



American Academy of Nursing

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American Academy of Nursing Releases Policy Brief on Pregnant and Parenting Women with a Substance Use Disorder

Recommendations for Enduring Therapeutic Practice

Washington, D.C. (April 15, 2019) — The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) today released its policy brief calling for an end to criminal prosecution and punitive civil actions against pregnant and parenting women based solely on their substance use in favor of a public health response.

At the forefront of the national stage for the past several years, the opioid epidemic has expanded the public's awareness of substance use disorders (SUDs) and treatments during this public health emergency. For pregnant women with SUDs however, punitive actions in place of a public health response have resulted in criminal charges, arrests, and incarceration for these women. This has reinforced a culture of fear and barriers to essential health services. Early entry into maternity care plays a vital role in long-term health and social outcomes. Recovery-oriented public health responses are urgently needed to shift the culture of punishment to one of enduring therapeutic intent for women as well as their infants, children, and families affected by SUDs.

“Through this timely brief, the Academy is helping to shape the conversation around providing care to pregnant and parenting women and reducing the stigma of SUDs in the age of the opioid epidemic,” said Academy President Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FACHE, FAAN. “One of the Academy’s [policy priorities](#) is to advance health equity and champion wellness. To do this, providers must incorporate multi-disciplinary, culturally- and trauma-responsive models of care.”

The Academy’s policy brief, “Pregnant and Parenting Women with a Substance Use Disorder: Actions and Policy for Enduring Therapeutic Practice,” was published in the March/April 2019 issue of the Academy’s journal, *Nursing Outlook*.

The Academy puts forth recommendations at the federal, state, and provider level. At the federal level, the Academy recommends increased funding for the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); increased dissemination of SAMHSA’s Clinical Guidance for Treating Pregnant and Parenting Women with Opioid Use Disorders; the advancement of ongoing training and technical assistance to ensure cultural competence and sensitivity in SUD treatment; and the collection of comprehensive data on maternal deaths due to overdose by the Centers for Disease Control. At the state level, the Academy recommends increased funding and the integration of services related to community-based treatment for women, their children, and families affected by substance use. Finally, the Academy recommends strategies for nursing leadership to safeguard accurate and comprehensive clinical assessment and provider practice consistent with a therapeutic health justice approach.

Read the full policy brief [here](#).

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The American Academy of Nursing (www.AANnet.org) serves the public and the nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. The Academy's more than 2,700 fellows are nursing's most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice, and research. They have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and healthcare.

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