



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Infant Plan of Safe Care for Families

Frequently Asked Questions

Why am I being given this information?

A recent federal law now requires health care providers involved in delivery and care of infants in North Carolina (and all states) to notify child welfare when an infant is identified by a medical provider as being (1) affected by substance abuse, (2) affected by withdrawal symptoms or (3) affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. This law also requires that a Plan of Safe Care (POSC) is developed for these infants. Your infant has been identified as meeting one or more items on these criteria.

What does being 'affected by' mean?

Infants who are identified as meeting one or more of the following:

1. Affected by substance abuse:

Infants who have a confirmed positive urine, meconium or cord segment substance screen along with other concerns.

OR

Medical evaluation and/or behavioral health assessment of mother concerning for active substance use disorder during the pregnancy or at time of birth.

2. Affected by Withdrawal Symptoms:

The infant displays symptoms that are consistent with drug or alcohol withdrawal.

3. Affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD):

Infants diagnosed with one of the following:

- a. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
- b. Partial FAS (PFAS)
- c. Neurobehavioral Disorder associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (NDPAE)
- d. Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD)
- e. Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)

OR Infants with known prenatal alcohol exposure that the health care providers are concerned about.

What does "notifying child welfare" mean?

The notification to the county Department of Social Services (DSS) is required by federal law and does not necessarily mean that the health care providers believe that any child harm has occurred.

What happens after DSS is notified?

When DSS is notified, DSS will immediately make a referral to the local Care Coordination for Children (CC4C) program to carry out the Plan of Safe Care or POSC. A CC4C care manager will be contacting you to discuss and plan for how to best support your infant's health and development. In addition, DSS staff will work through their intake process to determine if circumstances support further involvement to benefit the infant's safety.

What is a Plan of Safe Care?

All identified infants, along with their families, will be required to have a *Plan of Safe Care (POSC)* developed. This POSC will be developed, regardless of DSS involvement. The POSC is intended to meet the needs of the infants' families, in the context of the infants' substance exposure.

What is Care Coordination for Children (CC4C)?

CC4C is a voluntary family support program usually based in local health department, that serves children from birth to 5 years of age. CC4C works to keep children healthy.

What if my infant has been identified as meeting one of the new categories because of a medication I am taking that has been prescribed for me?

Even if you are taking prescribed medications appropriately, an infant may be identified because of a positive drug test or withdrawal symptoms, which can be a complication of some medications taken during pregnancy. Medical research has shown that infants who have been exposed to certain medications may be at higher risk for certain health and development complications. The intent of the POSC is to support these infants and their families so that they may be as healthy as possible.

Is this new?

Yes, this is effective July 31, 2017. North Carolina policy on Plans of Safe Care is based on federal law. The goal is to support families in the following ways:

- To include infants, children and families in the Plans of Safe Care.
- To develop an individualized Plan of Safe Care based on the needs of the infant, families and the situation of the infants' exposure to a substance.
- To support the health of the infant and mother, not to penalize the mother and family.
- To increase access to treatment and support for all women with a substance use disorder and their children.
- To provide access to services for infants determined to be affected by substance abuse, withdrawal or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

To get information on **connecting to treatment** for pregnant and parenting women, contact the NC Perinatal Substance Use Specialist at 1-800-688-4232.