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## News Release

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John R. Kasich / Governor  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **State Health Department Receives National Recognition**

Columbus, Ohio—The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) was last week presented with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) *2012 Vision Award* at the annual meeting of the association in Austin, Texas. ODH was recognized for its work with the Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative (OPQC), a public/private partnership, in addressing preterm birth issues through its *39-Week Project*. The project has resulted in an eight percent statewide increase in full-term deliveries and is credited for saving approximately \$27 million in annual health care costs.

“Reducing infant mortality rates in our state must continue to be a top priority,” said ODH director, Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D., who was present at the annual meeting to accept the award on behalf of ODH and the collaborative. “This award recognizes the hard work of so many dedicated people who are committed to saving precious lives.”

As a result of OPQC’s 39-Week Project:

- Nearly **23,000** babies that would have been delivered at 36-38 weeks were delayed to 39 weeks, representing an increase of **8 percent** in full-term deliveries.
- This shift helped prevent approximately **500** admissions to neonatal intensive care units and **34 infant deaths**.
- In addition, this project has saved approximately **\$27 million** in healthcare costs through avoided NICU admissions.

The ASTHO Vision Awards annually recognize outstanding health department programs and initiatives that use creative approaches to address public health needs or problems and to promote awareness and replication of successful state health programs and initiatives. In Ohio’s category (budgets more than \$250,000), the Texas Department of State Health Services took second place for its “Surviving Disaster: How Texans Prepare” video toolkit and documentary series. The Florida Department of Health was honored with the first place award (budgets less than \$250,000) for the Florida Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis Screening Program and the Oklahoma State Department of Health was awarded second place in that category for the Every Week Counts Collaborative, an initiative aimed at reducing infant mortality and other adverse birth outcomes.

*ASTHO is the national nonprofit organization representing the public health agencies of the United States, the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia, as well as the more than 100,000 public health*

*professionals these agencies employ. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, are dedicated to formulating and influencing sound public health policy and to ensuring excellence in state-based public health practice. The Ohio Perinatal Quality Collaborative is a public/private partnership established in March 2007 to focus on improving prematurity and infant mortality outcomes in Ohio. The collaborative consists of perinatal leaders, doctors, nurses, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Medicaid and other policymakers in Ohio.*