**ADDRESSING INFANT MORTALITY THROUGH TRANSPORTATION**

**GOAL**

Purpose: To assist Smart Columbus in providing new and expectant mothers in Linden with improved transportation to medical appointments.

**Main Objectives:**
- Research current state of (1) non-emergency medical transportation (and (2) the infant mortality crisis
- Benchmark cities and companies across United States in order to (1) understand respective NEMT models and (2) how infant mortality is being addressed in that location
- Develop strategic recommendations for improvement of NEMT services that prioritize needs of new and expectant mothers

**ABSTRACT**

Better access to transportation can significantly improve the lives of the new and expecting mothers of Linden. Through comprehensive online research and investigative interviews with key stakeholders, we have developed a greater understanding of the infant mortality crisis in Columbus and the workings of the non-emergency medical transportation system as it operates here and across the country. This is an inherently complex system that can be confusing to coordinate from the patient perspective, more often than not amounting to unreliable service and poor customer outcomes. To better serve these mothers, our recommendation is that the city of Columbus execute three principal actions:

1. Establish a connection between local organizations dedicated to addressing infant mortality and the NEMT providers.
2. Offer priority rides to new and expecting mothers.
3. Provide an improved channel of communication between patient and driver.

**INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW**

NEMT services are an important facet of the healthcare system, especially for those who suffer from chronic conditions or lack access to reliable transportation. The state Medicaid agency or managed care organization establishes a contract with one or more NEMT brokers. Brokers subcontract out to transportation providers. These brokers may be chosen based on cost, experience, and knowledge of the particular region. The NEMT broker is charged with managing patient transportation in a designated area by subcontracting with transportation providers who are properly licensed.

**MOMS2B**

A comprehensive prenatal and first year of life program held in 5 Columbus locations weekly for 2 hour sessions. Provides group education setting to discuss nutrition, breastfeeding, stress reduction, safe sleep, and reproductive health. Connects women to other forms of pre- and postnatal care/support. Focuses on short-term goals to help at-risk mothers during pregnancy, and long-term goals that ensure healthy future pregnancies and relationships with care providers. Many attendees receive transportation through Moms2B, which pays out of pocket for taxis.

**REFERENCES**

- **LogistiCare**
  - Largest private NEMT service provider in the country
  - 256 active contracts across 39 States
  - Partners with MCO's, Cities, State-run Agencies and Hospitals
  - In charge of scheduling rides, operating a call center, addressing patient complaints and driver performance
  - Recently launched partnership with Lyft in 276 cities

**BENCHMARK: PRIVATE CONTRACTORS**

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**BENCHMARK: STATEWIDE NEMT MODELS**

**TENNESSEE SOUTHEASTRANS**

The Medicaid system in Tennessee signed a contract with the transportation broker Southeastrans in 2008 to provide NEMT services to patients who have Bluecare and TennCare Select as their managed care providers.

**WASHINGTON STATE HEALTHCARE AUTHORITY**

Washington State Healthcare Authority responsible for administering Medicaid program and services
- Brokerage NEMT model established in 1989
- 6 transportation brokers → 170+ transportation providers
- 13 regions → 39 counties
- Interactive map allows patients to access their regional transportation broker by clicking on region in which they live
- Automatically redirects to regional broker website
- Trips can be booked through online portals, phone, or fax
- Some transportation providers offer fuel vouchers and mileage reimbursement
- Patients may receive an ORCA card to access Washington's public transportation services

**VEYO**

- NEMT provider, actively contracting in 9 states
- Contracts out drivers from Uber/Lyft and other third-party commercial transportation companies
- Utilizes booking portals, call centers, and apps for both drivers and members
- Model utilizes flexible supply fleet during high demand hours by relying on the supply of other companies rather than their own fixed fleet

**DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SMART COLUMBUS**

**DISCUSSION**

The most commonly cited complaint for any of these services was that a patient scheduled in advance following the necessary guidelines, but ultimately missed their appointment because the ride either arrived late or not at all. The main reasons for this failure are:

- Not enough drivers in general or in their specific area to compensate the demand for service
- Complicated chains of communication between the patient, broker, contracted agency, managed care provider, and the medical professional create ineffective information about the scheduled ride
- Communication between the patient and their driver is extremely limited or non-existent
- The strength of associations with more successful programs included:
  - Focused their values on providing compassionate care as well as logistics and technology
  - The smaller the service area, the better a bridged agency is able to arrive promptly and navigate to the destination
  - The ability to know where a patient’s ride is and how far away they are in real time is a desired capability of patients; however, companies like Uber that can provide this often lack other requirements for being a qualified NEMT service.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1: Form partnership between the NEMT service and Moms2B**

Found some success with certain NEMT models/some failure with others - both related directly to addressing infant mortality

Any company/model used should be tied directly to grassroots efforts and support programs for mothers, like Moms2B

Direct ties can help ensure drivers have appropriate training and allow programs like Moms2B to advertise to potential program participants in various NEMT vehicles

Provide free rides to mothers attending Moms2B meetings

**Recommendation 2: Priority rides for new and expectant mothers**

Create pilot program prioritizing rides for mothers from Linden and other at-risk neighborhoods.

Prioritize mothers who will increase attendance at critical pre- and post-natal appointments and lessen issues that will inevitably arise during the implementation of any new NEMT system

Creating clear connection between city objectives related to infant mortality and Smart Columbus actions

**Recommendation 3: Better technology to increase communication and information between patients and drivers**

Major problems in NEMT revolve around disconnect between patients and drivers. Technological innovation can increase monitoring/location tools for patients/drivers

Require GPS or equivalent tracking technology in RFP for vendors to ensure effective monitoring of program

**METHODS**

- Obtained a baseline of information about the infant mortality crisis
- Research infant mortality statistics for Columbus
- Reached out to organizations within Columbus currently working to combat this issue, including Moms2B and CelebrateOne
- Researched other cities, regions, states and what they have done to combat this issue
- Researched NEMT companies and their company regions, and what has been successful or not