

Substance Exposed Newborns: Colorado Landscape

While substance use during pregnancy continues to be a pressing issue for Colorado families, Colorado has made great strides in the last decade to develop and implement prevention and intervention responses. Prepared by the Colorado Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN) Steering Committee and Illuminate Colorado, the current landscape of related efforts is outlined below.

The **Colorado SEN Steering Committee** envisions a Colorado that equitably serves all families through prevention and reduction of substance use during pregnancy and provides multigenerational support for families to thrive. **Illuminate Colorado** provides backbone support to the SEN Steering Committee, the SEN Family Advisory Board, and the associated work groups.

Pre-Pregnancy

The efforts outlined below aim to increase public awareness of the impacts of substance use during pregnancy and increase access to services that help to prevent substance-exposed pregnancies.

Tools & Education

- **Women's Health & Alcohol Patient Education Module** - Designed to educate women on the impact alcohol can have on their physical, mental, and social well-being. Peer Assistance Services maintains this as part of their Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Colorado work.
- **Take Meds Seriously Campaign** - Created to educate Coloradans on safe use, storage, and disposal of prescription medications. The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention **Public Awareness Work Group** leads this campaign.

Advocacy & Policy Implementation

- **Marijuana Use While Pregnant or Breastfeeding** - **SB19-224** requires every medical and retail marijuana store to post, at all times and in a prominent place, a warning that there is no amount of marijuana use known to be safe during pregnancy or breastfeeding.
 - **LARC4CO Coalition** – This coalition works to increase funding for the **Family Planning Program**. **Contingent on state budget forecast and hearings.*
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Perinatal: Prenatal, Birth, and Postpartum/Postnatal

The efforts outlined below aim to strengthen screening, support, identification, intervention, and immediate postpartum/postnatal services for pregnant/postpartum people, newborns/infants, and their families.

Tools & Education

- **Colorado Perinatal Substance Use Provider Toolkit** - This searchable toolkit provides Colorado-specific resources related to patient engagement, substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, lactation, management of substance-specific impacts, community referrals, and more. The SEN Provider Education Work Group maintains the toolkit, which was funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
- **Tough as a Mother Campaign** - This new statewide public awareness campaign aims to connect pregnant and parenting women to individualized substance use disorder treatment in their geographic region. **The Campaign Kickoff is May 12th 2-3pm**. The initiative is made possible by Signal Behavioral Health Network, AspenPointe, Mental Health Partners, West Slope Casa, and Colorado Office of Behavioral Health.
- **MAT Waiver Training for Prenatal Providers** - This collaborative effort to increase the capacity of prenatal providers to provide medication-assisted treatment (MAT) through DEA X waiver training is being led by the Colorado Perinatal Care Quality Collaborative in partnership with the University of Colorado Practice Innovation Program as part of the CHoSEN Collaborative's expanded focus to prenatal and pediatric providers.

- **Patient Safety Bundle for Obstetric Care for Women with Opioid Use Disorder** - Through the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM), Colorado providers have access and support to implement patient safety bundles, including this one focused on women with opioid use disorder (OUD). Colorado Perinatal Care Quality Collaborative participates in AIM, a national data-driven maternal safety and quality improvement initiative.

Practice Change & Expanded Services

- **CHoSEN Collaborative** - The Colorado Hospital Substance Exposed Newborns (CHoSEN) Collaborative is an effort to increase consistency in implementation of best practice in the identification of and response to newborns prenatally exposed to substances throughout the Rocky Mountain region. The cornerstone initiative of the CHoSEN Collaborative is focused on quality improvement. Known as “CHoSEN QIC”, this work is built around multidisciplinary hospital-based improvement teams working collaboratively to achieve measurable improvements. The CHoSEN Collaborative is coordinated and led in partnership by the Colorado Substance Exposed Newborns Steering Committee, a subcommittee of the Colorado Attorney General’s Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force, chaired by Illuminate Colorado, and in collaboration with the Section of Neonatology, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine and the Colorado Perinatal Care Quality Collaborative.
- **Integrating Care for Women and Babies Pilot** - [SB19-228](#) created the co-location of women's health care and behavioral health services pilot program, now called 'Integrating Care for Women and Babies' (IWMB). The Practice Innovation Program at the University of Colorado leads this multi-site pilot, which is currently in the early stages of implementation.
- **Maternal Opioid Misuse (MOM) Model Grant** - In December 2019, the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing was awarded the MOM grant to bring this model to Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program). Given the unique needs and existing efforts in communities across Colorado, the Department’s proposed approach for the MOM model will support local providers while building statewide capacity to serve pregnant and parenting women with OUD and their infants. The Department will utilize a total budget of \$4.6 million to provide two components of support for integrating care: regionally specific subgrants, totaling up to \$506,778 per site over four years, for integrating SUD treatment into primary and obstetric care sites that are appropriate to their community; and technical assistance to subgrantees through a collaborative learning model.
- **Maternal Mortality Review Committee** - As outlined in [HB19-1122](#), the MMRC reviews maternal deaths, identifies the causes of maternal mortality, and develops recommendations to address preventable maternal deaths and support the health and safety of the pregnant and postpartum population in Colorado. The MMRC is housed at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
- **Plans of Safe Care Implementation** - The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires all states to ensure the development of a plan of safe care for substance exposed newborns and their families. Working closely with the Colorado Department of Human Services, which is responsible for meeting the requirement, the SEN Plans of Safe Care Work Group works to promote community-based strategies to meet the [CAPTA requirement](#) regarding plans of safe care for infants and caregivers, including educating and supporting providers and child welfare screeners regarding implementation of the [guidelines and checklist](#) across systems. This work is occurring in collaboration with the CHoSEN Collaborative hospitals and other birthing hospitals around the state.

Data & Research

- **Colorado Perinatal Substance Use Data Linkage Project** - The goal of this first-of-its-kind study in Colorado is to inform the implementation of state policies and improve systems to best support the varied needs of families impacted by substance use during pregnancy. This study links data about Colorado mothers and infants from the prenatal period to a year post-birth including vital records, health care utilization, human service and public health program utilization and outcomes, and associated costs. This project is led by the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, in partnership with the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and the Substance Exposed Newborns Steering Committee of the Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force. The SEN Data and Research Work Group advises on the project.

Advocacy & Policy Implementation

- **Protecting Conversations Regarding Substance Use During Pregnancy** - In 2012, [HB12-1100](#) created criminal protection of information (tests, conversations, etc.) about substance use during pregnancy between a woman and her physical health care provider. In 2019, [HB19-1193](#) extended this same criminal protection for conversations with behavioral health providers about substance use during pregnancy.
- **Revising Child Abuse & Neglect Definitions Related to Prenatal Substance Exposure** - Illuminate Colorado has led a multi-year, cross-sector stakeholder process to de-emphasize the focus on positive drug tests for controlled substances at time of birth and to increase consistency in holistic assessments of families. This potential statutory change of the Children's Code is in the midst of the legislative process through [SB20-028](#).
- **Substance Exposed Newborn Policy Work Group** – This group provides a space for information-sharing, alignment opportunities, and policy development. The work group's policy priorities are to decrease bias and discrimination in screening and testing, ensure families with a substance exposed newborn receive supports and services appropriate to their family's strengths and needs, and to increase access to substance use disorder treatment.
- **Raise Colorado** – This coalition supports the growth of Colorado's youngest children and their families through public awareness, policy development, and advocacy efforts. Their related initiatives include:
 - Infant Maternal Mortality Prevention Work Group
 - Policy & Advocacy Work Group
- **Colorado Maternal Mental Health Framework & Collaborative** - A central source for Coloradans to effectively collaborate, impact action, and accelerate progress toward improved mental health and wellness of all pregnant and postpartum people in Colorado:
 - Maternal Behavioral Health Policy & Financing Coalition - Working to increase reimbursement of pregnancy-related depression screenings (of birth parent, under child's chart). This potential budget footnote change would align Medicaid policy with national best practice: four screens in the first year **contingent on state budget forecast & hearings.*

On the Horizon

- **SAMHSA Pregnant and Parenting Women Grant** (*Application Pending*) - If funded, this grant would support the expansion of the Prenatal Plus Program (integrated behavioral health and care coordination services) at prenatal care sites that feed into CHoSEN sites.
- **HRSA FASD Grant** (*Application in Development*) - Exploring opportunities to expand training for prenatal providers related to alcohol screening during pregnancy
- **SEN Qualitative Study** (*In Development*) - The SEN Data and Research Work Group is currently developing a protocol for IRB review as a qualitative complement to the quantitative Colorado Perinatal Substance Use Data Linkage Project.

Childhood and Adolescence

The efforts outlined below aim to strengthen screening, support, identification of prenatally exposed children and adolescents, as well as to strengthen intervention and ongoing services for children, adolescents, and their families that address their long-term needs.

Tools & Education

- **Project SCOPE** - Project Supporting Children of the Opioid Epidemic (SCOPE) is a three-year training initiative aiming to build nationwide provider capacity and confidence in applying evidence-based practices in screening, monitoring, and interdisciplinary support for children and families diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS), or who are suspected of being impacted by opioid use, trauma, or related exposure. Colorado is one of sixteen states currently participating. JFK Partners/Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine leads the project in Colorado.

- **Rise Above Constellation Project** - This project includes technical assistance and resource support regarding the intersections of youth engagement and substance misuse prevention for community agencies and coalitions in targeted communities across the state and is supported by the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health, Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, and CO9to25.
- **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Gap Analysis & Awareness Events** - The SEN FASD Identification Work Group has developed a statewide FASD Gap Analysis and has hosted three regional FASD Roadshow events to raise awareness of FASDs and resources regionally available for families, as well as to receive feedback on future priority areas based on the gap analysis findings.
- **CARE Network** - The Child Abuse Response and Evaluation (CARE) Network supports primary care physicians throughout the state to do initial evaluations of behavioral and population health contexts, including food and housing security, substance use disorders, and domestic violence. Another goal will be to increase the knowledge of both physical and mental health professionals about existing resources in their community and how to link patients to them and find ways to grow capacity in the community where resource gaps are identified. The Kempe Center leads the CARE Network with support from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Practice Change & Expanded Services

- **Regional Partnership Grant to Increase the Well-Being of, and to Improve the Permanency Outcomes for, Children and Families Affected By Opioids and Other Substance Abuse (RPG)** - The Colorado Judicial Department received this grant which aims to establish, by cooperative agreement, regional partnership grant projects designed to increase well-being, improve permanency, and enhance the safety of children who are in, or at risk of, an out-of-home placement as a result of a parent's or caregiver's opioid or other substance use. The Colorado Judicial Department is using these funds to expand the **Dependency and Neglect System Reform (DANSR) program** to additional sites.
- **Circle of Parents in Recovery** - An evidence-informed model for peer-to-peer parenting support. Tailored to people who are parenting while in recovery, groups are facilitated by a parent lead and utilize a national model to provide a safe, supportive, confidential, non-judgmental environment where parents can openly discuss their successes and challenges with the support of community agencies. Illuminate Colorado leads the state chapter of Circle of Parents in Colorado.
- **Child Care and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Pilot Programs** - This two-part pilot program includes a mobile child care pilot through which RVs will be outfitted into infant/toddler classrooms to visit treatment centers around the state to provide child care to parents seeking support for SUDs, and a child care navigation pilot through which navigation services will be simultaneously expanded to address long-term child care needs. The pilots will begin in two regions, serving multiple SUD treatment facilities in order to meet the immediate needs of caregivers accessing SUD treatment. As created by [HB19-1193](#) and supported by a public-private partnership, Illuminate Colorado is leading the three-year mobile child care pilot.

On the Horizon

- **HRSA FASD Grant (Application in Development)** - Exploring opportunities to expand training for pediatric providers related to screening for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) throughout childhood and adolescence.