

BRIEF FOCUSED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare (NCSACW) is a technical assistance resource center jointly funded by the Children's Bureau (CB), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NCSACW offers a range of technical assistance options to help states, tribes, and communities improve the safety, health, permanency, well-being, and recovery outcomes for families. This applies to families affected by substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders who are in or at risk of being involved in the child welfare system.

As part of the range of training and technical assistance resources, the NCSACW offers two intensive technical assistance engagements: [In-Depth Technical Assistance \(IDTA\)](#) and Brief Focused Technical Assistance (BFTA). Since 2014 these engagements have focused on helping states develop policies and protocols that respond to the needs of infants and families affected by prenatal substance exposure, including access to substance use and mental health treatment and recovery supports. This focus expanded in 2016 to help states implement the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provisions related to infants born with, and identified as affected by, substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Available to states, communities, and tribes, BFTA prioritizes site-identified policy and practice changes and implementation of specific collaborative strategies to improve outcomes for infants, children, and their families. BFTA can also be tailored to strengthen broader cross-system practices that support family-centered approaches and outcomes and workforce development. BFTA engagements offer a customized package of substantial consultation services, expert assistance, and support with targeted training, technical assistance, and coaching for up to year. NCSACW assistance and resources are available in sufficient depth and duration to implement a strategic plan to affect real practice and policy changes. Key factors for success identified through NCSACW's experience include:

- Partnering with agencies committed to implementing effective policy and practice changes including policies to mitigate disproportionality and inequity
- Engaging systems leaders who not only support the work of collaborative teams, but are also willing to address obstacles to implementing practice changes
- Establishing or enhancing a collaborative governance structure as the foundation for implementation
- Measuring cross-system outcomes

Support is provided by a senior staff member of the NCSACW who acts as a Change Liaison (CL) in partnership with the state, community, or tribe. The CL manages the technical assistance request and provides ongoing guidance and support. Together the site team and CL determine goals and priorities, identify challenges and barriers, develop a scope of work and action plan, and assist with the design and development of project deliverables. The CL provides site teams with access to a range of trainings, resources, and subject matter experts.

Engaging in BFTA helps sites refine existing operations or identify changes within current structures and regulations to better support infants, families, and caregivers affected by substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders, including prenatal substance exposure. Potential BFTA goals include:

- Enhancing the team's ability to meet the needs of infants prenatally exposed and their families. This takes place by exploring the current practices, gaps, and barriers that families and the systems that support them face.
- Developing a coordinated, statewide approach for implementing Plans of Safe Care (POSC) for infants affected by substance abuse, withdrawal symptoms, or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and their affected family or caregiver.

- Providing training and coaching on topics such as parental engagement, SUD symptoms and risk factors, treatment approaches, and evidence-based practices.
- Using a public health approach that links infant and maternal health care providers with substance use and mental health disorder treatment providers to implement POSCs and inform practitioners' responses to prenatal substance exposure.

BRIEF FOCUSED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE KEY STEPS

ESTABLISH COLLABORATIVE TEAM AND STRUCTURE

- Develop a structure (or integrate an existing one) that includes an identified project liaison, oversight/executive committee, and collaborative team
- Ensure team is committed to BFTA engagement
- Clarify request for technical assistance and identify areas of practice and policy change

DEVELOP SCOPE OF WORK

- Clearly define the state's, tribe's, or community's needs, goals, and capacity
- Draft a site-specific scope of work, including an action plan, to identify goals and targets for protocol improvements and changes
- Determine who will be **Responsible** for activities, **Accountable** for decision making, **Consulted** for feedback, and **Informed** about progress using the **RACI** model
- Identify baseline and annual metrics (e.g., data dashboard) to help evaluate practice changes over time

IMPLEMENT SITE PLAN AND BUILD CAPACITY

- Define key decision-makers and leaders and hold regular meetings to ensure approval and participation
- Hold monthly check-in calls with CL
- Develop strategies, tools, and resources to support goals
- Identify key steps for statewide implementation

EVALUATION, DISSEMINATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Evaluate effectiveness of change strategies (e.g., Plan, Do, Study, Act) using qualitative and quantitative data
- Disseminate effective strategies and lessons across systems
- Identify resources to sustain protocol and practice changes
- Implement data collection points and data elements needed to effectively measure implementation of plans of safe care and identify disproportionate notifications for people of color and underserved populations

TYPES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT

The assigned CL uses a variety of strategies to provide technical assistance and support implementation of the site plan. This includes ways to develop or strengthen a collaborative team; facilitate conversations with partners and leadership; modify the site's approach to POSCs; devise policies, processes, and protocols; and plan and support roll-out, including training and pilot implementation. Technical assistance strategies are selected based on the needs and preferences of the site and may include:

- Monthly calls with the site's project liaison(s) and other team members
- Quarterly meetings or briefings with leadership and decision-makers
- Targeted resource dissemination
- Development of site-specific tools and templates
- Access to all NCSACW resources and expertise, including links to technical assistance sites and subject matter experts
- Assistance with coordinating and developing collaborative relationships
- Kickoff meeting (on-site or virtual) for collaborative team
- On-site visit and training as identified in scope of work

For addition information or to request technical assistance, please contact ncsacw@cffutures.org or visit our webpage at <https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/technical/idta.aspx>