data sources include: DataOhio Portal Protected Mortality Download, behavioral health records, medical records, newborn screening records, community resource records, immunization records, criminal justice records, death certificates, forensic records, prescription drug records, social service records, and military/veterans' affairs records.

DATA FINDINGS

Table 1: 2025 County Metrics

	Total Number of Deaths
Under Age 1	34
Age 1-17	16
Total	50*

*Per DataOhio Protected Mortality, this number does not include fetal deaths

Figure 1: Deaths by Gender

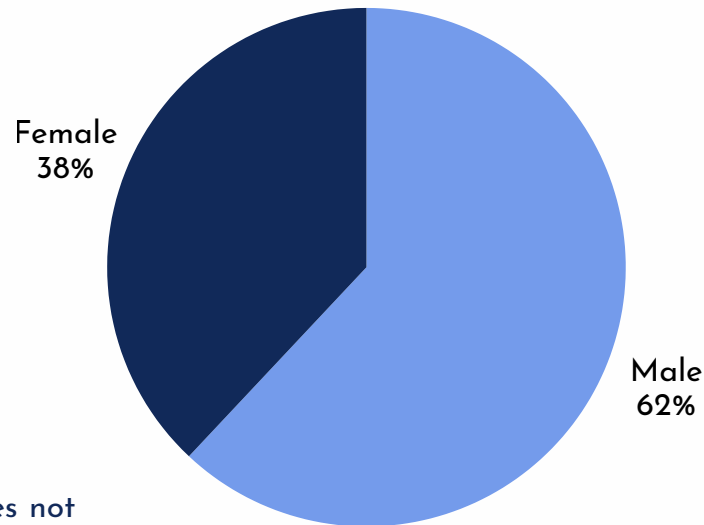


Figure 2: Deaths by Manner

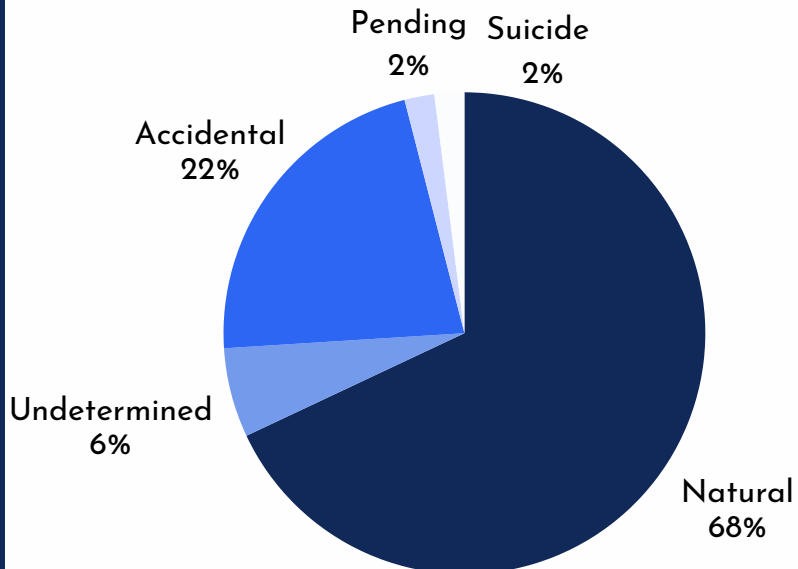
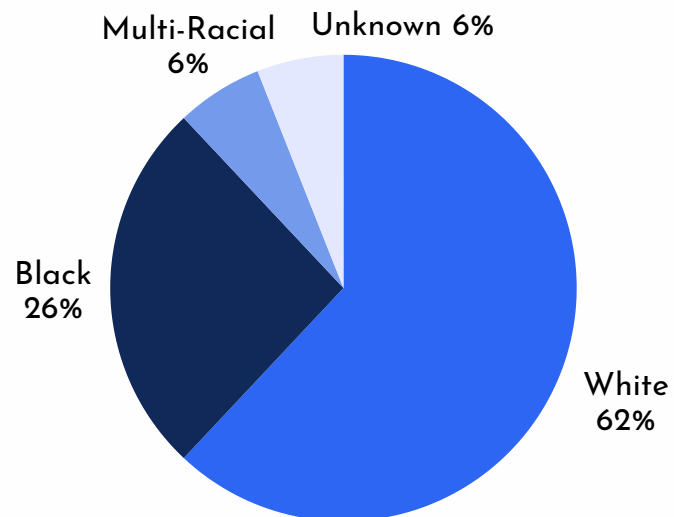
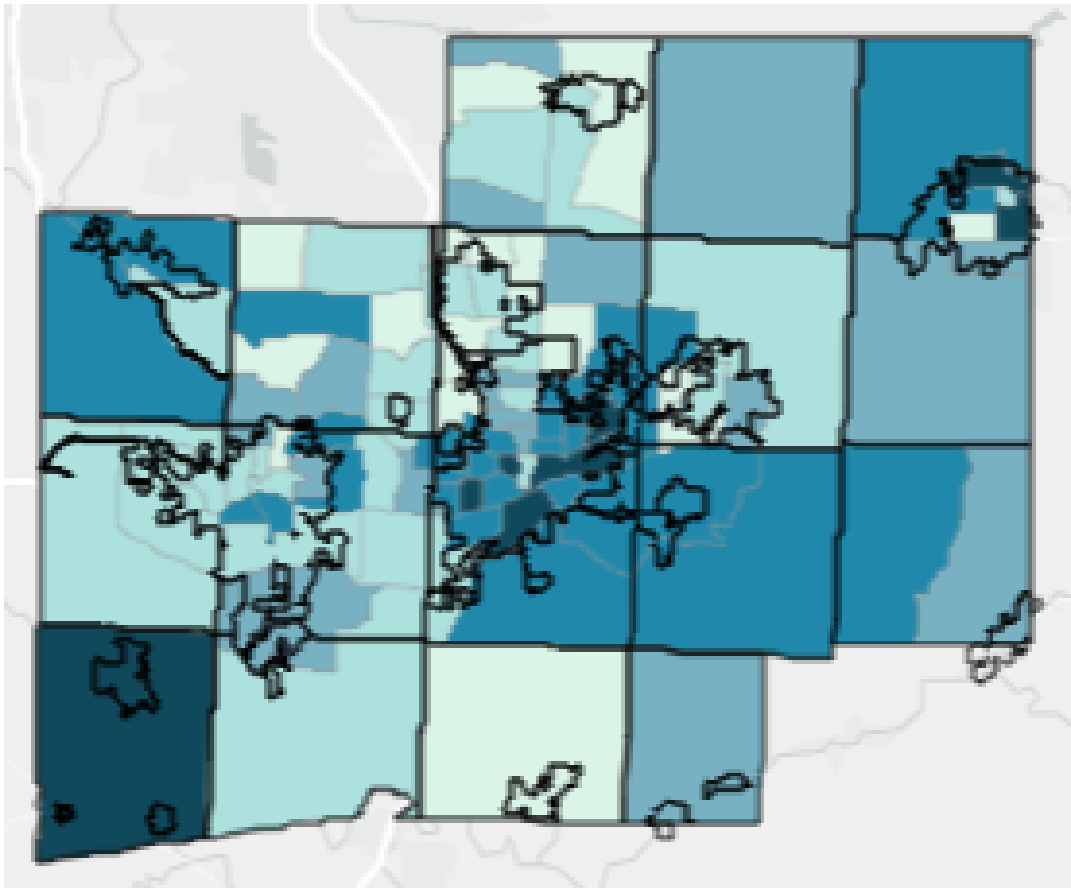


Figure 3: Deaths by Race



CHILDHOOD DEATHS BY CENSUS TRACT

The map below shows where children who have passed away resided. The lighter colors depict fewer deaths, and the darker colors represent a higher incidence of deaths. The map used data from 2000-2025.



For an interactive view, please visit our dashboard using the QR code below.



2025 Recommendations- Child Fatality Review

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF NATURAL AND ACCIDENTAL DEATHS

- Public health should increase outreach of the Complex Medical Help (CMH) program to the community.
- Public health should promote local assistance programs to hospital social workers.
- Public health should promote respite care through CMH program.
- Public health should provide resources on caregiver fatigue through CMH program.
- Public health should provide infant/child CPR education to community members.
- Public health should promote car seat safety education to community members.
- Public health and primary care providers should promote swimming/pool safety.
- Public health should promote Medicaid value added benefits to community agencies.
- Public health, medical providers, social service providers should participate in ConnectWell, social exchange information network.
- Fire departments should offer home safety assessments for families whose children have autism.
- Fire departments should participate in safety events to distribute carbon monoxide and smoke detectors.
- Primary care and specialty providers should encourage early palliative care involvement.
- Primary care providers should promote early referrals for occupational/physical/speech therapy services.
- Primary care should recommend genetic testing for siblings of children with chronic diseases/conditions.
- School districts should consider partnering with YMCAs to provide free swimming lessons to students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE DEATHS

- Public health should promote digital wellness and provide education to parents on electronic media management for children.
- Public health and primary care should promote safe gun and medication storage.
- Public health and primary care should increase gun lock and medication disposal bag distribution.
- School districts should promote See Something, Say Something campaign to students.

STARK COUNTY FETAL INFANT MORTALITY REVIEW



2025 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF INFANT DEATHS

- Expand access to genetic counseling and Maternal-Fetal Medicine services.
- Promote early initiation of prenatal care and consistent prenatal visits throughout pregnancy.
- Increase awareness of the importance of pregnancy spacing to improve maternal/infant outcomes.
- Strengthen monitoring and management of chronic conditions prior to/during pregnancy.
- Ensure closer clinical monitoring for individuals with a history of miscarriage or preterm labor.
- Improve screening, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.
- Increase access to mental health services and provide counseling when there are significant life stressors (e.g., loss, head injury, housing instability).
- Support safe management of medication during pregnancy.
- Promote fetal movement monitoring, including Count the Kicks.
- Educate on the importance of reporting fluid leakage or concerning pregnancy symptoms.
- Promote infant CPR education and importance of initiating care during an emergency.
- Reinforce safe sleep recommendations that emphasizes suffocation prevention.
- Ensure families have access to a safe sleep environment everywhere the baby sleeps.
- Strengthen connections to Medicaid nurse case managers for coordination of care.
- Improve access to prenatal care and use of interpreters for underserved populations.
- Enhance linkage and increase referrals to community-based resources.
- Address transportation barriers so ensure access to prenatal, postpartum and pediatric care.

CFR AND FIMR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stark County Health Department partnered with safe sleep work group to discuss recommendations and statistics at quarterly meetings.
- Partnered with Stark County Suicide Prevention Coalition to distribute gun locks and safe home kits to Job and Family Service workers and the coroner's office.
- Implemented ConnectWell, a social information exchange network.
- Hosted Medicaid to present on value added benefits to community agencies.
- Created digital wellness work group.
- Enhanced coordination between home visiting programs, epidemiology, fatality review and vital statistics.
- Conducted maternal/family interviews for FIMR.
- Streamlined process for obtaining medical/service records and case summary presentation.

2020-2024 Fetal Mortality Scorecard

Stark County

Stark County

2024 Fetal Death Rate **4.5**

2024 Total Number of Fetal Deaths **17**

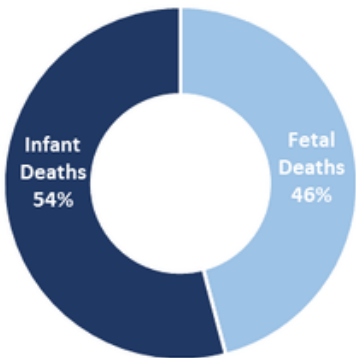
Disparity Ratio **1.8**

In 2024, the fetal mortality rate among Non-Hispanic Black mothers was about 1.82 times the rate among Non-Hispanic White mothers.

Key Findings

- Significant racial disparity persists. The fetal mortality rate among Non-Hispanic Black residents (7.0) exceeded that of Non-Hispanic White residents (5.0), and infant mortality among Black residents (15.9) was nearly three times higher than white residents.
 - Fetal deaths represent a large share of perinatal mortality. Approximately 46% of fetal and infant deaths from 2020–2024 were fetal deaths.
 - Cause of death is frequently unidentified. Nearly half of fetal deaths (48%) were classified as unspecified.
 - Stark County overall fetal death rate is lower than the State rate and HP 2030 goal for the last three years.
- *A rate is calculated by dividing the number of events by the population at risk over a specific time period, then multiplying by a constant (like 1,000) to standardize it.

Percentage of Fetal and Infant Deaths, 2020-2024



Infant deaths accounted for the majority of combined fetal and infant deaths from 2020–2024.

Fetal Death (Stillbirth):

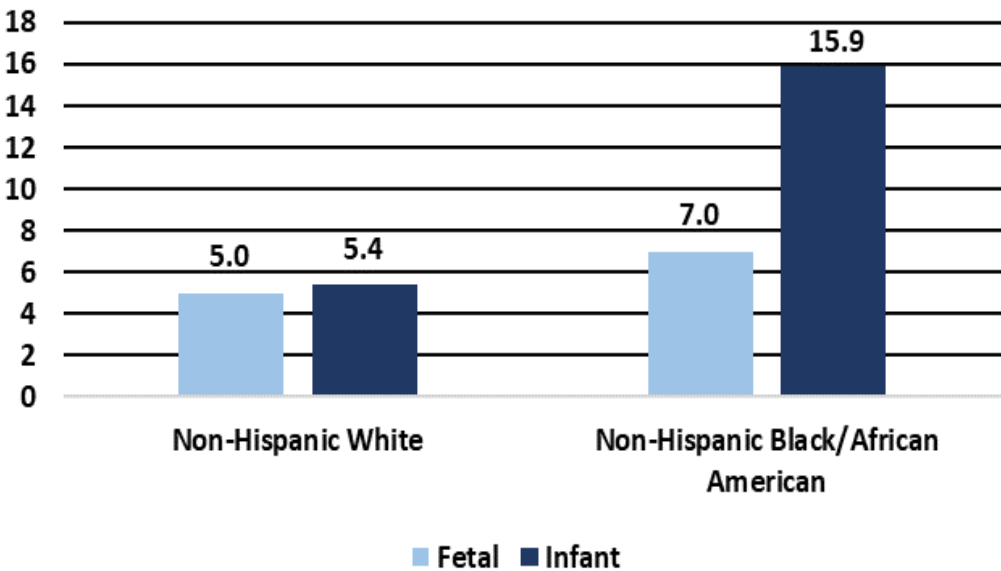
The death of a baby in the womb at **20 weeks of pregnancy or later**, before birth

Infant Death:

The death of a baby **after birth but before reaching their first birthday**

Infant mortality among Non-Hispanic Black infants (15.9) was nearly three times higher than among Non-Hispanic White infants (5.4).

Fetal Mortality Rate vs. Infant Mortality Rate by Race and Ethnicity, 2020-2024



Leading Causes of Fetal Death, 2020-2024

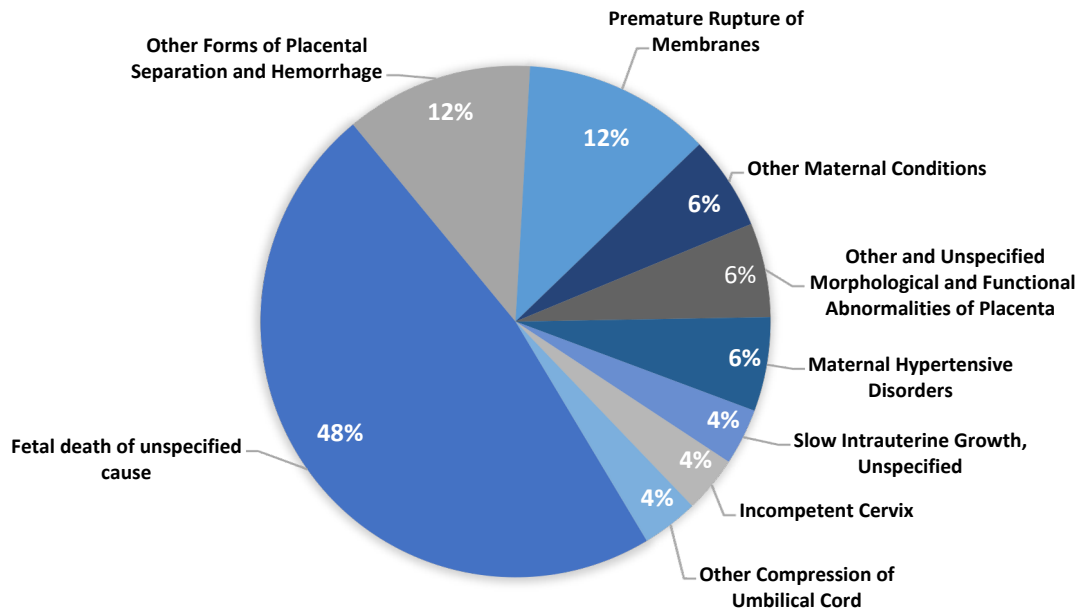
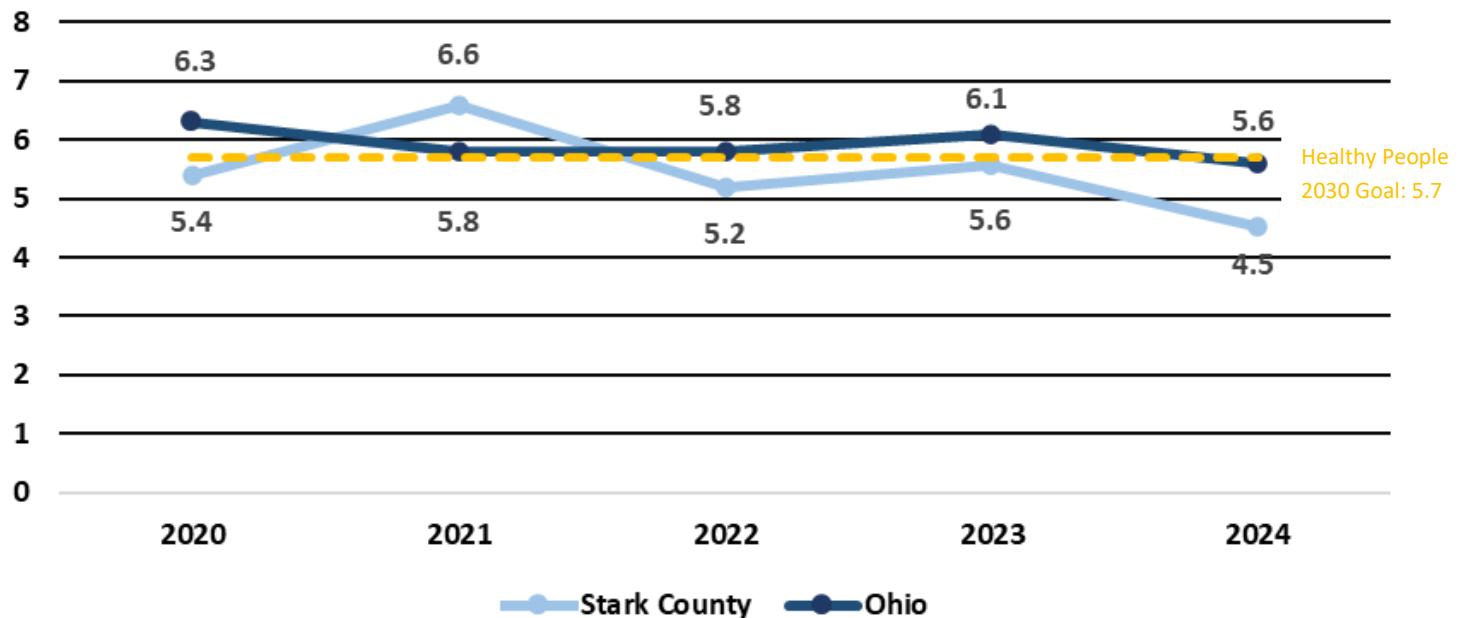


Chart Information: Leading causes of fetal death were identified using **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** codes. Diagnostic definitions associated with these codes were verified using **Codify by AAPC**.

Ohio and Stark County Fetal Mortality Rate, 2020-2024



Additional Information:

- A fetal death is defined as the death of a fetus prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from the mother, regardless of the duration of pregnancy, and excludes induced terminations of pregnancy.
- Unless otherwise specified, the data presented in the following illustrations include individuals of all races and ethnicities.
- State of Ohio Data for 2024 is considered preliminary

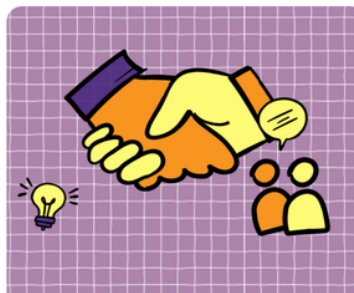
Disclaimer: Data analysis was prepared by Canton City Public Health, Cade Harmon, Epidemiologist (234-458-5143). Data were obtained from the DataOhio Portal Protected Datasets on 3/10/2025. The Ohio Department of Health specifically disclaims responsibility for any analyses, interpretations, or conclusions presented. Birth data are typically considered preliminary for two years, and infant mortality data are typically considered preliminary for four years. The Ohio Department of Children and Youth specifies that race for birth and mortality data is derived from the mother's race.

Do you need help to support your digital wellness?



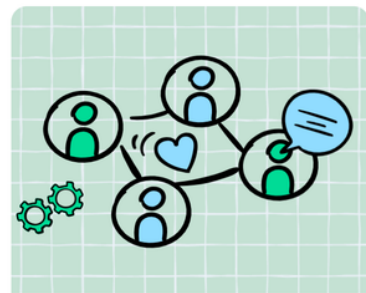
Effects of Digital Overload

Youth and families can be affected by digital overload in ways such as disrupted sleep, increased anxiety, and strained relationships. The good news is there is a healthier way forward.



What We Have Discovered

We have noticed youth want a digital balance without judgement or being told what to do, while parents can feel overwhelmed and unsure how to lead by example. Digital wellness benefits everyone.



Our Mission

Digital Wellness Stark County is a community-driven collection of trusted leaders who are here to empower healthier digital habits for youth and families across Stark County. Download our digital wellness toolkit to learn about resources for your family.

[Check out-- StarkHelpCentral.com/Digital Wellness](https://StarkHelpCentral.com/DigitalWellness)

What is StarkHelpCentral.com?

StarkHelpCentral.com is Stark County's resource navigation tool. For anyone facing challenges in life, StarkHelpCentral.com is a resource you can turn to for support. No matter the situation, hope is just a search away.

What is Digital Wellness?

Digital wellness refers to the practice of maintaining a healthy relationship with technology to support overall well-being—physically, mentally, and emotionally. It emphasizes using digital tools in a balanced way that enhances life rather than causing harm.

Some Core Principles of Digital Wellness:

- Mindful Usage: Being aware of how much time is spent online and why.
- Healthy Boundaries: Setting limits on screen time, notifications, and social media engagement.
- Purposeful Interaction: Using technology for productivity, learning, and connection rather than passive scrolling.
- Digital Literacy: Understanding the impact of algorithms, privacy, and online behaviors.

The Digital Wellness Stark County Committee partnered with StarkMHAR and United Way to provide a place to find resources to support digital wellness in this digital focused world.

The Digital Wellness section of StarkHelpCentral.com recently launched and is still building capacity to provide resources and links to the latest information for you, your family, and the community.

Please be patient as the site is still under construction. Updates will continue to be made in 2026.





THE

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In a **Crib**.

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for your baby to sleep.



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