

# Lucas County

## Improving Birth Outcomes Through Produce

Produce Prescriptions Provides Pregnant Women Access to Fresh Produce.

### Challenge

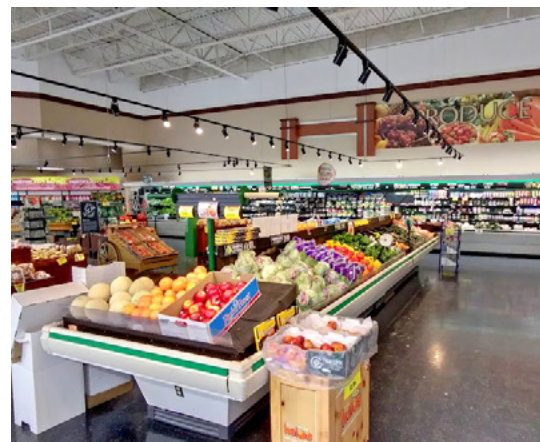
According to the Ohio Department of Health's Ohio Public Health Information Warehouse 2021 data, 6.5% of all births in Lucas County were born to teenage mothers. Of those teenage mothers 79.1% were low income, 15.3% delivered low birth weight babies, and 13.7% delivered preterm. These teenage mothers also presented with a number of risk factors which include gestational diabetes (3.8%), gestational hypertension (15%) and poor pregnancy outcomes (.9%). It has been well established that optimum nutrition during pregnancy is essential to maternal health as well as positive fetal outcomes. Increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables protects against a number of serious and costly chronic diseases; however fresh produce can be scarce and expensive.

### Approach

In an effort to improve the birth outcomes of vulnerable pregnant and postpartum teenage mothers and their children, the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department and its Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program contracted with Produce Perks Midwest to provide monthly Produce Prescription vouchers for fruits and vegetables to food insecure participants at Health Partners of Western Ohio (HPWO). HPWO Community Health Workers (CHW) identified vulnerable pregnant and postpartum women who would benefit from the Produce Prescription Pilot Program (PRx). The interested PRx participants attended monthly check-ins with their CHW where they received their produce prescription vouchers. The participants received \$30/month per household member (max. \$150) to be redeemed at participating stores and farmers' markets in Lucas County.

### Results

Twenty-eight participants were enrolled into the six-month PRx program from July through December 2022. Eighty-six percent of participants enrolled were women of color with the average age 28 years old; ranging 16-41 years of age. The Toledo Farmers Market, Seaway Market, and Family Food Center partnered with the PRx program to redeem the produce prescriptions. In the first year of the program, \$2,953.51 in vouchers were redeemed serving a total of 103 household members. An additional \$1,255 of meal kits and holiday produce boxes were distributed to the participants. In addition, participants received blood pressure cuffs from the American Heart Association for self-monitoring blood pressure. In December, the program participants received a post-program survey which indicated that the participants and their household members benefited from the produce vouchers and have increased their knowledge of healthy foods.



### At A Glance

Having access to healthy, nutritious foods during pregnancy is essential to the mother's overall health as well as the development of the fetus, however, this is not always possible for individuals experiencing food insecurity. To help combat this issue, the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department contracted with Produce Perks Midwest to provide pregnant and postpartum mothers of Health Partners of Western Ohio the opportunity to participate in a Produce Prescription Program. These participants received \$30/month per household member of fresh produce vouchers to be redeemed at participating stores as well as nutrition education.



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