

Impact on Children of Caregiver Substance Use: Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Policy Recommendations

New Initiatives

1. *Revise the child abuse definitions in the Colorado Children's Code to de-emphasize the focus on positive drug tests for controlled substances at time of birth*

Next Steps:

- Research other states' approaches to defining child abuse and neglect as it pertains to prenatal substance exposure
- Draft language to replace 19-1-103(1)(a)(VII) and 19-3-308(1)(a)(I)

2. *Increase availability and accessibility of substance use treatment and recovery support services for parents/caregivers, specifically pregnant and postpartum women*

Next Steps:

- Design, fund and pilot a program or study that removes barriers for parents/caregivers, specifically pregnant and postpartum women, including addressing child care, infant mental health, transportation, and housing needs
- Prioritize two generation approaches and gender-specific considerations
- Replicate to ensure geographic distribution

3. *Increase Early Childhood Mental Health Services to adequately address issues of trauma in children in early childhood settings (birth to 5) and develop a similar network for school settings (children 6 to 18)*

Next Steps:

- Explore approaches (such as Trauma Smart) to support Early Childhood Mental Health Services and Early Childhood Professionals in building knowledge and skills to address trauma
- Increase or identify funding to build capacity of early childhood mental health services to address issues of trauma
- Partner with the Colorado Department Human Services Division of Child Welfare Youth Services Unit to increase understanding of the the trauma informed schools project and identify opportunities to expand the project and engage additional partners

4. *Evaluate the options for increasing accessibility and availability to Early Intervention Services for children that were prenatally exposed to substances*

Next Steps:

- Partner with Early Intervention Services to understand the process and ability to modify eligibility requirements, including federal restrictions, to add prenatal substance exposure as a category eligible for services
- Determine what screening and evaluation tools exist to identify and document prenatal substance exposure
- Research other states approaches to increasing access to Early Intervention Services for substance exposed Newborns
- Support Colorado Colorado Substance Exposed Newborns Steering Committee's needs assessment of current capacity to identify and/or diagnose children with FASD
- Consider additional mechanisms to increase access of children with prenatal substance exposures, trauma, or cognitive needs due to caregiver substance use to development evaluations and services

Existing Opportunities

1. *Expand the role of the Colorado Children's Trust Fund in overseeing and coordinating efforts to prevent child maltreatment, with a specific focus on substance exposure*

Next Steps:

- Explore potential amendment to broaden lens of substance exposure
 - Support HB18-1044: Colorado Children's Trust Fund Act to strengthen the board and expand the mission of the CCTF
 - Increase resources to the CCTF to address issues of preventing an impact on children of caregiver substance use
2. Engage with the bills from the Interim Study Committee on Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders to identify and advocate for increasing access to treatment for parents/caregivers and their children

Next Steps:

- Support HB18-1007: Substance Use Disorder Payment & Coverage to address payment issues related to substance use disorder treatment
- Support HB18-1137: Substance Use Disorder Treatment to add residential and inpatient treatment to the Colorado medical assistance program
- Support SB18-024: Expanding Access Behavioral Health Care Providers to expand the availability of behavioral health care providers in shortage areas of the state
- Support HB18-1003: concerning measures to promote opioid misuse in Colorado including increasing funds for screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment, advocate for a two generation focus