



Department of Health

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June 29, 2018

Dear Healthcare Provider,

Federal Legislation now requires the development of a “Plan of Safe Care” (POSC) for all infants born affected by substance exposure, withdrawal symptoms, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The purpose of a POSC is to ensure that infants and caregivers affected by prenatal substance exposure receive needed supports and services after hospital discharge, such as Family Home Visiting, Early Intervention, and recovery supports. **Beginning on July 1, 2018, hospital-based newborn providers will utilize newly created *Plan of Safe Care* forms to develop and provide a POSC upon discharge from the birthing hospital, for infants and their caregivers affected by substance exposure.** The POSC should be documented in the infant’s medical record, included in discharge instructions, and shared with the infant’s primary care provider. Information from POSCs will be collected for public health purposes through the Rhode Island Department of Health Newborn Screening Program. Healthcare providers in the community should be aware of these plans, discuss them with the families they serve, and take an active role in encouraging families to connect with all the supports they need to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Statewide efforts to reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorder (SUD) are focusing on encouraging pregnant individuals to seek prenatal care and substance use disorder treatment as early in pregnancy as possible. The hope is that early screening, identification, and treatment of SUD during pregnancy, and linkage to supports and services for infants and caregivers after birth will help support families in treatment and recovery, and reduce the risk for child safety concerns and child welfare referrals.

It is important to note that providing a POSC does not require a report to DCYF or call to the DCYF hotline in all circumstances. Newborns affected by prenatal substance exposure due to prescribed medication under a clinician’s direction AND without any child safety concerns do not need to be reported. No personal information on newborns or their families affected by substance exposure is collected by DCYF unless a report is made.

RIDOH’s [Newborns Affected by Substance Exposure Information for Pediatric Healthcare Providers](#) provides information on the Plan of Safe Care process including guidance, forms, and FAQ. We hope that



State of Rhode Island

the POSC process will complement your existing, ongoing work to support newborns and their families affected by substance exposure. Thank you for the excellent medical care that you provide and for your commitment to ensuring a healthy and safe start for some of our state's most vulnerable families. For questions or concerns, please contact Margo Katz, margo.katz@health.ri.gov, 401-222-7761.

Sincerely,



Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH
Director, Rhode Island Department of Health

