



# IMPACT WV

## Study Summary

### Why was this study done?

Rates of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and substance use disorder (SUD) have been growing in the last 20 years, especially in West Virginia. Focusing on nine counties in northern West Virginia that have the highest rates of NAS, this study looked at the needs of caregivers and children with NAS, or children exposed to substances in utero. The goal of the study was to coordinate services to assist families during the first three years.

### What was done?

IMPACT WV worked with three organizations in West Virginia: Burlington United Methodist Family Services (BUMFS) for home visitation, WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital for birthing hospital, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for child advocacy. Information about needed services for caregivers and children was gathered through enrollment in a home program and by working with doctors and other medical providers. Patient navigators helped coordinate these services at each site.

### What was found?

182 families enrolled during the program period, most of which were from Ohio and Marshall counties. Families were enrolled in the program for an overall average of 655 days (an average of 803 days spent with CASA, 663 days with BUMFS, and 514 days with the program at Wheeling Hospital).

The patient navigators helped with many social services, including education (17), employment (17), transportation (16), utilities (16), clothing (24), housing (25), finance (13), health (24), interpersonal violence (7), food insecurities (28) and child development (28). These needs were addressed through trainings, referrals to providers, direct aid and other service coordination.

### What does this mean?

More research is needed to understand how service coordination may have helped the family as a whole. Children in this program were within average ranges on the Ages and Stages developmental (ASQ 2) screener, meaning they were developing normally for children their age, with scores improving throughout the length of the program. Caregiver reports of domestic violence also decreased significantly on both the Relationship Assessment Tool (RAT) and the Hurt, Insulted, Threatened with Harm, and Screamed at (HITS) tests.

While there were no other major changes overall in the program in terms of maternal depression or substance use, there were significant differences found at individual sites. For example, maternal depression was highest at the BUMFS home visitation program, and reports of domestic violence were lower in the CASA program than at the birthing hospital.

Future studies and programs from IMPACT WV will seek to explain these differences and determine how effective patient navigators are in helping families receive the services and support they need. Surveys on the PN Model conducted in 2022 by IMPACT WV showed families at BUMFS or CASA tended to have a better connection with their patient navigator.

