**REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NOTIFICATION PROCESS BY HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS OF INFANTS BORN SUBSTANCE-EXPOSED**

This bulletin is to remind providers of important federal and state legislation requiring healthcare providers to complete a notification through the CAPTA/CARA Newborn portal at the time of the birthing event of infants born substance-exposed (as defined in DCF CAPTA Notification Best Practice Guidelines dated 2024) and/or those who experience withdrawal symptoms from the mother/birthing person’s prenatal use of substances or medications. The process to report abuse and neglect concerns will not change. Those concerns should be reported, per protocol, and completion of the CAPTA notification as applicable. Substance exposure alone does not constitute abuse or neglect.

**As of March 15, 2019, CT birthing hospital**s were required to make an online notification, pursuant to the above requirements, following the birthing event and prior to discharge. Effective August 21, 2024, the requirements will be supplemented with Best Practice Guidelines and instructions for the newly revised online notification process for use by CT birthing hospitals. Additionally, DCF/DMHAS and the SEPI CT Family Care Coordinator will offer training and a webinar to assist and support providers in successfully supporting families and children.

It is important to understand the Federal legislation requires the notification process through The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) legislation, as follows:

States are to develop policies and procedures for healthcare providers to notify child protective services of the birth of an infant affected by substance abuse\* or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Ensure the development of a Plan of Safe Care for infants who are born and identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Develop a process for appropriate referrals for the affected infant and affected family or caregiver.

CT State Legislation (<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/ACT/pa/pdf/2018PA-00111-R00HB-05332-PA.pdf>) requires:

all families with prenatal substance exposure understand the array of resources and have access to services available to support their health, recovery, and their child’s development needs, as applicable;

families receive education and support to prepare them for the birth event and notification;

the state has an accurate calculation of the number of families experiencing prenatal substance exposure, whether they received a prenatal Family Care Plan and what types of referrals families were given.

Remember a CAPTA Notification is NOT the same as mandated report. Whether or not the concerns meet the threshold of making a mandated report will continue to be determined by questions answered in the Online portal.

Please review the Best Practice Guidelines included with the Provider Bulletin. For additional questions contact: Kris Robles LCSW Clinical Behavioral Health Manager at [kris.robles@ct.gov](mailto:kris.robles@ct.gov)

Director of the Office of Substance Use Treatment, Intimate Partner Violence & Recovery

**Please visit the following links for additional information and resources:**

**The Substance Exposed Pregnancy Initiative (SEPI CT)** is a statewide initiative co-funded by DCF and DMHAS that provides training and technical support to providers regarding CAPTA implementation and development of Family Care Plans. They also have a site with robust resources for providers and clients.

[For Professionals | Substance Exposed Infant Initiative CT (sepict.org)](https://www.sepict.org/professionals/)

**ACCESS Mental Health for Moms** offers psychiatric expertise and consultation to medical providers treating perinatal individuals presenting with mental health and/or substance use concerns. For obstetric, pediatric, and adult primary care, and psychiatric providers treating pregnant and postpartum patients up to one-year post delivery.

[Home – ACCESS Mental Health for Moms (accessmhct.com)](https://www.accessmhct.com/moms/)

**CT Treatment and Recovery Services for Women-** CT offers a robust continuum of services targeted at meeting the specific needs of women and families. Same-day admissions are available and the system is poised to meet the state’s capacity needs.

[Women's and Children's Services (ct.gov)](https://portal.ct.gov/dmhas/programs-and-services/women/womens-and-childrens-programs)

[Connecticut Addiction Services (ctaddictionservices.com)](https://www.ctaddictionservices.com/)