

HJR 32: PRENATAL DRUG USE NEXT STEPS FOR THE STUDY

BACKGROUND

The Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee has completed the planned activities for its House Joint Resolution 32 study of prenatal drug use. It now must determine whether to pursue legislation or take other action related to the study.

STUDY ACTIVITIES TO DATE

The committee scheduled time in its work plan to:

- hear about the prevalence of prenatal drug use and neonatal abstinence syndrome, a condition caused by opioid withdrawal in infants; and
- review efforts being undertaken in Montana and other states to decrease opioid use by pregnant women and mitigate the effects of opioid withdrawal on infants.

At the committee's November meeting, three panelists spoke about the Meadowlark Initiative, an ongoing effort by the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the nonprofit Montana Healthcare Foundation to support projects that identify and treat substance use and mental health disorders among pregnant women and improv outcomes for their babies.

The committee also visited St. Vincent Healthcare to hear from hospital representatives about the efforts being undertaken there as part of the DPHHS-Healthcare Foundation initiative.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE STUDY

Based on the information received to date, the Committee needs to make the following decisions to complete its work on the study.

1. Does the committee need more research or information on the study topics?
 - a. If so, what information is needed?
2. Does the committee want to pursue legislation related to the study?
 - a. If so, what topics should the legislation address?
3. Does the committee want to make any findings or recommendations related to the study?

Potential findings and recommendations are provided on the back of this document.

PROPOSED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the information received to date, the committee may want to include some or all of the following findings and recommendations in a final report on the HJR 32 study.

Members also may want to add other findings or recommendations to the document.

POTENTIAL FINDINGS

After learning of the work being done by DPHHS and the Montana Healthcare Foundation through the Meadowlark Initiative, the committee could find that:

- the foundation has researched efforts being undertaken in other states to reduce the use of opioids and other substances during pregnancy;
- the foundation has determined that the most promising approach involves a team-based, integrated model that uses a care coordinator to help connect pregnant women with the treatment and other resources they need to reduce their substance use and deliver healthy babies;
- the Meadowlark Initiative supported by DPHHS and the foundation will support the use of that approach in every Montana community that has a hospital that delivers babies;
- the data collected by the multiyear Meadowlark Initiative will yield valuable information on the results of the integrated care model; and
- after collection of data from the Meadowlark Initiative, policymakers will be better able to determine whether the model should be sustained and expanded in the future.

POTENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on information presented during the interim, the committee could recommend that:

- DPHHS and the Montana Healthcare Foundation bring the results of the initiative to the Legislature at the completion of the five-year period so lawmakers can determine at that time whether legislative action could be taken to reduce prenatal drug use and improve birth outcomes.