

Patient Education & Empowerment

Overview:

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Thoughts about labor and delivery, for most pregnant individuals, are riddled with questions and anxiety about the unknown. For the pregnant individual with SUD, there is an additional layer of stress, emotions, and anxiety related to childbirth and parenthood associated with the path to wellness and recovery. After having built relationships and trust with the prenatal care team, the thought of transitioning care to a new team of providers in the L&D unit can cause additional stress for the birthing parent with OUD. They may or may not have already met or had an opportunity to build trust and relationships with this staff and may question their motives, feel judged, and begin to worry that their newborn will be taken from them or that their pain will not be managed due to her SUD status.

Providing education about expected health care services and processes is associated with social and psychological benefits including reduced fears and anxiety, and provides patients with an opportunity to ask questions, thus increasing a patient's overall knowledge related to the anticipated experience. Providing education on what to expect in the hospital during a prenatal care appointment can reinforce previously received childbirth education and/or facilitate education for those who were unable or chose not to attend.

The "what to expect in the hospital" conversation during a prenatal care appointment is an opportunity to introduce the new L&D team and to discuss goals and options for pain management and institutional screening and drug testing.

Why We Recommend this Best Practice

Patient Education & Empowerment: Education and social support are the best ways to facilitate continued engagement with the Plan of Safe Care, recovery & wellness, positive progression through the continuum of care, and optimal patient experience.

Strategies for Implementation

Patient Education:

Step 1: Include a "what to expect in the hospital" in the prenatal checklist.

Consider creating a folder with education resources to give to someone who is pregnant or has recently given birth and has a substance use disorder. This folder could contain the following:

- [Eat, Sleep, Console Patient-Centered Video - Spokane Regional Health District](#)
- [Pregnancy and Substance Use: A Harm Reduction Toolkit](#)
- [Polysubstance Use Educational Flyer](#)
- [Harm Reduction Strategies for Parents](#)
- [Free Resources: Patient Education Tools](#)

Step 2: Train staff on the "what to expect in the hospital" discussion and patient resource folder