

FIRST STEPS DATABASE

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM EVALUATION PROJECT: SAFE BABIES, SAFE MOMS

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The Comprehensive Program Evaluation Project (CPEP), known as Safe Babies, Safe Moms, seeks to improve the health and welfare of substance abusing mothers and their young children by helping them make major life changes. CPEP attempts to improve long-term outcomes for these families and represents an investment in their future. The comprehensive services offered to substance abusing mothers who are pregnant and/or parenting children under age 3 include Targeted Intensive Case Management (TICM), Residential/Outpatient Chemical Dependency Treatment, Transitional Housing, Parenting Education, and Child Development Assessments and Referrals. Clients receive many services over a number of months; some clients take longer than others to show a positive response.

The project is a collaborative effort between the Department of Social and Health Services—Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Medical Assistance Administration, Children's Administration, Research and Data Analysis—and the Department of Health.

Three pilot sites—Benton-Franklin Counties, Snohomish County, and Whatcom County—served 276 substance abusing women and their children in the first two and one-half years of the program, from January 2000 through June 2002.

This brief report describes birth outcomes before and after CPEP enrollment and summarizes clients' accomplishments as of March 2002.

The low birth weight rate for infants born after CPEP program entry decreased by more than 50%.¹ In pooled comparisons, where all infants born before program entry were compared to those born after program entry, the low birth weight rate decreased by 63%—from 9.8% before program entry to 3.6% after program entry. For paired comparisons, which included only infants whose mothers had (at least) one birth before program entry and one birth after, low birth weight decreased by 57%—from 11.5% before program entry to 4.9% after program entry.

These findings show that birth outcomes were better for infants born after their mothers enrolled in CPEP. Improved birth weights suggest these infants will have lower risk of disorders associated with low birth weight such as neurodevelopmental conditions, learning disorders, behavior problems, and respiratory infections.

¹ Birth outcomes were analyzed for CPEP clients using two methods: 1) Pooled Comparisons: low birthweight rates for births after program entry (N=83) were compared to all births to CPEP clients before program entry (N=531); and 2) Paired Comparisons: low birth weight rates were compared for infants whose mothers had (at least) one birth before program entry and one birth after (N=61).

In addition, providers believed that **nearly 25% of active clients (47 of 202) were already successful in making key changes in their lives.** We asked providers to identify successful clients and to list specific accomplishments they had achieved.

Accomplishments indicating success among the 47 successful clients included the following:

- 12 clients used birth control consistently or had a tubal ligation
- 17 clients have accepted responsibility for parenting by attending parenting classes or securing needed services for their children
- 7 clients delivered clean, healthy babies, and 8 were reunited with their children
- 26 clients completed residential treatment, and 14 completed outpatient treatment for chemical dependency
- 22 clients reported being clean and sober for 6 months or longer
- 5 clients participated in the WorkFirst program, and 19 obtained part- or full-time work
- 15 clients obtained stable housing.

These accomplishments indicate major life changes for many of these women and their children, and they predict significantly better long-term outcomes for these families.

The 47 clients whose accomplishments are listed are not the only clients who have successfully completed certain components of this program. Other active clients not yet consistent enough in their behavior to be considered successful continue to receive program services. As of January 2002, CPEP providers were serving 202 active clients (74 in Benton-Franklin Counties; 78 in Snohomish County; and 50 in Whatcom County). A total of 127 women have completed residential treatment for chemical dependency, with some of these women receiving treatment more than once.

Conclusion

Even though this program represents an investment in long-term outcomes, some positive short-term outcomes have already been identified. Children born to CPEP clients are healthier, based on the decrease in the low birth weight rate. Women are making important life changes, based on the nearly 25% of active clients already identified as successful. These changes indicate that CPEP is achieving its goal—to improve the health and welfare of substance abusing mothers and their young children.

The services offered through this comprehensive program are clearly needed to help substance abusing mothers and their young children turn their lives around. Clients, program staff, and the state team members are committed to meeting challenges to insure continued successful implementation of this program. The continuation of these comprehensive services is an investment in positive long-term outcomes.

Data sources for this report include community providers and the First Steps Database. The First Steps Database was developed as a program monitoring tool for First Steps. The database links Medicaid claims and eligibility with birth and death certificates. Additional copies of this report (#4.36c) may be requested from DSHS Research and Data Analysis (phone 360-902-0707). RDA reports are available at the website, www1.dshs.wa.gov/rda.