



# INFORMATION MEMO

<b>Title:</b> Plan of Safe Care Website and Notification Process	<b>Office/division:</b> OCYF Division of Child Welfare <b>Division Director:</b> Joe Homlar	
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## Intended recipients

This communication has been sent to all county human service directors and subscribers to the Office of Children, Youth and Families Division of Child Welfare community partners email list that elect to receive notification when the Office issues a memo. Please forward pertinent information on to staff members as you deem necessary.

## Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum from the Division of Child Welfare is to provide information to county departments of child welfare about the new Plan of Safe Care website and updated policy and process for the notification by healthcare providers of infants exposed prenatally to substances.

## Action

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is required to collect and report de-identified data regarding the frequency of infants identified as being born affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms and to monitor the implementation of Plans of Safe Care for the affected infants and families. CDHS is launching an updated policy and process for the notification of infants exposed prenatally to substances to better meet requirements of the federal Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA).

Healthcare providers are asked to now anonymously notify and provide relevant data to CDHS when they are involved in the delivery or care of infants affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This can be done by filling out the electronic Infants Exposed Prenatally to Substances (IEPS) Notification Form which will be housed on the new [CDHS Plan of Safe Care Website](#), outside of the current child abuse and neglect reporting system.



Information collected in this form *does not include* identifying information about the infant or family. Data collected is aggregated and strictly used for required federal reporting, and to inform CDHS quality improvement efforts. Information will not be shared or used for any other purposes.

This notification is *not* to act as a report for potential abuse and/or neglect. If there is a concern about the safety or wellbeing of the infant providers, mandatory reports must continue to call the Colorado child welfare hotline at 844-CO-4-KIDS or contact their local child welfare intake team.

CDHS is also launching a new [Plan of Safe Care website](#) to include information about Plans of Safe Care, FAQs for healthcare providers and community members, links to resources and training opportunities, and information on statewide implementation efforts.

## Background

Pursuant to the CAPTA, CDHS is required to develop and operate a statewide program that includes policies and procedures for:

- Healthcare providers involved in the care and delivery of infants identified as being affected by prenatal substance exposure to notify the child protective services system of the identification of the infant. However that notification should not automatically be construed as a report of abuse or neglect, or require prosecution;
- The development of Plans of Safe Care for all affected infants and families following release from the care of healthcare providers; and,
- Referral to appropriate services to address the health and substance use treatment needs of the infant and affected family or caregiver.

CDHS must also collect information on and report the total number of infants identified as prenatally exposed to substances, the total number of Plans of Safe Care developed, and the number of individuals receiving a referral to appropriate services. Like most states, Colorado has not had a notification process separate from the reporting process for child abuse and neglect. However, in 2020, the Colorado definition of child abuse and neglect for Substance Exposed Newborns changed (2020 Memo: [OM-CW-2022-0010](#)). Prenatal substance exposure is no longer automatically considered abuse or neglect, and healthcare providers are no longer automatically calling child welfare when an infant is identified as prenatally exposed to substances.

State and National research has shown that developing a distinct notification process can help alleviate provider concerns about reporting infants and their families to child welfare when they have not identified child maltreatment concerns. A distinct process can also help reduce stigma by clarifying that not all prenatal substance exposure is a concern for child maltreatment. Lastly, developing a notification pathway may help reduce fear and promote access to healthcare and substance use treatment for birth parents.

CDHS is collaborating with the Colorado Hospital Substance Exposed Newborns Collaborative (CHoSEN), the Kempe Center, the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, and Illuminate Colorado to support a phased implementation of the new notification portal among Colorado hospitals.



CDHS is launching a new Plan of Safe Care website in response to community, healthcare provider and county feedback related to Plans of Safe Care. The new website will support communities by providing consistent messaging, templates, clear expectations, and a distinct report versus notification process.

### **Attachments**

The new website and information on the new notification process can be found [here](#).

### **Supersedes**

N/A

### **Contact**

For more information about this memo, please contact DCW Substance Use Policy and Practice Specialist, Shannon Bryan - [shannon.bryan@state.co.us](mailto:shannon.bryan@state.co.us)

*An information memo contains important information for counties that is strictly informational and timely. Information memos are active for one year; then they are archived and reissued if necessary. Access the CDHS Memo Series at [cdhs.colorado.gov/our-partners/counties/cdhs-memo-series](https://cdhs.colorado.gov/our-partners/counties/cdhs-memo-series).*

