



State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Lt. Governor

SHEREEF M. ELNAHAL, MD, MBA  
Commissioner

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Dear Health Care Provider:

National and state rates of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) attributed to opioids continue to rise, resulting in adverse health conditions among affected infants. In 2016, there were 685 babies diagnosed with NAS in New Jersey, a figure that has doubled since 2008.

NAS can be attributed to a variety of prescription and illicit opioid use, as well as alcohol. Each year, an estimated 400,000 to 440,000 infants nationally (12.6% of all births) are affected by prenatal alcohol or illicit drug exposure.

Data from the New Jersey Substance Abuse Monitoring System (NJSAMS) 2015 report reflects the most common substances used by New Jersey's pregnant women: heroin (59.8%) and other opiates (9.7%); marijuana (13.5%); and alcohol (9.3%).

Prenatal exposure to prescription opioids and illicit drugs has the potential to cause a wide spectrum of physical, emotional, and developmental problems for infants, but the harm can be reduced if pregnant and new moms and their babies receive treatment as soon as possible.

To that end, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is launching a "Help Yourself. Help Your Baby. Get Treated," public and provider awareness campaign to educate pregnant women, their families and their healthcare providers about the importance of getting treatment for substance abuse. The campaign will consist of opioid-dependence prevention posters and targeted advertising, which includes corner store and bus ads and promoted social media messages. Additionally, the Department's [nj.gov/health/treated4baby](http://nj.gov/health/treated4baby) website will include information for consumers and providers.

To partner with NJDOH during this important campaign, please consider the following:

- **Sharing our prevention message.** Display copies of the posters in your clinic, medical office, healthcare facility lobby, client waiting room or other high-traffic areas. Download the poster here: [nj.gov/health/treated4baby](http://nj.gov/health/treated4baby).
- **Promoting our social media campaign.** Use #Treated4Baby on your agency's social media page(s) to emphasize the importance of getting treatment. Follow the New Jersey Department of Health on social media: [twitter.com/NJDeptofHealth](https://twitter.com/NJDeptofHealth), [@ShereefElnahal](https://twitter.com/ShereefElnahal), [facebook.com/NJDeptofHealth](https://facebook.com/NJDeptofHealth), [instagram.com/njdeptofhealth](https://instagram.com/njdeptofhealth) and Snapchat @njdoh.
- **Connecting clients to our webpage.** Provide links to the NJDOH opioid outreach prevention webpage at [nj.gov/health/treated4baby](http://nj.gov/health/treated4baby) on your agency's website and in your agency's newsletter so clients can access information and resources.

In addition, healthcare providers play a critical role in preventing NAS by applying evidence-based practices of prevention and treatment to pregnant women. The NJDOH offers the following recommendations and reminders for preventing and treating opioid dependency in pregnant women and their babies:

- **Ensure early prenatal care and universal screening for all pregnant women.** It is important that women receive early and consistent prenatal care.
- **Increase risk assessment in pregnant women and perform additional screening when indicated.** The NJDOH encourages clinicians to talk to pregnant women about their opioid use during all prenatal visits.
- **Treat patients with opioid dependency immediately.** Early treatment is essential.
- **Ensure that substance exposed infants and their mothers are referred to the appropriate resources**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has published A *Collaborative Approach to the Treatment of Pregnant Women with Opioid Disorders: Practices and Policy Considerations for Child Welfare, Collaborative Medical and Services Providers* which may be of interest of you. To find this resource: visit: [https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/Collaborative\\_Approach\\_508.pdf](https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/Collaborative_Approach_508.pdf)

We hope that you will join us in this campaign to protect the health of pregnant women and their babies. If you have any questions, please refer to the Department's new NAS page at: [nj.gov/health/treated4baby](http://nj.gov/health/treated4baby).

Sincerely,



Shereef Elnahal, MD, MBA  
Commissioner



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