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STATE EFFORTS TO FIGHT OPIATE ADDICTION TURNS TO
PREGNANT MOTHERS AND NEWBORNS
Maternal Opiate Medical Support (M.O.M.S.) Project to Save Lives,
Taxpayer Dollars

COLUMBUS – As part of Ohio’s ongoing effort to mitigate the impact of opiate abuse, the Kasich Administration today announced plans to address the epidemic among the smallest of individuals – babies born to mothers who are addicted to opiate painkillers and heroin. The Maternal Opiate Medical Support (M.O.M.S.) Project will improve health outcomes and reduce costs associated with extended hospital stays by neutralizing the impact of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). NAS is a complex disorder with a myriad of possible symptoms found in newborns and caused by exposure to addictive illegal or prescription drugs.

The M.O.M.S. Project goals are threefold:

- 1) Develop an integrated maternal care practice model with timely access to appropriate mental health and addiction services that extend postpartum, including intensive home-based or residential treatment;
- 2) Identify best practices for obstetrical services relating to MAT, before, during and after delivery and develop a toolkit to support clinical practice; and
- 3) Conduct a pilot and evaluation with promising practices at 2-3 sites that will integrate the model into standard practices.

“In the midst of Ohio’s opiate epidemic, it is easy for us to forget that there are some individuals who are experiencing the effects of this addiction who never chose to use drugs—babies born to opiate addicted mothers,” said Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). “It is important to give children the best start in life that we can, and the M.O.M.S. project gives us the opportunity to do just that.”

Under the leadership of the Governor's Office of Health Transformation, OhioMHAS and the Ohio Departments of Health and Medicaid, the M.O.M.S. Project will support interventions and prenatal treatments that improve outcomes for 200 women and babies while reducing the cost of specialized care by shortening length of stay in Neo-Natal Intensive Care Units (NICU). By engaging expecting mothers in a combination of counseling, Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and case management, the three-year project is estimated to reduce infant hospital stays by 30 percent.

"Neonatal abstinence syndrome has taken a heavy toll on Ohio's healthcare system," said John McCarthy, director of the Ohio Department of Medicaid. "By providing treatment during the pregnancy and then after the child's birth, we expect to see healthier babies and a stronger relationship between mother and child. This project has a great potential for reducing health problems and costs experienced by both the mother and child."

The most common conditions associated with NAS are withdrawal, respiratory complications, low birth weight, feeding difficulties and seizures. Treating newborns impacted by NAS was associated with more than \$70 million in healthcare expenses and nearly 19,000 days in Ohio's hospitals in 2011, according to data from the Ohio Hospital Association. In 2011 alone, there were 1,649 admissions – roughly five per day – to both inpatient and outpatient settings.

"The Kasich Administration has made fighting drug abuse and addiction a key priority. At the same time, we have been focused on reining in health spending and transforming Ohio's health system through better coordination and accountability. This initiative fits perfectly with the Administration's focus on promoting healthy, productive families and communities," said Greg Moody, director of OHT.

The M.O.M.S. project is a \$4.2 million program supported by a \$2.1 million investment from the Health Transformation Innovation Fund, which is administered by the Office of Health Transformation. The Fund focuses on requests that advance Ohio's health system modernization strategies and create a return on investment for taxpayers while improving overall health system performance. The balance of the project will be funded from Medicaid dollars. The M.O.M.S. project builds upon and uses data resulting from the Ohio Children's Hospitals Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome research project funded by a Health Transformation Innovation Fund award of \$1 million in 2012.

In addition to treatment, the project will also support a limited amount of non-clinical services that are not reimbursable by Medicaid but that have been found to greatly assist in recovery. Funds can be used for housing vouchers for women who need short-term transitional housing as well as transportation or brief babysitting for medical and treatment appointments.

The project also includes an evaluation component. OhioMHAS will contract with a research entity with a proven track record of conducting quality improvement processes and developing/testing evidence-based and emerging best practice standards -- including MAT -- to evaluate the program model.

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