

# Melrose Weekly News

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## ***DA using data to address substance use among young women***

WOBURN – Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan is using data to prioritize resources and create new solutions to combat the opioid epidemic. As part of this approach, Ryan is calling attention to the associated risks of misusing opioids for women of childbearing age.

Ryan has been working with Hallmark Health, Melrose-Wakefield Hospital, Jewish Family and Children Services, MotherWoman and members of the Substance Use Disorders and Substance-Exposed Newborns Collaborative to identify goals and strategies for caring for mothers with substance use disorders and their substance-exposed newborns.

Recognizing that these women are in need of more specialized intervention, treatment and education, the collaborative, created in January 2015, has been meeting regularly to establish best practices for early intervention and comprehensive treatment to better serve families affected by maternal substance use and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

The need for this specialized focus is supported by recent data collected from the Massachusetts Ambulance Trip Record Information System (MATRIS) that shows that from 2014 through June of this year licensed Emergency Medical Services responders in Middlesex County have responded to 794 opioid-related calls for women age 18-35, representing the female population of the county most likely to either have young children or who may become pregnant in the near future.

"This data is particularly concerning when considering Middlesex County's growing number of patients with maternal substance use disorders and/or substance-exposed newborns," said Ryan. "The goal of this partnership is to illuminate service gaps where

additional support is needed and ultimately, if these women do become pregnant, to provide mothers and their babies with a seamless continuum of care through a collaborative community approach."

Last week, Ryan participated in a focus group hosted by MotherWoman with members of the Collaborative to help form a Strategic Action Plan. Moving forward, MotherWoman will work with the collaborative to address related issues such as perinatal depression. This action plan will serve as an important tool for members of the Collaborative to demonstrate areas where other key stakeholders can and should get involved and to show successes of existing approaches.

Building off this discussion and to broaden the reach of the collaborative, this November, Ryan will dedicate her monthly meeting of the Eastern Middlesex Opioid Task Force to educating key stakeholders on the impacts of substance use on infants and their families.

Ryan will also be raising awareness about the heightened risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUIDS) associated with substance use during and after pregnancy, as well as for children who are born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. With risk factors, like more blankets in the crib during colder months, the SUIDS Public Safety Campaign will help inform the public of safe sleep recommendations. The Middlesex District Attorney's office is responsible for investigating all child deaths, including those attributed to SUIDS. Ryan is committed to talking to caregivers about the importance of safe sleep practices as part of her Safe Babies Safe Kids Task Force.

The Substance Use Disorders and Substance-Exposed Newborns Collaborative is a network of professionals who offer critical support services to mothers, while working to address the related health and safety needs of their newborns. The group is comprised of the Middlesex District Attorney's office, healthcare providers, mental health clinicians, social service professionals and child welfare advocates. Through outreach, education, training and technical assistance, the collaborative promotes trauma-informed interventions and dydactic-focused approaches across all levels of the care continuum.