

## TITLE

### Ohio Menstrual Health and Period Poverty Information Project

“Menstrual Health Equity: *Free Flow* and NNLM Raise Awareness and Reduce Stigma”

## SUMMARY

The Ohio Menstrual Health and Period Poverty Information Project is a community-based effort to improve access to menstrual health products and reliable information. It is targeted specifically to youth ages 12+ and adults who menstruate and those who care for them. When people understand menstrual health, they are prepared to advocate for their own care and those they care for recognizing troubling conditions, leading to earlier treatment and better outcomes.

Richland Public Health, under the leadership of Dr. Julie Chaya, initiated a proposal to raise awareness and reduce period poverty throughout Richland County. Richland Public Health and the Mansfield-Richland County Public Library joined forces to offer free menstrual supplies in all public bathrooms at Library Branches and the Health Department building. The program was able to take off thanks to a generous donation by the Richland County Foundation which helped to put Aunt Flow free pad and tampon dispensers (as well as disposal units) in each of those locations.

The NNLM Region 6 Partners Outreach Program worked with Dr Chaya to develop information for librarian training as well as community-based educational programs for menstrual health and period poverty for local youth-oriented groups and their loved ones.

NNLM Region 6 in partnership with the Ohio Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) and Aunt Flow, a non-profit organization based in Columbus, Ohio, will expand the Richland County menstrual health equity program, called [\*Free Flow\*](#), throughout Ohio.

The project objectives are:

1. To combat misinformation and stigma around menstrual health
2. To empower menstrual health care with understanding of information
3. To raise awareness of the financial barriers to menstrual health products

## EVIDENCE OF NEED

“Period poverty” is defined as a lack of access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, waste management, and education. More than half of the world’s population are

menstruating people. Yet, stigma shrouds periods preventing individuals from talking about it, which causes physical, mental, and emotional challenges.

It is essential that when we talk about period poverty, we keep in mind that not all menstruators are women, and not all women menstruate.

Menstrual products are expensive in the U.S. It can cost nearly \$9,000 over a menstruator's lifetime to afford pads, tampons, and other supplies.

People who experience period poverty often are unable to purchase the menstrual products they need, and, in many cases, this means that they cannot go to school or work or otherwise participate in daily life.

There are an estimated [16.9 million](#) people who menstruate living in poverty in the United States.

“In a national survey of 1,000 menstruating teens, 1 in 5 struggled to afford period products and 4 in 5 either missed or knew someone who missed class time because they did not have access to period products. Unfortunately, government benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), do not cover the cost of these necessary supplies.”<sup>1</sup>

The Global Menstrual Collective defines [menstrual health](#) as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.” It notes that people should have:

- Access to information about menstruation, life changes, and hygiene practices
- The ability to care for themselves during menstruation
- Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services
- The ability to receive a diagnosis for menstrual cycle disorders and access to healthcare
- A positive, supportive environment in which to make informed decisions
- The ability to participate in all aspects of life, such as going to work and school

To this end, NNLM Region 6 will engage in advocacy and education with identified populations in Ohio who are living below the federal poverty line and in need of

education and services through partnerships for information and collaboration of outreach.

IMPLEMENTATION

May 2023 – January 2024

- In collaboration with Aunt Flow, develop educational messages for posters, banners, and social media based on information from *Free Flow*, NIH, NLM, and other government agencies and trustworthy resources
- Adopt *Free Flow* educational curricula and training program materials

February 2024 – April 2024

Market *Free Flow* programs in Ohio for a statewide promotional campaign launch in May 2024. Program partners will agree to:

- Adopt *Free Flow* curricula for menstrual health equity training for librarians or other community educators and menstrual health programs for youth and adults
- Identify a sustainable funding source to purchase dispensers and sanitary product from Aunt Flow
- Install dispensers and sanitary products in public restrooms

May 2024 – April 2025

- Evaluate activities and program outcomes
- Submit paper proposals to the Public Library Association (PLA) Annual Meeting, April 2026, the Medical Library Association (MLA) Annual meeting May 2026, and the American Library Association Annual Conference June 2026

LOGIC MODEL

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NNLM Region 6 as project manager and funder of up to \$10K</li> <li>• Aunt Flow as the contracted developer of a microsite and creator of health information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A menstrual health and period poverty microsite available to access free information from Aunt Flow</li> <li>• Easy-to-read, culturally, and age-appropriate</li> </ul>	Collaborate with communities throughout Ohio to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To combat misinformation and stigma around</li> </ul>

<p>and promotion material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ohio SAG as reviewers of project materials and advisors for promotion</li> </ul>	<p>health information for menstruation education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statewide promotion of menstrual health and period poverty</li> </ul>	<p>menstrual health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To empower menstrual health care with understanding of information</li> <li>• To raise awareness of the financial barriers to menstrual health products</li> </ul>
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## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> Davies, Shelby, MD. Period Poverty: The Public Health Crisis We Don't Talk About. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab