

Substance Exposed Newborns:

Additional Information

Considered During DCF Screening

A mandated reporter who, in his professional capacity, has reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from: (i) abuse inflicted upon him which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare, including sexual abuse; (ii) neglect, including malnutrition; (iii) physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth, shall immediately communicate with the department orally and, within 48 hours, shall file a written report with the department detailing the suspected abuse or neglect; or (iv) being a sexually exploited child; or (v) being a human trafficking victim as defined by section 20M of chapter 233. (MGL c. 119 § 51A)

Whenever a mandated, or non-mandated, reporter calls DCF or the Child Abuse Emergency Line to make a 51A report they will speak with a live screener who will discuss the information with them.

More information is available: [Report child abuse or neglect | Mass.gov](#) and [MA Child Abuse Emergency Line :: The Baker Center For Children and Families](#)

If the concerns involves a child who is born with a physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth the DCF screener will collect information regarding that allegation in addition to the information that they collect regarding all child maltreatment allegations. This additional information is designed to help DCF understand the unique needs and circumstances related to mother and her baby. Some of these questions will be focused on a **Plan of Safe Care**, which is a document created jointly by a pregnant or parenting woman and her provider. This document helps women to think about what services or supports they might find useful, to record their preparations to parent, and to organize the care and services they are receiving. A Plan of Safe Care typically identifies parents' behavioral health and recovery services as well as family and child focused services.

If a Plan of Safe Care does not exist, the DCF screener may recommend that you or another service provider create this plan in collaboration with the family.

Additional information related to Plan of Safe Care can be found [here](#).

Topics that DCF will explore during screening:

- Any existing Plan of Safe Care
- Providers involved in the creation of the Plan of Safe Care

- Supports and Services listed on the Plan of Safe Care to support the mother and her newborn
- The types of treatment, if any, the parents have been receiving including the length of treatment
- Whether service providers have seen progress or regression in treatment
- Any relapse prevention plans

You are not required to have any of this information prior to filing a 51A report. You must file immediately with DCF when the conditions of the 51A law are met (see the blue box at the top of this document). **If you do have this information to provide at the time of screening this information will assist DCF in determining the level of risk to the child and the family.**