



COMMUNITY  
OF PRACTICE:

# Supports for Mothers, Babies and Caregivers after Birth

The Community of Practice (CoP) series was developed through a partnership with IMPACT WV and the WV Home Visiting Program to help participants exchange technical information and share experiences about serving clients currently experiencing or who have past experiences with substance use and neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).

**The information in this IMPACT WV product was taken from a Community of Practice (CoP) presentation by Jessica Ross, Mikishia M. Lee, Abby Baker-Pownall, Patient Navigators for IMPACT WV at Burlington United Methodist Family Services (BUMFS), Wheeling Hospital (WH), and Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA) respectively.**

## Aim

The purpose of this CoP is to:

- Identify the differences between personal, societal and professional support during the postnatal period.
- Describe the importance of community based public health programs and strategies addressing postnatal support.
- Apply awareness of home visitation programs stating the purpose and goals that contribute to the continued support after delivery.
- Investigate the importance of peer support for families affected by substance use disorders through and after postnatal care.

## General Info

What is Social Personal Support? Social Personal Support is functional support that leads to an individual feeling cared for, valued and with a sense of belonging to a larger network. The overall goal of this support is to protect the physical, mental and emotional well-being of those exposed to stress. This type of support aids in reducing stress, depression and anxiety that all can play a large role on our physical health. The benefits of social support are endless, yet the following barriers to reaching social support may be present:

- **Social Expectations:** Society's view of motherhood plays a large role in one's ability to access social support. These expectations can make a mother feel shame, or that they are inadequate worsens the idea that they are not "good mothers."
- **Social Media:** Social media holds standards for what it means to be a "good mother." This places pressure on the individual to meet these standards, and judge themselves based on the media's idea of how they will be perceived.
- **A need for increased and better facilitated functional support overall:** Lack of support available during postpartum care leaves women feeling less inept to seek out and receive the necessary postpartum care.
- **A stigma against asking for support:** Women often feel guilt, shame and embarrassment during the postpartum period. With this, comes the fear of losing their child and being hospitalized for their needs.

## Community Based Programs

Community health care workers are the first point of access for clients, and the health care system. Through these programs, clients can build trusting and supportive relationships with providers before, during and after pregnancy. With the hopes of improving quality of care and access, awareness, demand and use of services increase community involvement.

\*See resources below for available community-based programs across the state of West Virginia.

## Professional Support

Who do you go to for post-partum care, and what is their role? Post-partum check-ups are done to ensure the mother is healthy after giving birth to their child, typically between 4 and 6 weeks after birth. It is not uncommon for women to experience feelings of sadness, anxiety and tiredness after having a baby. This mental health condition is called post-partum depression, and may be present for a long period of time after birth, in addition to other mental health conditions. The following health care supports are available to mothers/caregivers during the post-partum period with their respective roles below:

- OBGYN – Complete the postpartum checkup, and postpartum depression/mental health screenings.
- Functional Medicine Practitioner- Create a personalized care plan that focuses on diet, exercise, herbs or supplements.
- Lactation Consultant- Provide knowledge and counseling for breastfeeding mothers, and issues related to: clogged ducts, milk supply, pumping, nursing position, latching, sore nipples, etc.
- MAT/Counseling – Administration of post delivery MAT, prescription of Buprenorphine from Addiction Specialist, and Maintain Pregnancy medical classification chrono (MCC) for 6 weeks.
- Foster Care/Adoption Agency – connect patients to financial assistance, medical assistance and respite care.



## Infant Support

When infants are born, a 1 week check up is completed with the pediatrician. During this appointment, general health and wellness measures such as weight, height and circumference will be completed. The pediatrician additionally performs developmental screenings, and refers as necessary to additional health care providers/services that will allow for further testing and support. The following health care supports are available to infants during the postnatal period with their respective roles below:

- Pediatrician – 1-week checkup, developmental and general health status, referrals as necessary.
- Neonatologist- support for infants exposed to substances during pregnancy, aim to prevent medications through eat, sleep, and console algorithms to perform non-pharmacological interventions, and referral for medical treatment if needed.
- Pediatric rehabilitation – speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy
- Behavioral and Developmental Pediatricians – evaluate for delays in speech/language, motor skills, social skills and learning skills. Often evaluate for: ADHD, anxiety, ASD, Dyslexia and performance in school.

## Peer Recovery Support

Peer recovery services are delivered by individuals who have experienced substance use disorders and recovery. These individuals aim to support others with substance use disorders, or those in recovery to engage in activities that are healthy, motivate them for self-accountability, and increase independence, self-determination and confidence. Coaches and peer sponsors provide support in and out of classes that aim to prevent relapse, and increase the understanding of health information regarding physical, mental, and social health. The following peer services are available to families in transition to recovery:

- Peer Recovery Coach: A person with a lived experience of a substance use disorder acting as a model for recovery and supporting others during their journey towards recovery as well. These individuals advocate on an individual and community level to provide knowledge and training to support recovery efforts.
- Peer support services during post-partum transition: Aids in best practices for care of pregnant women using substances and protecting their families. Peer support specialists are available to provide immediate support when an individual feels as though they may begin coping with substances.





## Resources

- IMPACT WV Patient Navigators [wvimpact.org/patient-navigators/](http://wvimpact.org/patient-navigators/)
  - Coordinate care of families impacted by substance use or NAS.
- Catholic Charities of WV [catholiccharitieswv.org](http://catholiccharitieswv.org)
  - Child Care Resource Center [catholiccharitieswv.org/child-care-resource-center](http://catholiccharitieswv.org/child-care-resource-center)
    - Assist families during work or educational opportunities.
  - Seasonal Outreach [catholiccharitieswv.org/seasonal-outreach/](http://catholiccharitieswv.org/seasonal-outreach/)
    - Supply, bookbags, school supplies, outerwear, etc.
  - WV Birth to Three [www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/](http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/)
    - Services for children who exhibit delays or are at risk for delays.
- Home Visitation Programs:
  - Parents as Teachers [parentsasteachers.org](http://parentsasteachers.org) Serves families with children prenatally through kindergarten to increase knowledge of development and increase success.
  - Early Head Start [www.wvheadstart.org](http://www.wvheadstart.org)
    - Promotes school readiness for low income families.
  - Right from the Start [www.wvdhhr.org/rfts/](http://www.wvdhhr.org/rfts/)
    - Provides home care services to mothers and children.
  - Healthy Start/HAPI Program [bumfs.org/wv-healthy-start-hapi-project/](http://bumfs.org/wv-healthy-start-hapi-project/) – Reduces infant mortality rates by providing home services, supports and resources to families.
- Gabriel Project: [www.gabrielwv.org](http://www.gabrielwv.org) - Services for children 2 years and younger that support families without adequate financial resources to meet needs of a newborn.
- West Virginia Woman, Infants and Children Program [www.dhhr.wv.gov/WIC/Pages.default.aspx](http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/WIC/Pages.default.aspx) – Provides nutrition counseling, parenting advice, breastfeeding support and food/formula assistance.
- West Virginia Family Resources Networks: [wvfrn.org](http://wvfrn.org)
  - Responds to needs of the local community.
- West Virginia 211: [wv211.org/](http://wv211.org/) - Database to search for human service needs.

## Tips

- Reach out to your doctor and discuss next steps once your child is born.
- Ask your doctor for resources/services available for postpartum care in your area.
- Post-partum care should be individualized to meet the needs of both the mother and the baby.
- Postpartum assessments and Individualized Care Plans should be discussed between providers and clients to navigate individual needs.