

## **Practice Innovation Program brings together over 90 clinicians, clinical and non-clinical support specialists, and community partners in the first Colorado Perinatal SUD Integration Conference**

May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

Avon, Colorado – In early May, the Practice Innovation Program hosted its first ever conference on integrating Perinatal and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) care in Avon, CO. The conference, which was funded by the Behavioral Health Administration, focused on work being done at over 25 family medicine/OB clinics and SUD treatment sites in Colorado through the Integrated Care for Women and Babies (ICWB) and the Improve Perinatal Access, Coordination, and Treatment for Behavioral Health (IMPACT BH) projects. Over 90 providers, clinical staff, subject matter experts, patient advocates, and stakeholders convened to share best practices in supporting mothers and children in the perinatal period while addressing impacts and challenges of substance use. Dr. Kyle Knierim, leader of the ICWB project, expressed his gratitude for all in attendance who have delivered care and services to over 1000 women and children across Colorado and continue to invest in this community.



To open the conference, attendees were presented with a short video of women successful in recovery from the Tough as a Mother campaign. For Jennifer Ammerman, ICWB Clinical Health Information Technology Advisor (CHITA) from Colorado Community Managed Care Network, seeing these stories from both mothers in recovery and their support teams “keeps her motivated to continue to do the work needed to support these women and their families through a critical process in life.”

Over the two days, a diverse group of 21 speakers and panelists across Colorado (and Utah!) presented sessions ranging from clinical to non-clinical aspects of perinatal/SUD care, including community resources and state/local programs and policies. Having a diverse cast of presenters and presentations was particularly important for Kathy Cebuhar, Practice Facilitator for the ICWB project, who stressed the importance of “providing engagement opportunities for all aspects of the care team and their partners.” In addition, providers and other support staff were able to redeem 7.5 hours of continuing medical education credits for attending the conference.



*Dr. Ryan Jackman (St. Mary’s Hospital, Grand Junction, CO) presenting on Neonatal Onset Withdrawal Syndrome with Dr. Christine Gold (University of Colorado, Aurora, CO).*

A key theme of the conference was to bring all stakeholders to the table to address the complicated nature of providing integrated perinatal and SUD care to mothers and their families. Allyson Gottsman, Relationship Manager for the Practice Innovation Program always stresses the “Colorado Way” of approaching these challenges. “The fostering of relationships and collaborations between healthcare providers, community partners and state/local policy leaders are a strength we have in Colorado.” Through this strength, conveners such as the Practice Innovation Program can provide these engaging opportunities to share and learn from each other to shape the way we support and improve the health of communities across Colorado.



*Melynda Childers (Sunrise Community Health Center, Greeley, CO) asks a question to our policy and payers panelists covering current and upcoming opportunities in programs and payment of services to support mothers and babies.*



The conference would have not been possible without the support of the Behavioral Health Administration and community partners that were invited to share their stories and work. Racquel Garcia and her team from Hard Beauty spoke to conference attendees about the importance of supporting mothers in recovery including several peer group programs hosted in conjunction with Tough as a Mother. For the Hard Beauty team, the conference presented the chance to “connect with fellow peer movers and industry experts from various backgrounds and engage in meaningful discussion.”



Lastly, we want to show a BIG thanks to the 2023 Colorado Perinatal SUD Integration Conference Planning Team from the Practice Innovation Program for making this opportunity possible: (from left to right) Danika Buss, Jennifer Halfacre, Lauren Quintana, Bertha Gonzalez, and Kathy Cebuhar. Overall, attendees were greatly appreciative of the opportunity to connect and learn from each other, and the planning team and our partners look forward to next year's conference!