



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## **PROJECT NICU LAUNCHES FAMILY ASSISTANCE FUND AT LOCAL HOSPITALS TO SUPPORT NICU FAMILIES**

***In partnership with The MetroHealth Foundation and University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, this fund will support families experiencing financial hardships while their babies are in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.***

**Cleveland, Ohio** - When a baby is born premature or with medical complications and is admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, a period of separation between the infant and parents begins. Not only can this take an emotional toll on parents, it can also create financial stress.

Project NICU, a Northeast-Ohio-based nonprofit, supports families who have children in the NICU and the medical professionals who care for them. The organization recently launched a new fund designed to help families experiencing financial hardships while in the NICU.

The **Project NICU Family Assistance Fund** has been established at **Cleveland's MetroHealth Hospital and University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital**.

"On top of families facing isolation and the wave of emotions that come along with the NICU stay, many experience financial stress while their children are in the NICU. Parents have to worry about covering costs from loss of work, transportation needs, childcare, and more. We wanted to help create a solution," said **Pam Frasco, President and Founder of Project NICU**.

The newly established fund, which is a part of a commitment Project NICU has to partner hospitals, will give the NICU teams the ability to support families in the areas of fuel, food, lodging, and emergency bill pay assistance.

"We at Metro are proud to continue to partner with Project NICU in their efforts to provide assistance to NICU families, babies, and caregivers. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide added assistance to our families who are faced with all the challenges of a NICU journey," said a **representative of The MetroHealth NICU Nursing Team**.

In addition to the Family Assistance Fund, these partner hospitals will continue to receive support through NICU Care Packages, holiday treats, special events and more to help families feel connected during their stay.

"Project NICU is a trusted partner, supporting patients and families at UH Rainbow Babies and Children's since their inception," said **Traci Craver, Clinical Nurse Manager, Department of Neonatology, UH Rainbow Babies**

**& Children’s Hospital.** “We are extremely honored to be a part of this inaugural fund to provide much needed resources for our families. Project NICU is unique in the fact that they not only support the families, but the caregivers as well. I have spent my entire 35-year career in the Neonatal world, and I know this tremendous gift will help us support the many challenges a NICU family faces.”

The fund has been supported through local and national donors and Project NICU’s goal is to grow it so that any hospital that would like to participate can have access to support their families.

“We want to thank our incredible donors who have continued to help us move our mission forward over the last few years. We also want to thank The Kaulig Foundation and WaterWipes USA who are our founding partners of The Family Assistance Fund. **“If there is one thing that is for sure, it truly takes a village,”** Frasco adds.

To learn more about The Family Assistance Hospital Fund, visit [www.projectnicu.com/hospitalfund](http://www.projectnicu.com/hospitalfund)

**About Project NICU:**

*Established in 2018, Project NICU is Cleveland-based a 501(c)3 focused on supporting families with children in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the medical teams who care for them. Through Care Packages, Peer Support, and Events, the team is there for families during and after a NICU experience. After launching several virtual opportunities in March of 2020, the organization has been able to support families all over the country.*

**About The MetroHealth System:**

*The MetroHealth System, Cuyahoga County’s public health system, is honoring its commitment to create a healthier community by building a new hospital on its main campus in Cleveland. The building and the 25 acres of green space around it are catalyzing the revitalization of MetroHealth’s West Side neighborhood.*

*MetroHealth broke ground on its new hospital in 2019. The project is being financed with nearly \$1 billion the system borrowed on its own credit after dramatically improving its finances. In the past five years, MetroHealth’s operating revenue has increased by 40% and its number of employees by 21%. Today, its staff of 8,000 provides care at MetroHealth’s four hospitals, four emergency departments and more than 20 health centers and 40 additional sites throughout Cuyahoga County. In the past year, MetroHealth has served 300,000 patients at more than 1.4 million visits in its hospitals and health centers, 75% of whom are uninsured or covered by Medicare or Medicaid. The health system is home to Cuyahoga County’s most experienced Level I Adult Trauma Center, verified since 1992, and Ohio’s only adult and pediatric trauma and burn center.*

*As an academic medical center, MetroHealth is committed to teaching and research. Each active staff physician holds a faculty appointment at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. Its main campus hospital houses a Cleveland Metropolitan School District high school of science and health. For more information, visit [metrohealth.org](http://metrohealth.org).*

**About University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital:**

*A nationally ranked leader in pediatric healthcare, UH Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital is a 244-bed, full service children’s hospital, serving as a trusted partner to Northeast Ohio families for more than 130 years. UH Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital, home to the only Level I Pediatric Trauma Center in northern Ohio, combines family-centered quality care, advanced treatments and the latest innovations to deliver the complete range of pediatric services for more than 750,000 patient encounters annually. Among the nation’s leading academic medical centers, UH Rainbow is part of University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center and an affiliate of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, a nationally recognized leader in medical research and education.*