

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR SUBSTANCE EXPOSED INFANTS & THEIR FAMILIES

Federal policy should utilize a **public health approach**



More than 50,000 infants enter foster care each year in the U.S., most due to parental substance use.



The foundational legislation meant to protect infants & children, called the **Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA)**, wasn't set up to meet the needs of families affected by substance use.



A new bill to strengthen CAPTA was introduced this spring, but additional changes could improve our ability to support families:

Families in need of services must be easily identified, and **current eligibility requirements are vague**. Clearer guidance should be provided to states and data collection systems should be updated to ensure that infants and families receive needed support.

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States should **eliminate criminal-justice approaches** to substance use in pregnancy.

The federal government should provide clearer guidance on the **negative health impacts of these punitive policies**, and on the importance of family assessments that are culturally-responsive and oriented to a family's strengths.



Important new changes to CAPTA support a broad public health response to prenatal substance exposure, but **states need technical assistance and monitoring support** to implement the changes.

Additional, **sustained appropriations funding** will be required to realize the goals of CAPTA's reauthorization bill.

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