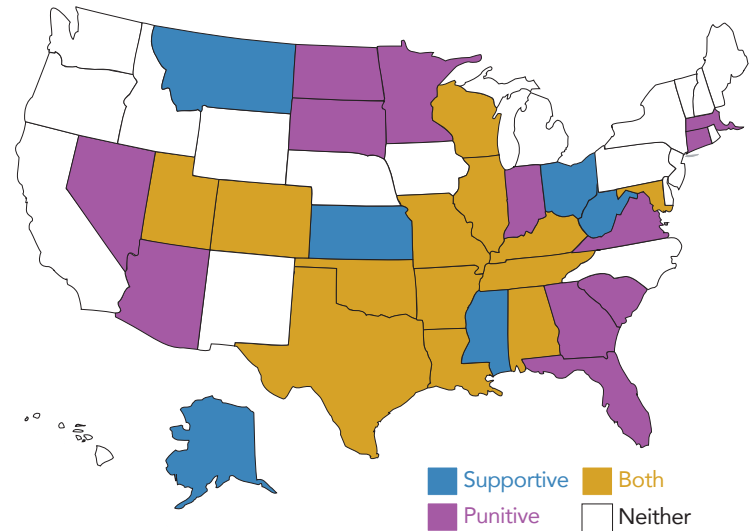


What You Need to Know About Prenatal Substance Use Laws

Prenatal substance use laws are aimed at reducing the use of illicit substances during pregnancy.

Supportive laws increase access to substance use treatment during pregnancy, either through additional funding or priority access for pregnant people. **Punitive laws** criminalize prenatal substance use or define it as child maltreatment.



Supportive laws are associated with better outcomes for pregnant people, while **punitive laws** are associated with worse outcomes:

- **more/less** receipt of prenatal care;
- **more/less** use of substance use disorder treatment services*; and
- **fewer/more** opioid overdoses.*

Supportive laws are associated with better outcomes for newborns:

- Fewer preterm births (born before 37 weeks gestation);
- Fewer low birth weight births (under 5.5lbs).

Punitive laws are associated with worse outcomes for newborns:

- More neonatal drug withdrawal syndrome;
- More reports of infant maltreatment.

What can I do?

Providers can support pregnant people by offering counseling, as well as connections to treatment and links to supportive resources. **Child protective services workers** should use supportive, evidence-based interventions aimed at maintaining family units when possible. **Everyone** can contact their state legislators to encourage laws that will improve the health and wellbeing of pregnant people and infants.

Learn more:

e4action.org/HAffairs

e4action.org/HEcon

e4action.org/JSAT

For information on how laws were classified as supportive or punitive, please review the Health Affairs paper linked above. This research was supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [Evidence for Action Program](#). The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Foundation. * These findings are from a sample of commercially insured pregnant people with opioid use disorder and may not apply to other populations.