Building Family Wellness Plans in the Medical Setting

Federal law requires that infants born affected by substance misuse, withdrawal or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) receive a Plan of Safe Care (called Family Wellness Plan in Orange County) that supports their families as well.

What Is a Family Wellness Plan (FWP)?

The goal of the Family Wellness Plan is to strengthen the family unit, help mothers have a healthy pregnancy, and keep child(ren) safely at home. It is also:

- A personalized guide to ensure necessary resources are provided to help families thrive
- A tool that helps communicate strengths, needs, and accomplishments to providers
- A tool to help with care coordination

Who Could Benefit from a FWP?

The Family Wellness Plan was designed for pregnant women with substance use disorders and families of infants who may have been substance exposed during pregnancy.

- Pregnant people with an active substance use disorder should develop a FWP during pregnancy
- Any families with infants born exposed to substances with the potential of misuse should develop a FWP. Families with infants who experience withdrawal, even to prescribed medications (ex. methadone, benzodiazepines) should develop a FWP
- The FWP should be developed for infants and their families whether or not they require a report to Social Services

Who Develops and Adds to the FWP?

The FWP is owned by and developed by the family. The FWP can be developed anytime. Ideally, it should be developed during pregnancy. If a plan has not been started during pregnancy, it should be developed after delivery but before leaving the hospital.

Providers can work with pregnant people & new parents to develop and share the FWP. These providers include:

- Hospital social workers/case managers
- OB/GYNs and primary care doctors
- Substance use disorder treatment providers or recovery coaches
- Mental health providers
- Pediatricians
- Faith leaders or counselors
- Staff from home visiting programs

Where Can I Find a FWP Template?

FWPs should address the health, development and substance use disorder needs of the family, infant and caregiver. FWPs may include sections on:

- Demographic information of the family
- Identified family supports
- Mental/substance use disorder needs and supports
- Referrals completed to support the family
- Delivery information
- Type of exposure and how it was identified (ex. positive test or maternal self-report)
- Information about infant placement, if applicable

To download a FWP template go HERE

Family Wellness Plans in the Medical Setting

Which Families Require a FWP?

The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act requires a FWP for infants who are born affected by substance abuse, withdrawal, or a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and their affected caregivers.

When Is a Report to Social Services Required?

A positive toxicology screen at the time of the delivery of an infant is **NOT in and of itself a sufficient basis for reporting child abuse or neglect.**

However, any indication of maternal substance misuse shall lead to an assessment of the needs of the mother and child. **If other factors are present that indicate risk to a child, then a report shall be made.**

Find more from the statute: 2.5 CA & N reporting Act 11164-11174.3

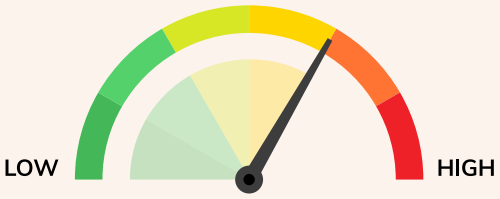
The Orange County Child Abuse Hotline can be reached at 714-940-1000 or 800-207-4464 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If the healthcare provider determines a report is not required, they can work with the family on the Family Wellness Plan.

Health care providers can refer families to Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA) Pregnant and Parenting Support Programs (714-834-7747 or everywomanoc.org/referrals/CNSD) to assist with the FWP by providing coordination, follow-up, and linkages.

How Do I Determine if Safety Risks Exist?

Healthcare providers should assess whether risk factors affect the safety of an infant. If a healthcare provider has concerns, they should call the Orange County Child Abuse Hotline. Orange County Child Abuse Hotline staff can complete an in-depth screening and potentially open a more thorough investigation.



Healthcare Providers Can Screen for

Protective Factors

- Is the parent actively participating in their recovery program?
- Is the parent actively participating in care for the infant?
- Can the parent console the infant?
- Can the parent meet the infant's basic needs?

Risk Factors

- Is the parent unable or unwilling to provide care to the infant?
- Is there evidence of ongoing substance misuse that impairs the caregiver's ability to parent?
- Does the parent have prior history that raises child safety concerns?

This is not a complete list of potential risk factors, but rather it is intended to aid providers.
Call the Orange County Child Abuse Hotline if you have any concerns about the family or newborn.