Responding to the Need for Better Data to Inform Smart State Investments in Prenatal Substance Use Prevention and Support

Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Study Committee

July 19, 2023

Dr. Elysia Clemens, PhD, LPC

Dr. Courtney L. Everson, PhD

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Promoting Public Health and Human Service Strategies through Actionable Data

Role of Study Committee in this project

Senate Bill 19-228 (SUD Prevention Measures)

Senate Bill 20-028 (SUD Recovery)

Senate Bill 21-137 (Behavioral Health Recovery Act)

Goals:

1. Connect data from multiple administrative data sources to comprehensively understand prenatal substance use and effects on family health and well-being.
2. Generate population estimates of prenatal substance use that can be used to guide investments and track progress.

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
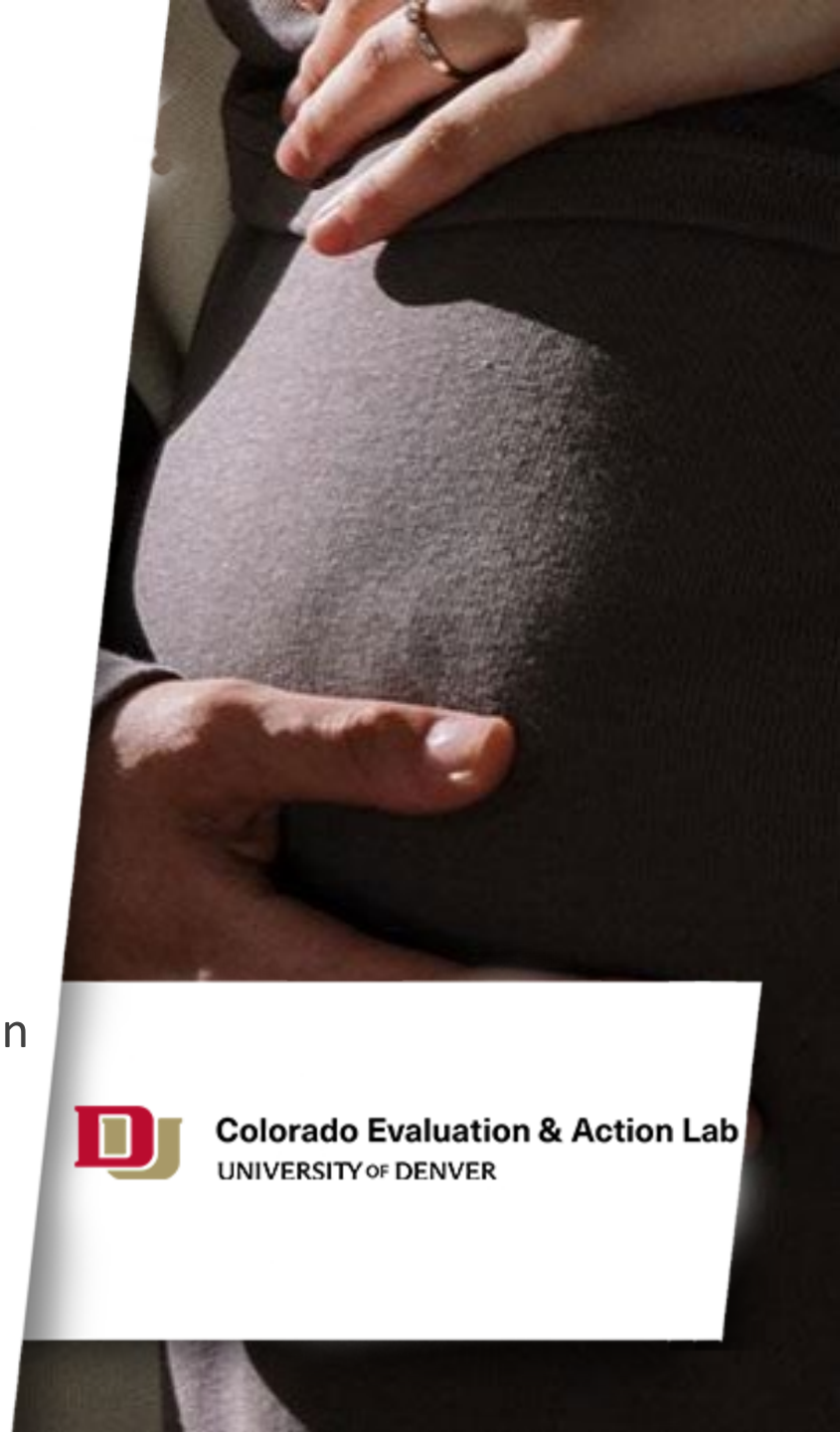
Project Partnerships

Designed in partnership with policymakers, state agencies, hospitals, non-profits, families, and the research community.

A "Numbers and Narratives" Approach

Administrative Data Sources:
to identify outcomes and service use patterns

Family Voice and Provider Perspective:
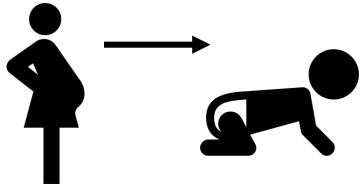to better understand findings and inform meaningful solutions
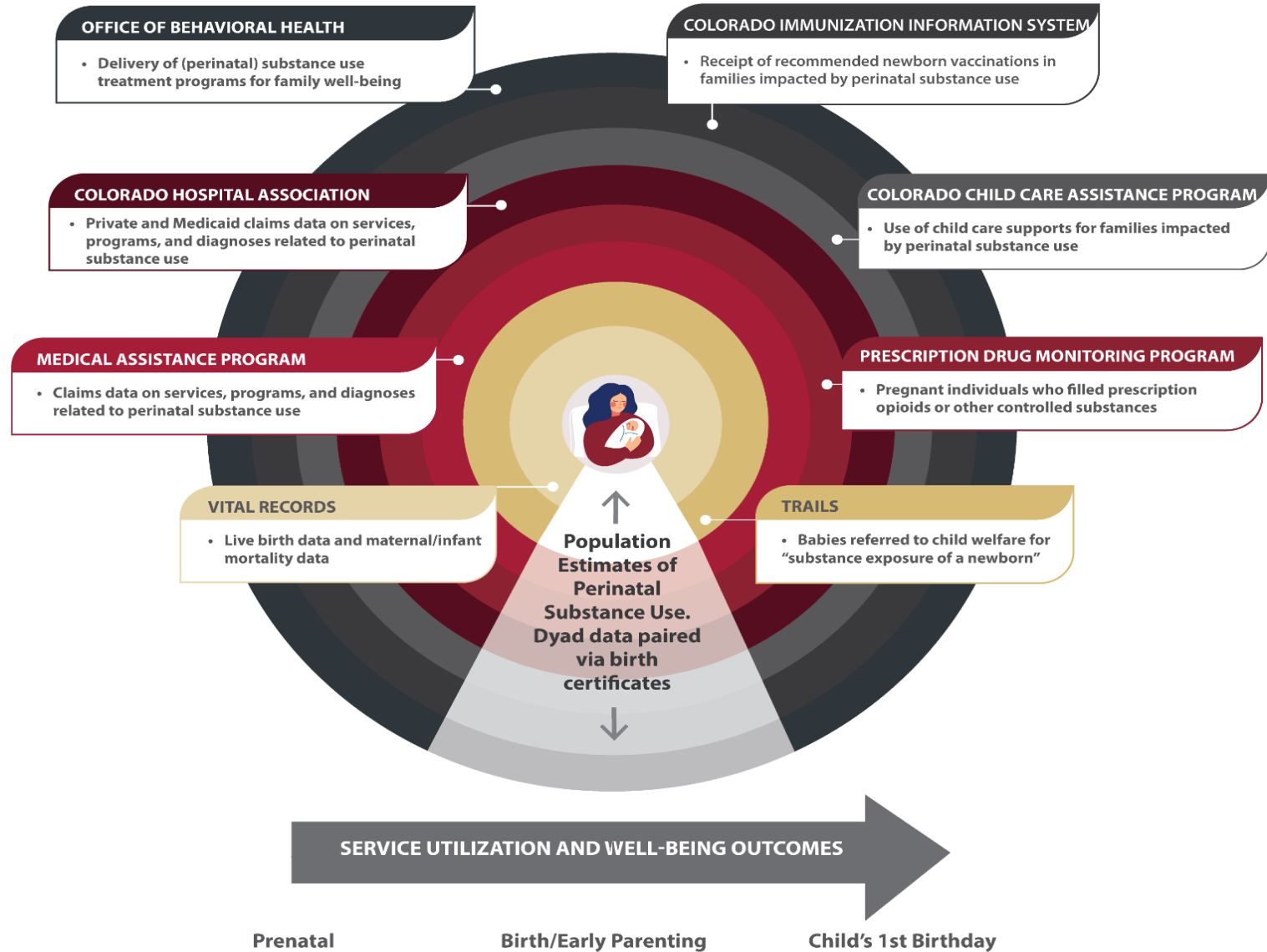
What Makes This Project Unique?

First of Its Kind in Colorado

Centers the health and well-being of **pregnant persons and infants as a unit.**

Examines outcomes and service navigation **prenatal through the first year of life**.

Breaks down data silos to understand real-life experiences that **cross systems**.

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

www.ColoradoLab.org

The Early Years Matter

Pregnancy and the first year of life set the stage for the life course

- Separating an infant from their family can disrupt early bonding, heighten behavioral health disorders, and decrease opportunities for family thriving.

- Drug overdose and suicide are the leading causes of maternal death.

- Early supports for infants provide the best possible chance of healthy child development, including school readiness.

- Early supports for caregivers provide the best possible chance of recovery and preventing future substance use.

- State government can save money by reducing ongoing systems involvement of infants and caregivers through upstream investments.

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Using Data to Drive Outcomes and Fiscal Responsibility

- Resourced by the CDHS Division of Child Welfare

- Four-year pilot to develop a comprehensive Plan of Safe Care (POSC) Framework for Colorado

- Goals include:
  - Align, coordinate, and accelerate approaches to POSC and services
  - Guide and maximize cross-system investments
  - Support state agencies in meeting state/federal requirements
  - Cultivate a culture of collaborative responsibility

What is a Plan of Safe Care?

A process intended to ensure the safety and well-being of an infant and caregiver affected by prenatal substance use, including connection to needed resources to stabilize the dyad together when possible.

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Accelerating Progress

Ask 1: Annual Appropriation

- Initial funding for this project focused on capacity-building and infrastructure.

- To maximize investments to date, the project needs a sustainable funding package **of $250,000 annual appropriation**.

Dedicated resourcing will allow this project to:

- Get actionable insights out the door faster to drive change

- Track progress of state investments over time

- Leverage federal and philanthropic funding for services

- Be responsive to decision-maker needs and changing requirements

- Integrate family voice with system measures

- Build capacity to establish return on investment of upstream resourcing

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
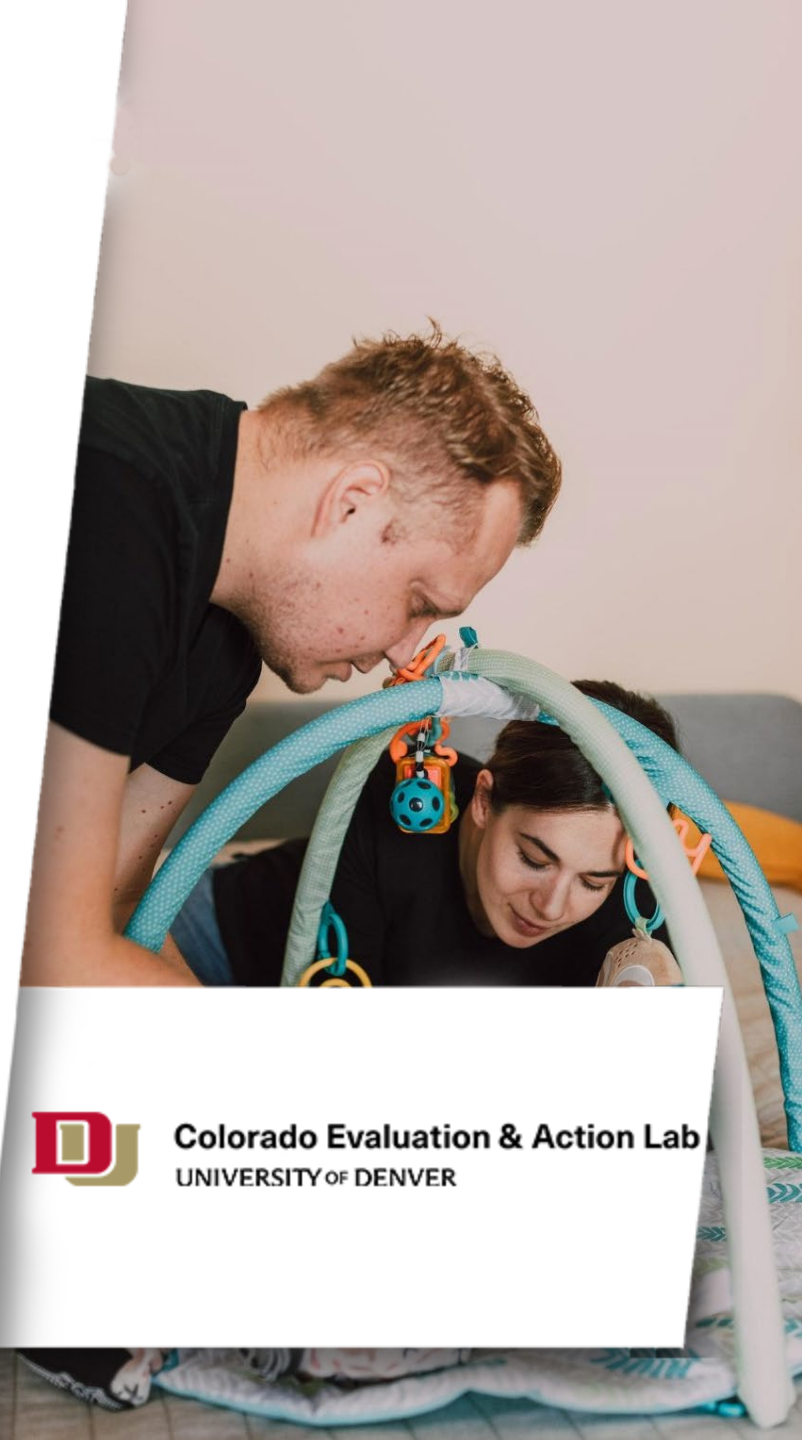UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
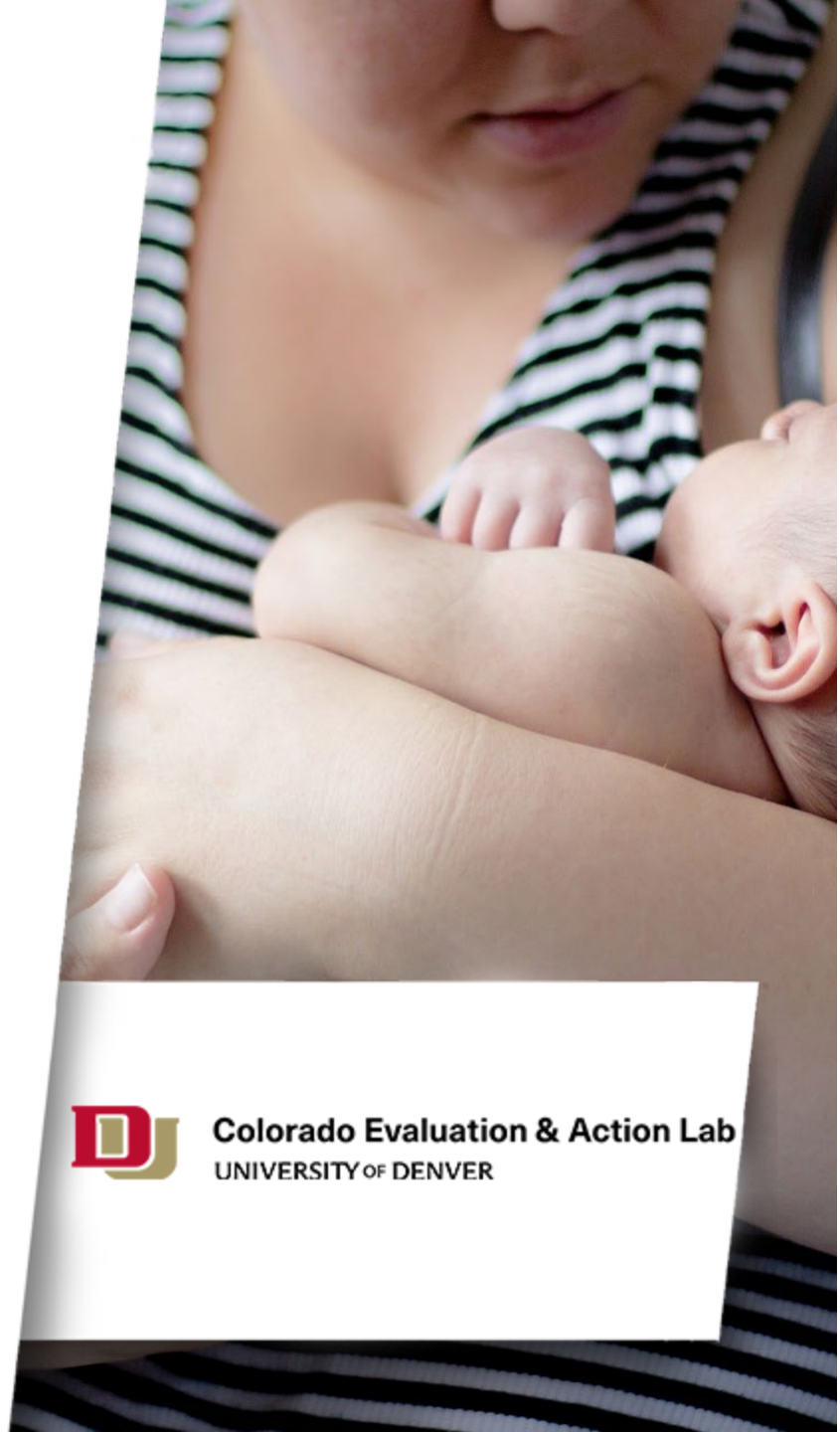
Ask 2: Enabling Language

- SB21-137 (Behavioral Health Recovery Act) includes the authorizing language necessary to link data across systems.

- Opportunity to strengthen this legislation and advance project impact through key enabling language revisions.

Enabling language revisions include:

- Add language on "compared to the general population" for each outcome measure named

- Names Colorado Early Intervention program as a data source

- Names Colorado SNAP as a data source

- Names CDE school readiness information as a data source

- Names Colorado WIC as a data source

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
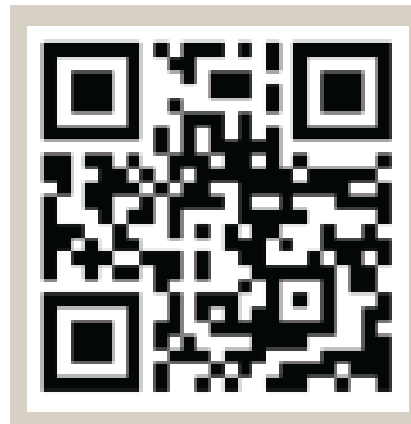UNIVERSITY of DENVER

Thank you!

Project Page

https://coloradolab.org/prenatal-substance-exposure/

Courtney Everson, PhD

Courtney@ColoradoLab.org

Elysia Clemens, PhD, LPC

Elysia@ColoradoLab.org

Project Page with Resources

Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER