

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

November 6, 2013

Name
CEO Director
Hospital Name
Hospital Address
City, State Zip

Dear Name:

Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), also known as neonatal withdrawal or substance exposed newborns (SEN), is a condition experienced by newborns exposed to certain prescription and/or illicit drugs taken by a mother during pregnancy. The abrupt cessation of gestational exposure to these substances, which occurs at birth, can lead to a constellation of physiological and neurobehavioral symptoms in infants. There has been a continuing rise in infants born with NAS in Florida. According to a recent clinical report published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, from 1995–2009, Florida had more than a ten-fold increase in hospital discharges of newborns diagnosed with NAS, corresponding to an increase from 0.4 to 4.4 discharges per 1,000 live births.

To address this growing public health problem, the 2012 Florida Legislature created the *Statewide Task Force on Prescription Drug Abuse and Newborns* to research the impact of prescription drug use and NAS, evaluate effective strategies for treatment and prevention, and provide policy recommendation to the Legislature. As a member of the Task Force, the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) was charged with addressing the policy recommendation of adding NAS to the list of Reportable Diseases/Conditions in Florida as specified in Florida Administrative Code Rule 64D-3.

To support this effort, hospital inpatient discharge records need to be examined as a valid means of NAS passive surveillance. We need to learn about the accuracy and validity of NAS case ascertainment to better understand the strengths and limitations of using this dataset for routine surveillance purposes.

The FDOH is partnering with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to initiate an investigation. The investigation will consist of hospital record reviews of NAS cases to assess the validity of ICD-9-CM codes 779.5 and 760.72 in the hospital inpatient discharge dataset and to examine reasons for differences between hospital inpatient discharge data and hospital record values. The hospital records needed for review are medical charts for all NAS infants and their mothers as well as the NICU logs and inpatient pharmacy records (to identify potential NAS cases not captured in the hospital inpatient discharge data). Your hospital is one of several hospitals in Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties being asked to participate. The investigation will not provide results by individual hospitals, doctors or patients.

Florida Department of Health**Office of the State Surgeon General**

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Per section 381.0031, Florida Statutes, the Florida Department of Health is authorized to obtain and inspect medical records for diseases and conditions of public health significance. In addition, the Department is authorized to conduct epidemiology studies of such situations and hospitals are authorized to release this information to the Department pursuant to Section 395.3025(5), Florida Statutes.

The statute provides the authority for the department to access the data and protection for the hospital by ensuring that the data will be used for public health purposes.

Abstractors will need access to the NICU logs, inpatient pharmacy records, social workers' NAS/SEN data, and medical records for NAS infants and their mothers who gave birth at your hospital from January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2011. They will provide your staff with a line listing of selected records. We anticipate the abstractors will take between 5 to 10 days to abstract these records. Copies of this letter have been sent to the CEOs, HIM Directors, Quality Specialist NICU Directors, Nursing Directors, Directors of Social Services, and Pharmacy Directors at your facility. Our abstractors will contact your hospital to obtain approval to review NICU logs and schedule an appropriate time for the record abstraction. Please contact Dr. Carina Blackmore at 850-245-4732 or Dr. Ghasi Phillips at 850-245-4444, ext. 3957 if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important public health project.

Sincerely,

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
Surgeon General & Secretary

JHA/GP/vt

cc: Name, HIM Director
Name, Nursing Director
Name, NICU Director
Name, Pharmacy Director
Name, Social Worker Director or Director of Health Management Services