

# SB19-228: COLORADO PERINATAL SUBSTANCE USE DATA LINKAGE PROJECT



Colorado families affected by substance use during a pregnancy are at risk for infant and maternal mortality, significant health consequences and threats to well-being of the family as a whole.

This concern continues to grow as the number of newborns experiencing neonatal abstinence syndrome (withdrawal symptoms) increases and accidental drug overdose remains a leading cause of death among postpartum women.

A study is underway to improve our ability to monitor current trends in this growing issue by establishing a comprehensive set of definitions for prenatal substance use for affected mothers and infants in Colorado.

IMPROVING FAMILY HEALTH  
THROUGH DATA INFORMED  
DECISION MAKING

**THE STUDY** LINKS DATA ABOUT COLORADO MOTHERS AND INFANTS FROM THE PRENATAL PERIOD TO A YEAR POST-BIRTH, CONNECTING:

- Vital records
- Health care utilization
- Human service and public health program utilization
- Health care, human service and public health program outcomes
- Costs associated with health care, human services and public health

## PURPOSE

The goal of this first of its kind study in Colorado is to **inform the implementation of state policies and improve systems** to best support the varied needs of families impacted by substance use during pregnancy.

The findings will also lay the **foundation for new policy and systems change** that strengthen families.



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Currently, there is incomplete and delayed reporting of data concerning infants' in-utero exposure to and subsequent withdrawal from substances during pregnancy.



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This study will uncover the scope of the problem by substance type, the moms and babies most at-risk for poor health outcomes, and where and how these families are interacting with child welfare, healthcare and other support systems. **It is vital to supporting Colorado families.**

## TIMELINE

**Summer 2020:** Preliminary research findings, with a focus on opioid use and child welfare involvement.

**Late 2020:** Five-year trend analysis, with information on multiple types of substance use, and health outcomes of women and babies at time of birth.

**Early 2021:** Exploration of how women and babies' engagement with health, child welfare, and other public systems relate to family well-being.

**TBD:** Launch of a qualitative study of families and providers to ensure policy and practice solutions are also informed by real-life experiences.

In partnership, the **Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention**, the **Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab**, and the **Substance Exposed Newborns Steering Committee of the Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force** identified a need for linking maternal and infant health records to inform efforts to ultimately improve outcomes for families impacted by substance use during pregnancy.

Data approved for use in this project will be securely integrated and anonymized through the **Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC)** housed in the Governor's Office of Information Technology.

Supported by **Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab**, LINC is a state collaborative that supports timely and cost-efficient research, evaluation, and analytics using approved integrated data across state agencies.