

Breaking Stigma in Perinatal Substance Use Care: A Novel Approach to Systemwide Change in Colorado



The Problem

- **Accidental overdose** is the second-leading cause of maternal death in Colorado and is 100% **preventable**.
- Healthcare provider **stigma** prevents birthing people with substance use disorder (SUD) from accessing care, and **worsens quality of care** when accessed.
- Few existing trainings address **provider bias** or include voices of people with **lived experience**.

The Solution

- From 2023–2025, CPCQC developed and delivered a brief, scalable training across Colorado in partnership with individuals with lived experience of SUD from **HardBeauty** and the **Perinatal Peer Support Doula Program** at University of Colorado College of Nursing.
- Curriculum incorporates **evidence-based** education, actionable steps, and – most critically – **humanizing narratives** from individuals in recovery.

Who We Reached



1,454

trainees across all settings (2023–2025)



29

hospitals



1

birth center

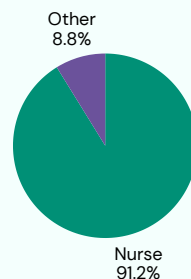


3

community-based organizations

91%

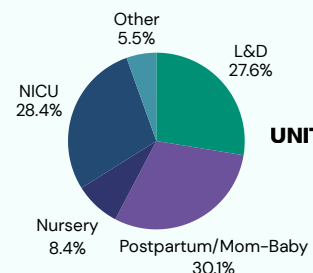
Nurses. Other trainees include MDs, midwives, NPs, PAs, educators, and social workers



TRAINEE TYPE

57.7%

from L&D or Postpartum units, with another 36.8% from NICU or Nursery.



UNIT TYPE

Results

Findings, published in the Journal of Drug and Alcohol Dependence,* show **statistically significant improvements** as a result of the training:

Knowledge	of perinatal substance use
Empathy	for patients experiencing perinatal SUD
Trauma-Informed Perspectives	understanding of systemic contributors to perinatal SUD
Comfort	in treating and engaging with patients with SUD
Confidence	in treating patients with SUD and addressing stigma within clinical environment
Evidence-based care	for patients with SUD

What Providers Are Saying

“

“Changed how I will approach patients in the future.”

”

“

eye-opening

“

practice-changing

”

“

More emphasis on empathy. Helps see a story behind a patient and understand their perspective.

“

humbling

”

“

They are humans and deserve love and understanding just like anyone else.

”

What's Next

CPCQC's Turning the Tide initiative will continue this training in 2026. To be notified, subscribe to our [newsletter](#) or visit our [events page](#) at cpcqc.org.

Thank You to Our Partners and Funders



Peer-reviewed article available at the link or QR code:
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2025.112913>

