

# Drug Usage During Pregnancy

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

**Policy: 500.0125**

**Effective Date: January 22, 1990**

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**Version: 2**

The Department carefully considers all calls to the Child Abuse Hotline alleging drug and/or alcohol use by a pregnant woman. A call alleging drug and/or alcohol abuse may be received during the pregnancy, after delivery while the newborn is at the hospital or after a newborn is already home. An investigation is conducted if there is a specific allegation of abuse and/or neglect of the newborn and/or other children in the home. If, during the course of the investigation, the preponderance of evidence uncovered indicates that mother used drugs and/or alcohol during pregnancy, an allegation of drug/alcohol abuse is added to the investigation. Such evidence may include positive prenatal drug screen(s), positive toxicology screen on mother or newborn while in the hospital or admission by mother that she used drugs during pregnancy.

When a woman has tested positive for drugs and/or alcohol during prenatal treatment, there is good cause to test both her and her baby for the presence of drugs immediately after the birth. Babies born with drugs in their systems, as evidenced by a positive toxicology screen at birth or observable withdrawal symptoms, babies born to mothers who admit using drugs during pregnancy or who have been observed ingesting drugs and babies born with fetal alcohol syndrome must be reported to the Child Abuse Hotline. A Report of Examination is completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner. If the method of use is known, such information is reported to the Department. All such reports are investigated by the Department.

If an investigation is founded and to ensure that these babies and their families are provided with necessary intervention, treatment and services, the assigned Child Protective Investigator (CPI) consults his/her supervisor and DCYF Legal Counsel as to the advisability of requesting an Order of Detention, Ex Parte, or a Straight Petition. Whether or not a Straight Petition is filed, the assigned Child Protective Investigator (CPI) refers the family to community services as appropriate.

## **Related Procedure**

[Drug Usage During Pregnancy](#)

## **Related Policy**

[Information/Referral \(I/R\) Reports](#)

## Drug Usage During Pregnancy

### Procedure from Policy 500.0125: Drug Usage During Pregnancy

- A. A Child Protective Services (CPS) report is completed by the Call Floor worker for all reports that a pregnant woman is using drugs:
  1. An investigation is initiated if there are specific allegations of abuse and/or neglect of child(ren) in the home.
  2. In conformance with DCYF Policy 500.0040, Information/Referral (I/R) Reports, an Information-Referral is entered into RICHIST if there are no specific allegations of abuse and/or neglect and/or there are no child(ren) in the home.
  
- B. A CPS report is completed by the Call Floor worker for all reports alleging that a newborn's mother used drugs during pregnancy. This procedure applies whether the report is received before or after the newborn's mother leaves the hospital.
  1. The CPS report is forwarded through the Call Floor Supervisor to the Investigative Unit for assignment.
  2. An investigation of the report is initiated by a Child Protective Investigator (CPI).
  3. The CPI gathers all information pertinent to the case and completes the investigation:
    - a. If the investigation is indicated, the CPI confers with his/her supervisor and Department Legal staff as to the advisability of requesting an Order of Detention, Ex Parte.
    - b. If it is determined that an Order of Detention, Ex Parte is not warranted, the CPI confers with his/her supervisor and Department Legal staff as to the advisability of requesting a Straight Petition. Appropriate referrals for services are made whether or not legal status is sought.
    - c. The case is transferred to the Intake Unit.