



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
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August 2, 2018

Dear Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition (BFHN) Providers, Medical Providers, and Other Community Partners:

In 2016, the Federal Government amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to include a requirement for the creation of “*plans of safe care for infants born and identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.*”<sup>1</sup> These Plans of Safe Care (POSC) are intended to help “ensure the safety and well-being of infants following the release from the care of health care providers by (1) addressing the health and substance use disorder treatment needs of the infant and affected family or caregiver; and (2) monitoring these plans to determine whether and how local entities are making referrals and delivering appropriate services to the infant and affected family or caregiver (in accordance with state requirements).”<sup>2</sup> The Department of Public Health (DPH) is partnering with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to help implement this federal requirement in Massachusetts.

DPH encourages providers working with clients/patients affected by substance use to participate in the POSC process. Depending on one’s role, this might mean screening for the need for a POSC, developing and coordinating a POSC, or communicating the existence of a POSC. If a POSC has not been developed prenatally, hospital staff should develop one before discharge. If a 51A is filed at birth, DCF will ask the reporter whether or not a POSC exists for that client/patient and whether referrals to services have been made. The content of the POSC does not have to be shared with DCF.

A POSC is an informational and resource document that can help pregnant/parenting clients/patients access needed services and supports for themselves and their babies. It can also help demonstrate to DCF that they have prepared to parent. The Institute for Health and Recovery is creating a POSC webpage to support implementation that will include a searchable resource list for perinatal services statewide. This will be available after August 15, 2018.

More detailed information is included in the attached memo. A POSC template is also attached. All questions should be directed to DPH’s MCH Director for Title V at [karin.downs@state.ma.us](mailto:karin.downs@state.ma.us).

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1702.pdf>