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ODH ANNOUNCES NEW EFFORT TO IMPROVE INFANT IMMUNIZATION RATES

Will use recovery act funding to invest in the health of Ohio's at-risk children

COLUMBUS-The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has announced plans to release \$330,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 (ARRA) funding to raise immunization rates among infants and toddlers, residing in Ohio's metropolitan areas.

"Vaccinations have played a significant role in increasing life expectancy," said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. "These funds will keep Ohio's most at-risk children healthy by fighting diseases that can lead to serious illness or death and will save money by preventing unnecessary hospital visits."

ODH plans to increase immunization rates by awarding ARRA funds to community-based peer advocates, who will promote immunization of infants and young children (through twenty four months of age), residing in the areas of the state that have the lowest immunization coverage. Activities will include one-on-one education, support, assessment, and vaccination reminders.

Current Immunization Action Plan (IAP) grantees whose plan includes the cities of Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Lorain, Toledo, and Youngstown are eligible to apply for these funds. Applications are available for download at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/pdf/requestsForProposal/IA11PAAIM.pdf>.

These funds were awarded to ODH from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Section 317 program. The Section 317 program provides funding for immunization operations and infrastructure necessary to implement a comprehensive immunization programs at all levels of government.

Ohio's Section 317 program has been allocated \$ 9,889,181 million in ARRA funding. ODH will use the funds to improve perinatal hepatitis B prevention systems, increase adolescent immunization rates, and purchase additional vaccines. ODH also received a separate \$476,252 grant to develop an innovative project to increase access to vaccines by improving reimbursement practices.

Additional information on Ohio's ARRA programs can be found on Ohio's recovery act website www.recovery.ohio.gov.