

Yale New Haven Children's Hospital Experience Developing and Instituting an Objective Protocol for Newborn Toxicology Testing: Collaboration for Health Equity

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Objectives

- Reconsider the clinical utility of newborn toxicology testing
- Describe data on the clinical utility of extended-time frame testing (meconium and umbilical cord) vs short term testing (urine)
- Present guideline for newborn toxicology testing in the setting of prenatal substance exposure
- Present data demonstrating practice patterns before and after guideline implementation




Biden-Harris Administration Plan

The Administration's vision is that all pregnant women with SUD will be identified early in pregnancy and prioritized to receive evidence-based treatment, services, and other recovery and social supports. Health care delivery will be well coordinated to optimize outcomes for families and prevent foster care placement where possible. Clear coordination of health care and early childhood systems, including public health, early learning, courts, child welfare systems, and family economic supports will optimize the outcomes for infants and pregnant women with SUD.

5. Improving coordination of public health, criminal justice systems, treatment and early childhood systems can optimize outcomes and reduce disparities.

3. Everyone has the right to effective treatment, and denying such care on the basis of sex or disability is a violation of civil rights.²³
4. Pregnant women using substances or having SUD, should be encouraged to access support and care systems, and barriers to access should be addressed, mitigated, and eliminated where possible.
5. Improving coordination of public health, criminal justice systems, treatment and early childhood systems can optimize outcomes and reduce disparities.

Substance Use Disorder in Pregnancy:
Improving Outcomes for Families
(The White House
Executive Office of the President
Office of National Drug Control Policy)
Published 10/2022



What are the effects of use during pregnancy?

Substance A

- Possible increased risk of stillbirth
- Possible increased risk of preterm birth (mixed data)
- Possible increased risk of fetal growth restriction (mixed data)
- Possible adverse effects on neurodevelopment
- No established association with specific congenital anomalies

Substance B

- Preterm delivery
- Poor intrauterine growth
- Abnormal facies and other structural problems (heart/limb/brain)
- Withdrawal
- Neuromuscular problems e.g. seizures, gross motor problems
- Behavioral, attention & cognitive problems leading to school difficulty
- Autism
- Increased risk of psychiatric disorders
- Socio-economic vulnerability
- Premature death

Substance C

- Miscarriage, stillbirth or preterm delivery
- Poor intrauterine growth
- SIDS or other infant death
- Birth defects including cleft lip/palate, clubfoot, gastroschisis, heart defects
- ADHD

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [last updated 2017 Sep 29]

What are the effects of post-natal parental use?

Substance A

- More likely that children will use cannabis and alcohol as adults.
- Risks associated with parental impaired judgement.

Substance B

- Highly variable effects, at least partially depending on how parents communicate about use.
- If use disorder is a contributor, potential for significant negative psychological effects.
- Risks associated with parental impaired judgement.

Substance C

- Ear infections
- Lung infections
- Asthma and chronic lung disease
- Allergies
- SIDS

Which is most concerning?

CANNABIS

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: WEAK

Prenatal effects:

- Weak evidence for possible fetal growth restriction, possible effects on neurodevelopment
- Many unanswered research questions, recommendations tentative

Postnatal effects

- Possible higher risk of use of cannabis and alcohol as adults
- Risks related to parental impaired judgement

ALCOHOL

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: STRONG

Prenatal effects

- Strong evidence for adverse pregnancy outcomes, fetal growth restriction, structural problems, neuromuscular problems, potentially life-long psychiatric and neurocognitive effects up to and including premature death
- Evidence base and recommendations well established

Postnatal effects

- Highly variable post-natal effects
- Potentially significant psychological impacts if alcohol use disorder involved
- Risks related to parental impaired judgement

CIGARETTE SMOKING

STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: STRONG

Prenatal effects

- Strong evidence for adverse pregnancy outcomes, fetal growth restriction, structural problems, increased risk for SIDS, potentially life-long neurocognitive effects
- Evidence base and recommendations well established

Postnatal effects

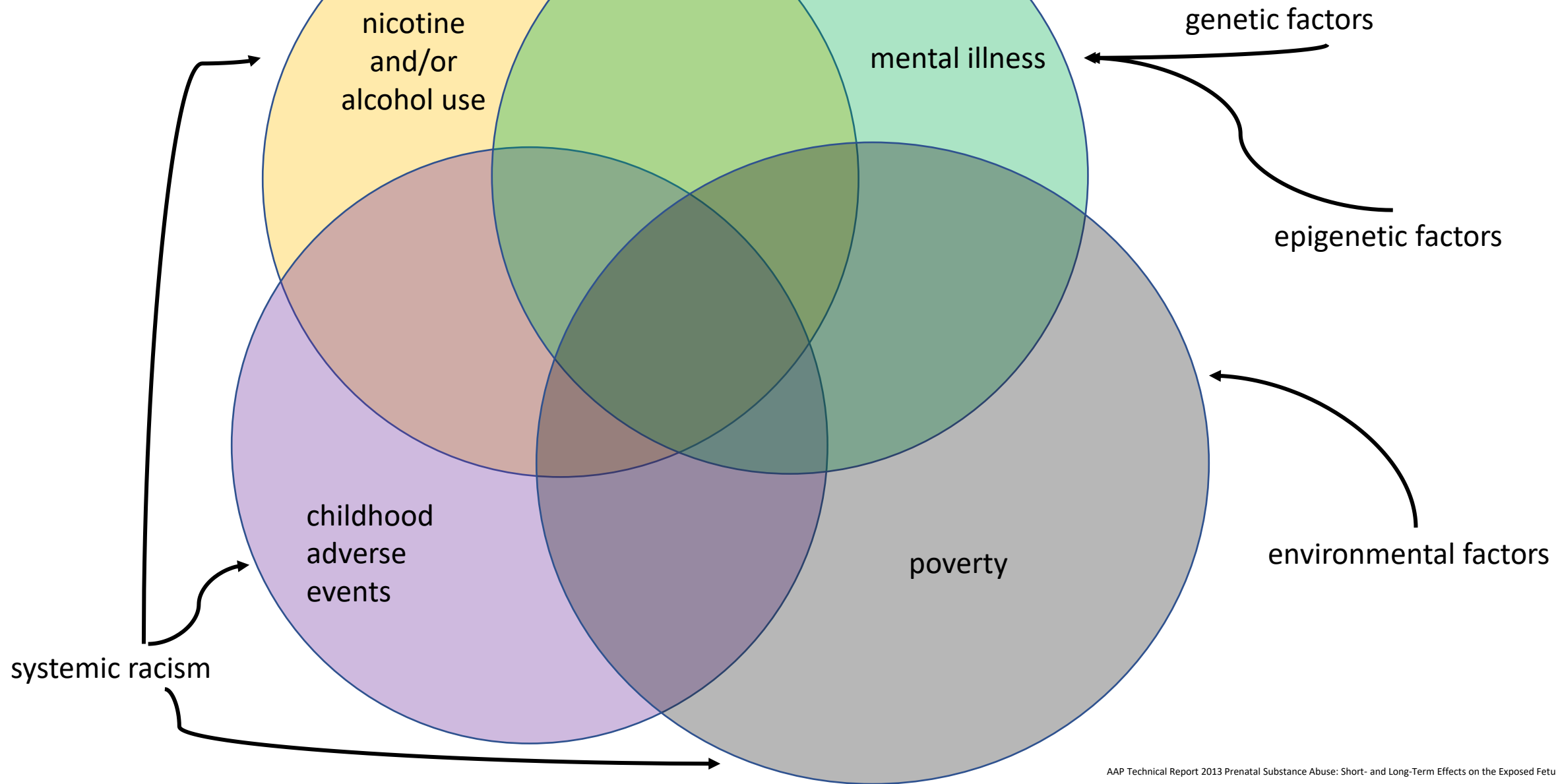
- Increased risk of SIDS
- Increased risk of ear infections, lung infections, asthma and chronic lung disease, allergies

- If we did toxicology testing with the intent of finding those things that were most concerning for the health of the pregnant patient, the viability of the pregnancy, and the health of the infant that may be born of the pregnancy, we would be testing for nicotine and alcohol metabolites.

Which is most concerning?

CANNABIS STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: WEAK	ALCOHOL STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: STRONG	CIGARETTE SMOKING STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: STRONG	POVERTY STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE: STRONG
<p>Prenatal effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weak evidence for possible fetal growth restriction, possible effects on neurodevelopment• Many unanswered research questions, recommendations tentative <p>Postnatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possible higher risk of use of cannabis and alcohol as adults• Risks related to parental impaired judgement	<p>Prenatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong evidence for adverse pregnancy outcomes, fetal growth restriction, structural problems, neuromuscular problems, potentially life-long psychiatric and neurocognitive effects up to and including premature death• Evidence base and recommendations well established <p>Postnatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly variable post-natal effects• Potentially significant psychological impacts if alcohol use disorder involved• Risks related to parental impaired judgement	<p>Prenatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong evidence for adverse pregnancy outcomes, fetal growth restriction, structural problems, increased risk for SIDS, potentially life-long neurocognitive effects• Evidence base and recommendations well established <p>Postnatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased risk of SIDS• Increased risk of ear infections, lung infections, asthma and chronic lung disease, allergies	<p>Prenatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong evidence for adverse pregnancy outcomes, fetal growth restriction, potentially life-long neurocognitive effects up to and including premature death <p>Postnatal effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potentially significant psychological impacts• Increased risks of accidents including accidental death• Increased risk of illness including asthma and lung infections• Increased risk of neurocognitive effects including unfulfilled potential educational and vocational achievement

What are we most concerned about?



What are the reasons to test?

- Does it provide new information (or is it redundant)?
 - Will it change medical management?
 - Will it change disposition?
 - Will it change anticipatory guidance?
 - Will it change follow up or specialist consultation?
 - Will it change the need for SW or DCF consultation?
- Will it affect DCF substantiation of claim of harm?
- Is it required by law?

Is infant testing required to fulfill CAPTA requirements?

- There is no requirement for infant toxicology testing in the CAPTA legislation.
- No state requires universal toxicology testing of all newborns.
 - 2 states require testing if “drug-related complications” noted after delivery (Minnesota & North Dakota)
 - 4 states require testing if prenatal substance exposure is suspected or identified (Minnesota, North Dakota, Iowa, Kentucky)

What are the reasons not to test?

- Are there harms of a child protective services referral?
- Will it demonstrate bias against people who use substances?
- Will it demonstrate racism and result in inequitable consequences for people of color?

What kind of test?



Specimen Collection Considerations

	Urine	Umbilical Cord	Meconium
Collection	Difficult	Easy	Moderate
Typical Turnaround Time	<4 hrs	1–2 days	12 hrs–2 days
Window of Detection	Short	Intermediate	Long
Drug Concentrations	Moderate	Low	High
Extent of Characterization	Moderate	Low	High

Evolution of newborn toxicology testing

- Urine testing
- 1989 – development of meconium testing

Drug screening of meconium in infants
of drug-dependent mothers: An
alternative to urine testing

Enrique M. Ostrea, Jr., MD, Mark J. Brady, Patricia M. Parks,
Dennis C. Asensio, MD, and Alexander Naluz, MD

From the Departments of Pediatrics, Hutzel Hospital and Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

The Journal of Pediatrics
September 1989

Evolution of newborn toxicology testing

- Urine testing
- 1989 – development of meconium testing
- 2006 – development of umbilical cord testing

Testing for fetal exposure to illicit drugs using umbilical cord tissue vs meconium

D Montgomery¹, C Plate², SC Alder³, M Jones², J Jones² and RD Christensen¹

¹Department of Women and Newborns, Intermountain Health Care and McKay Dee Hospital, Ogden, UT, USA; ²The United States Drug Testing Laboratories, Des Plaines, IL, USA and ³Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA

Journal of Perinatology (2006) 26, 11–14

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To summarize this literature

- The reasons cited for sending these tests are not clinically valid to the care of the newborn
 - Successful treatment hinges on rapid identification of substance exposure
 - Need for accurate data on substance use during pregnancy in service of the goal of increased abstinence during pregnancy

To summarize this literature

- Notable bias against those in poverty and those who use substances
- The validation of these tests occurred subsequently, but the original derivation of both meconium and umbilical cord testing did not even attempt to correlate with patient-reported substance use
- Acknowledgement throughout that fear of consequences to family was a reason for inaccuracy in patient report

Review of all umbilical cord tests sent at L&M in the last 3 years (2019-2021)

- 33 tests (average 0.9 per month)
- Reasons for ordering
 - 21% for known opioid use disorder treatment only
 - 36% for known cannabis use only
 - 15% for known non-prescribed medication or substance use
 - 18% for “clinical concern”

Review of all umbilical cord tests sent at L&M in the last 3 years

- ~55% positive result
- In 12% of cases, urine toxicology was also sent
 - Results were concordant between UCT and urine in 100% of cases
- Unexpected positive results (ie there was no known substance use but a clinical concern arose and a test resulted positive)
 - 0%
- Unexpected negative results (ie there was known substance use but the test resulted negative)
 - ~20%

Review of all umbilical cord tests sent at L&M in the last 3 years

- Test results changed clinical care or treatment plan
 - 0%
- Test results changed Family Care Plan or disposition plan (ie home with family)
 - 0%

Other sources corroborating concordance of umbilical/meconium and urine testing

- “Meconium did not appear to offer an advantage over maternal or neonatal urine for detection of cannabinoid, codeine, morphine, or methadone.”

Wingert WE, Feldman MS, Kim MH, Noble L, Hand I, Yoon JJ. A comparison of meconium, maternal urine and neonatal urine for detection of maternal drug use during pregnancy. J Forensic Sci. 1994 Jan;39(1):150-8. PMID: 8113697.

- No paper that attempts to compare these has any interview data to compare, so they are often blindly comparing apples (long-term testing) to oranges (short-term testing) and the idea of concordance does not apply

If toxicology testing is deemed relevant to the clinical care of the newborn

- Urine toxicology testing is standard of care for withdrawal in adult population and is deemed appropriate for detection of substance resulting in withdrawal

UpToDate: Opioid withdrawal in adults: Clinical manifestations, course, assessment, and diagnosis

- Urine toxicology is the only kind of testing that provides actionable information

Would universal testing provide equitable care to pregnant patients and families?

- While the testing would be distributed evenly, the downstream consequences (including who gets referred to DCF and whose families are separated, for how long, and at what cost) differ greatly

Our ultimate goals are...

- To identify substance use during pregnancy to counsel patients and enroll in treatment if indicated
 - Smoking cessation
 - Alcohol use cessation
 - Opioid use cessation including MOUD
 - Cannabis use cessation and/or risk mitigation
 - Cessation of other substances: cocaine, PCP etc
- To support parents in their responsibility of parenting
 - Treat associated mental health issues
 - Enroll in social assistance programs
- To provide the best start in life for newborns
 - Best evidence supports promoting families remaining together

Previous practice pattern for newborn toxicology

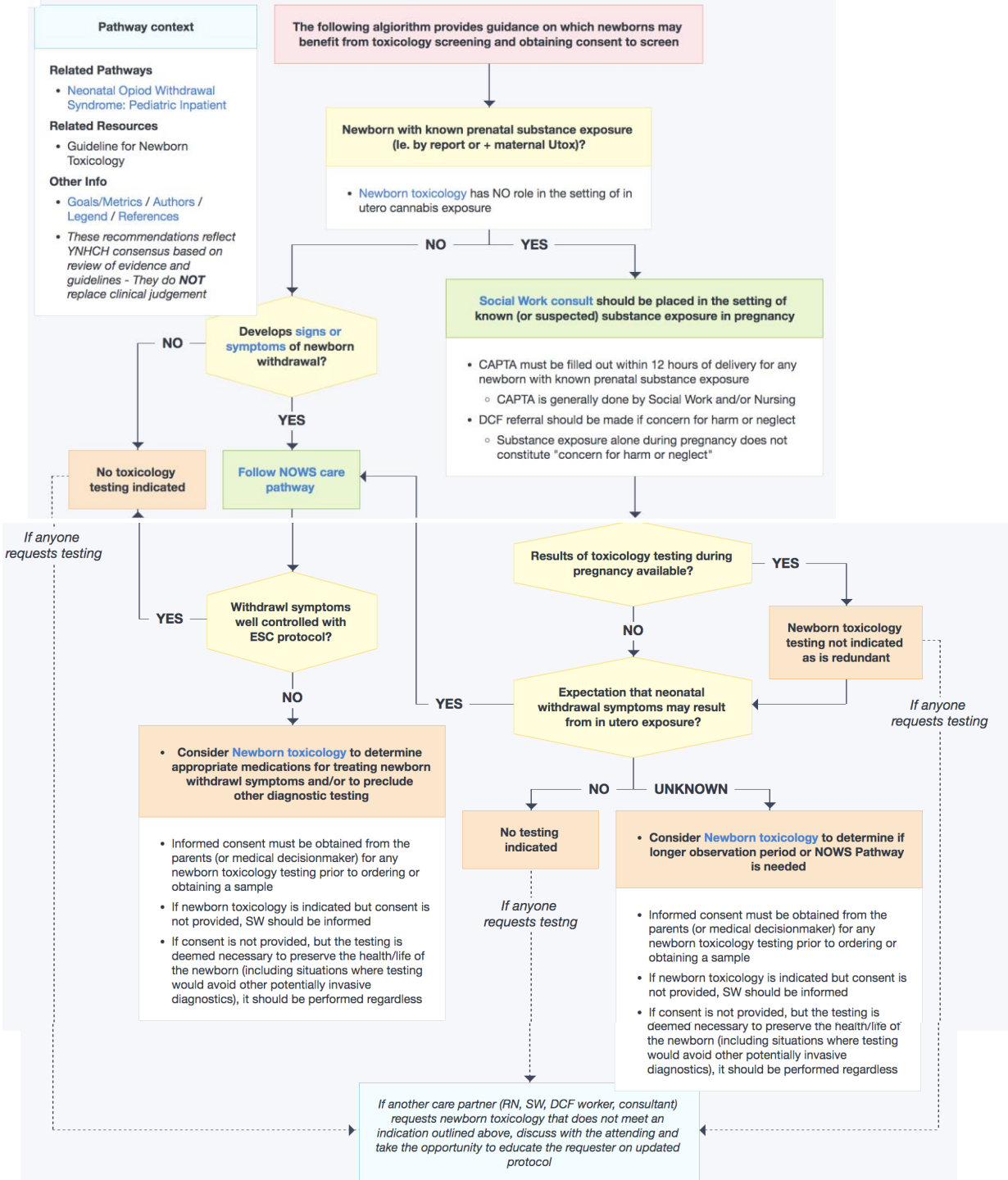
- Provider discretion, NOT UNIVERSAL TESTING
- Not testing in all cases of known prenatal substance exposure
- Not testing in all cases of known MOUD during pregnancy
- Mutual deference
 - Usually ordered when requested by SW or DCF (or expectation of this)
 - Per discussions with DCF, they thought they were ordered for medical purposes

Presler, C. (2021). Mutual Deference Between Hospitals and Courts: How Mandated Reporting from Medical Providers Harms Families. *Columbia Journal of Race and Law*, 11(3), 733–766.
<https://doi.org/10.52214/cjrl.v11i3.8750>

Collaboration

- Pediatric Hospital Medicine Section
 - Section Chief
 - Medical Director of Newborn Nursery
- Child Abuse Section
- SW
- Pediatric and OB trainees
- NICU
- OB
- DCF
- Addiction Medicine
- Psychiatry

The newborn toxicology pathway



Pathway context

Related Pathways

- Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome: Pediatric Inpatient

Related Resources

- Guideline for Newborn Toxicology

Other Info

- [Goals/Metrics](#) / [Authors](#) / [Legend](#) / [References](#)
- *These recommendations reflect YNHCH consensus based on review of evidence and guidelines - They do **NOT** replace clinical judgement*

The following algorithm provides guidance on which newborns may benefit from toxicology screening and obtaining consent to screen

Newborn with known prenatal substance exposure (ie. by report or + maternal Utox)?

- [Newborn toxicology](#) has NO role in the setting of in utero cannabis exposure

NO

YES

Develops [signs or symptoms](#) of newborn withdrawal?

NO

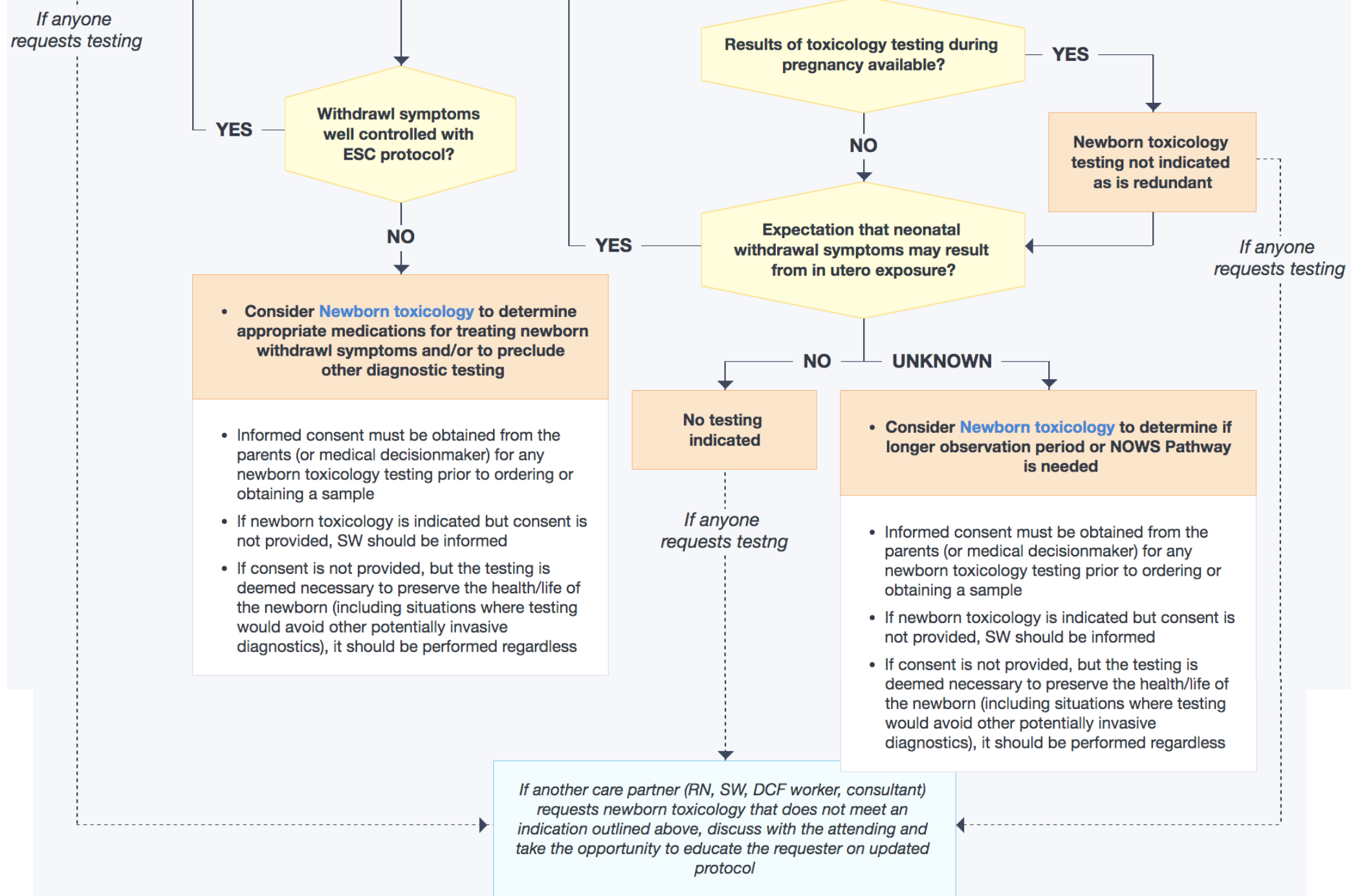
YES

No toxicology testing indicated

Follow [NOWS](#) care pathway

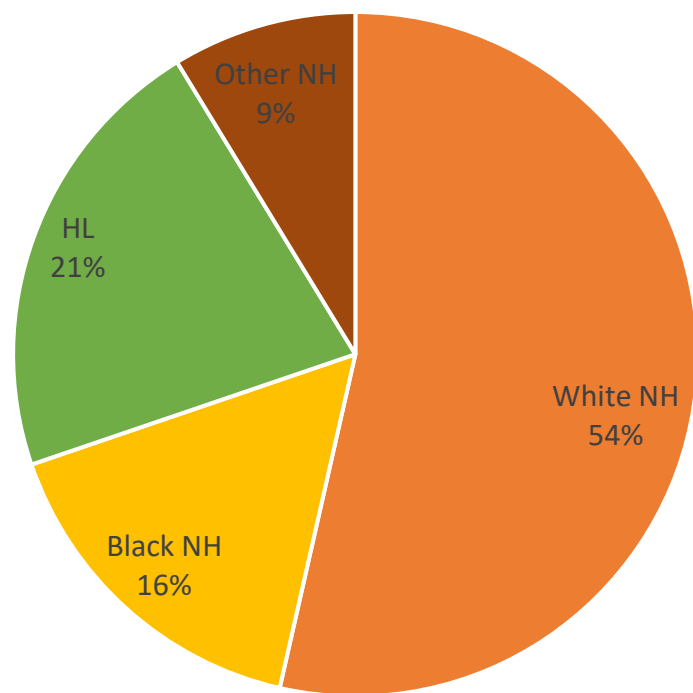
[Social Work consult](#) should be placed in the setting of known (or suspected) substance exposure in pregnancy

- CAPTA must be filled out within 12 hours of delivery for any newborn with known prenatal substance exposure
 - CAPTA is generally done by Social Work and/or Nursing
- DCF referral should be made if concern for harm or neglect
 - Substance exposure alone during pregnancy does not constitute "concern for harm or neglect"

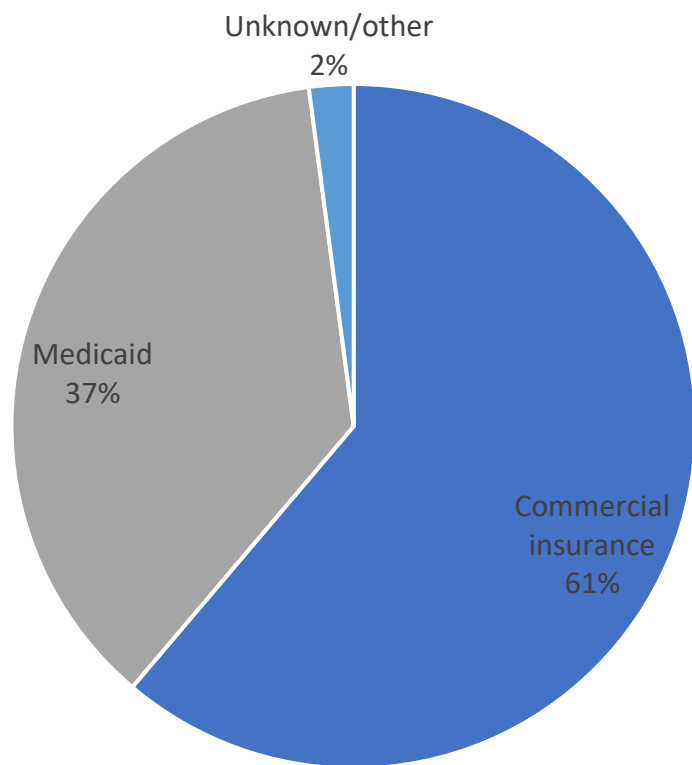


The before times (1/1/2019-12/31/2020)

Newborns by Race

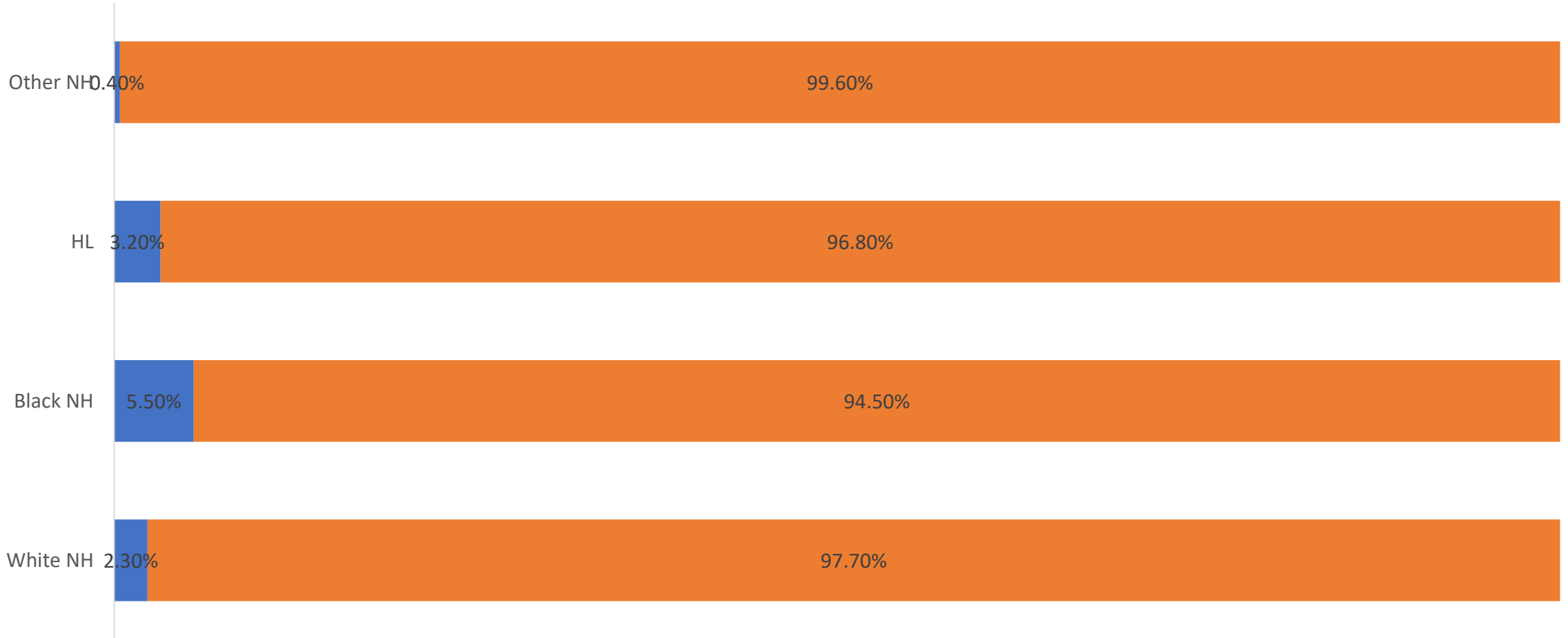


Newborns by insurance provider

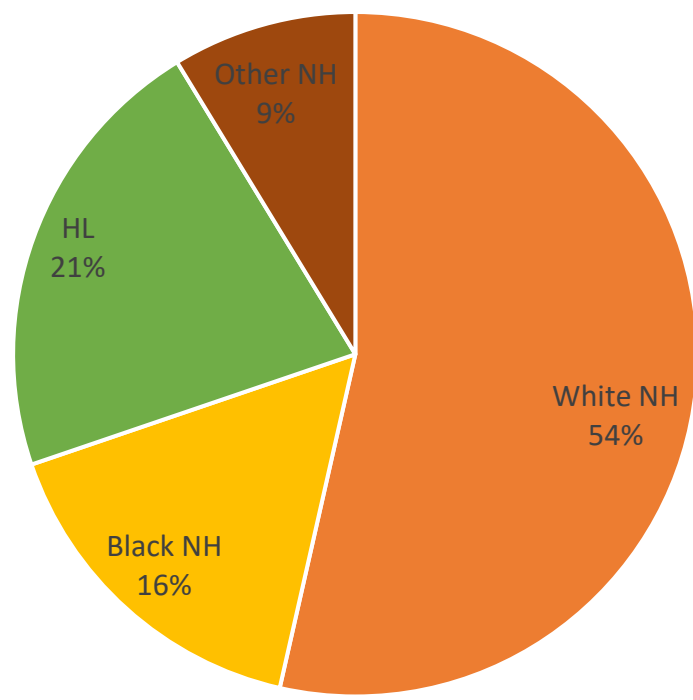


Toxicology Tests Obtained

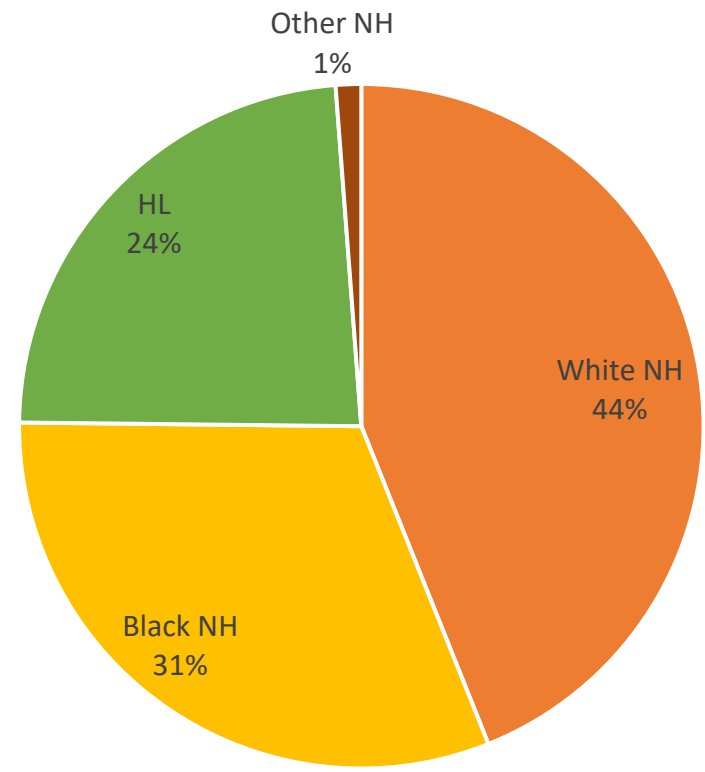
■ Tox collected ■ Tox not collected



Newborns by Race

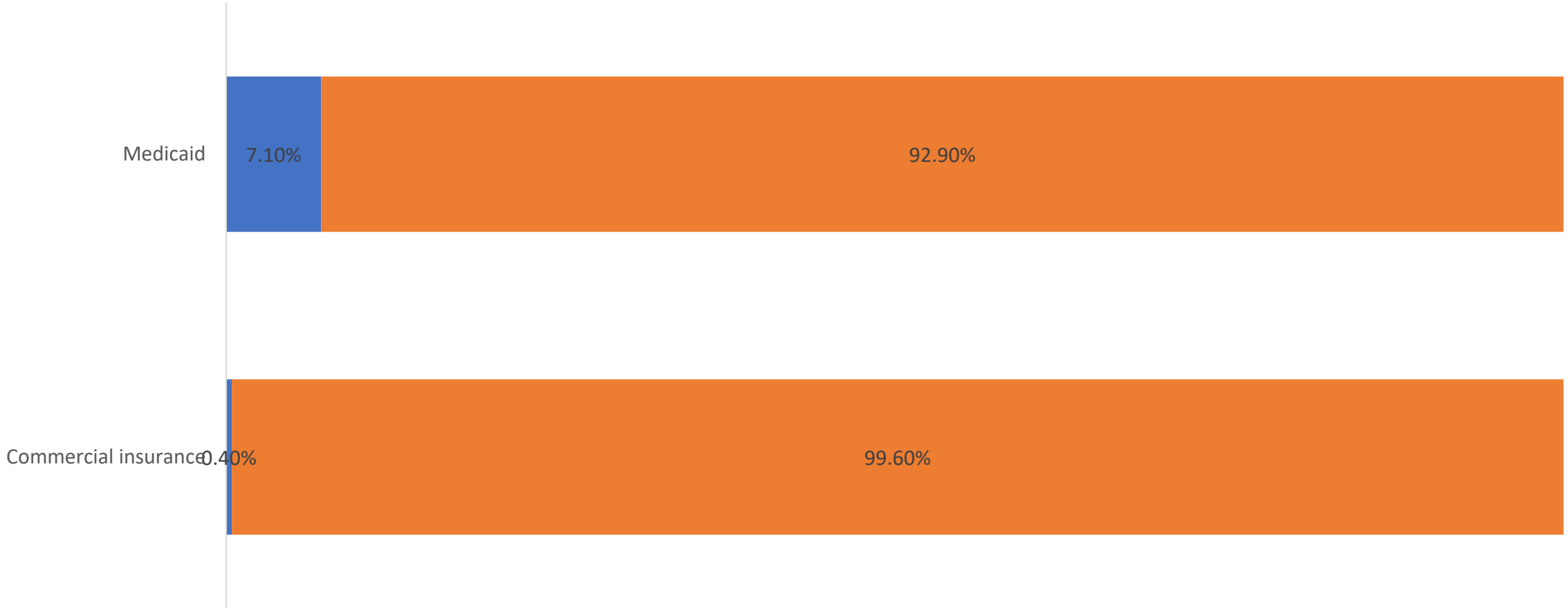


Toxicology Tests Collected by Race



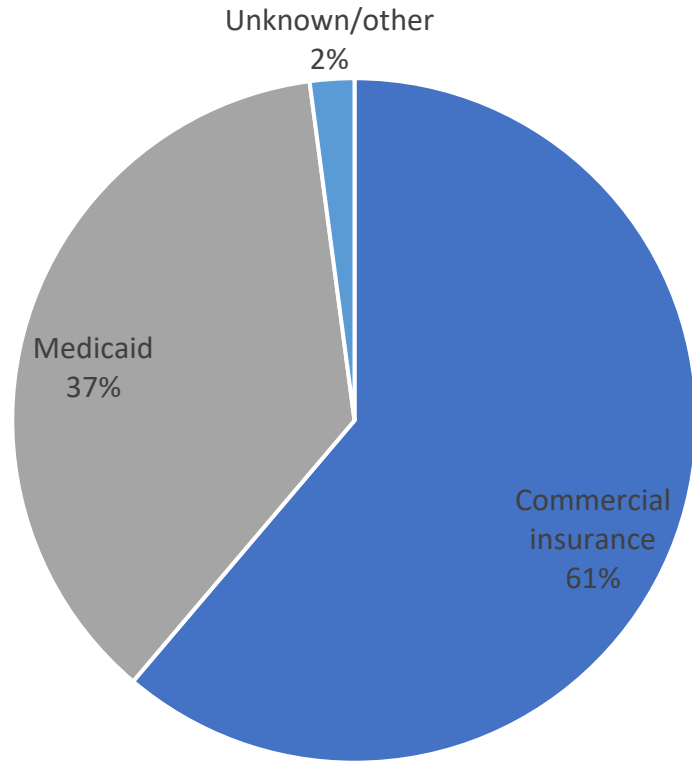
Toxicology Tests Obtained

■ Tox collected ■ Tox not collected

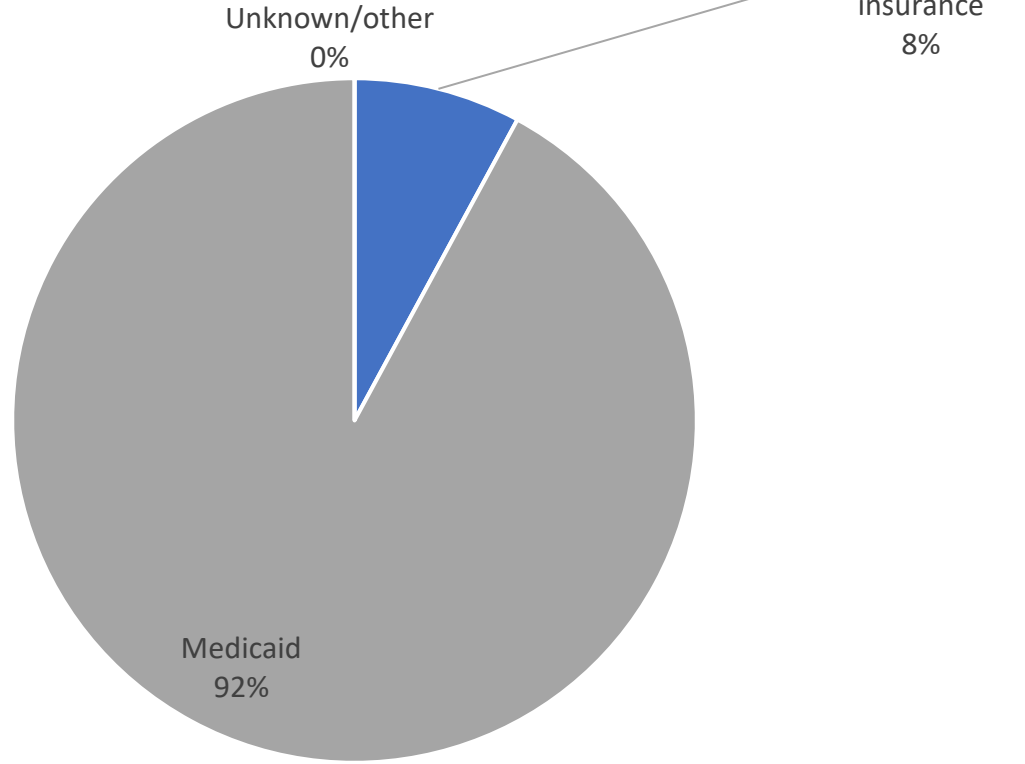


not for dissemination preliminary QI data

Newborns by insurance provider

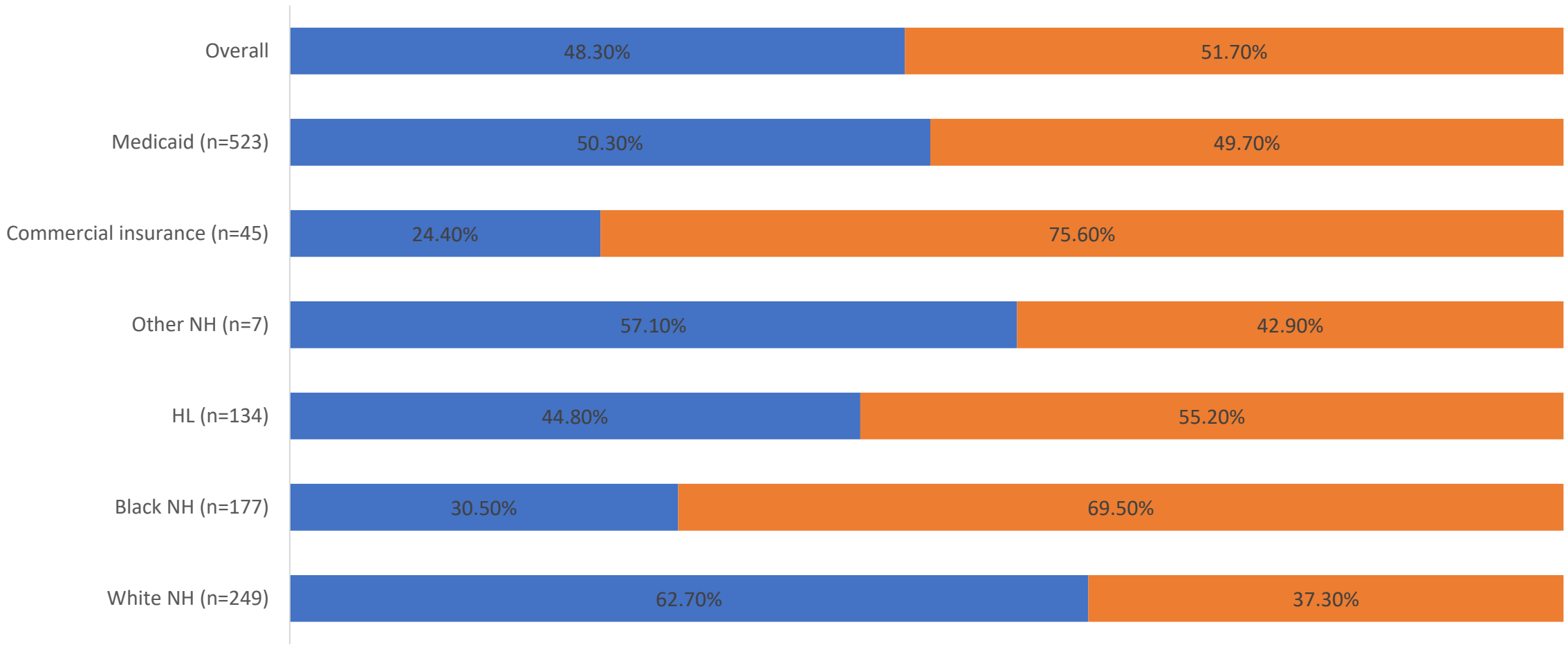


Toxicology tests obtained by insurance provider



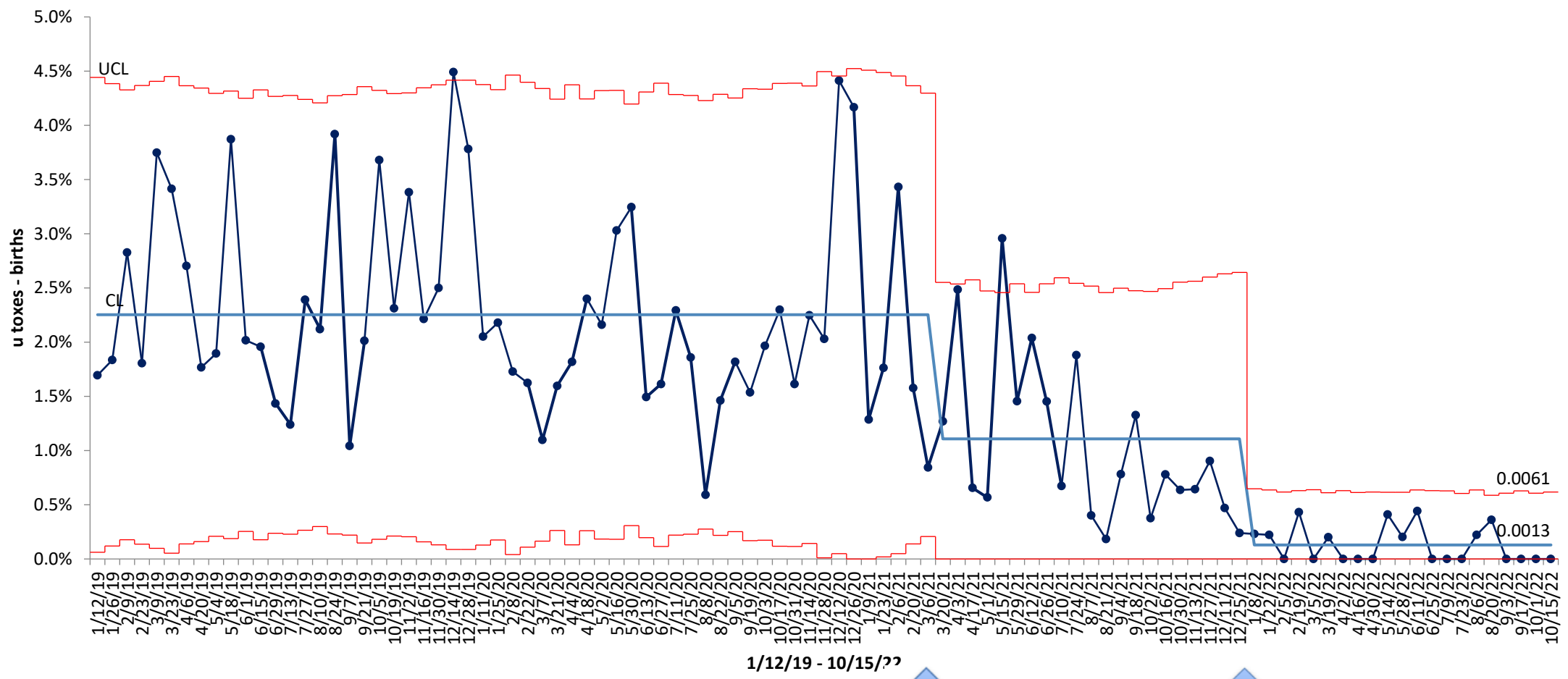
Toxicology Tests Positivity

■ Tox positive ■ Tox negative



Control chart

u toxes-births p Chart



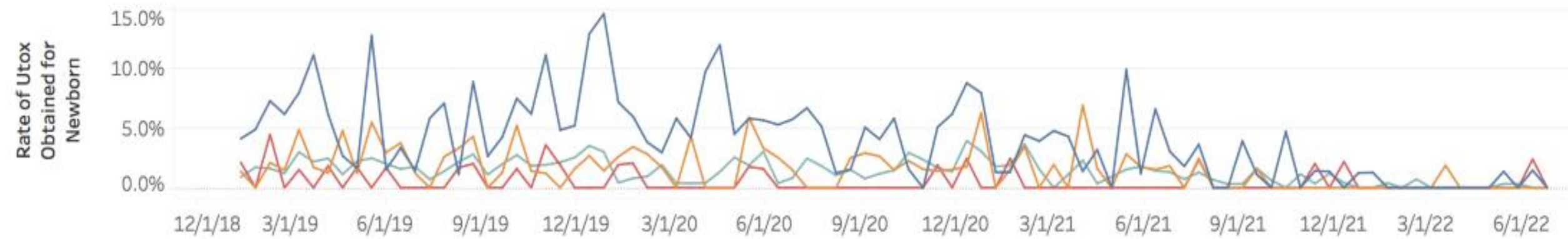
(A) Began work on project with conversations and coalition-building

(B) Protocol “live” on hospital intranet



not for dissemination preliminary QI data


Rate of Utox Obtained for Newborns By Race



(A) Began work on project with conversations and coalition-building

(B) Protocol “live” on hospital intranet


A


B

- Race/Ethnicity
- Black
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Other
 - White

After (1/1/2022-6/30/2022)

YNHCH YSC

not for dissemination preliminary QI data

	WNH	BNH	HL	ONH
Tox obtained	3	3	1	0
Total newborns with available data	1441	484	716	238
Percentage (pre)	0.2% (2.3%)	0.6% (5.5%)	0.1% (3.2%)	0.0% (0.4%)

	Commercial insurance	Medicaid
Tox obtained	2	6
Total newborns with available data	1716	1125
Percentage (pre)	0.1% (0.4%)	0.5% (7.1%)

Balancing measures

- Will newborns return to the hospital with untreated/uncontrolled withdrawal symptoms?
- Will children present with neglect in the setting of ongoing parental substance use?
- The underlying aspect of these questions is: “in situations where the newborn toxicology test would have been the only piece of information that led to a suspicion for and subsequent evaluation of prenatal substance use”
 - Rare
 - A failure of multiple systems that we are concurrently working to strengthen

	BRIDGEPORT % of hospital total		GREENWICH % of hospital total		LAWRENCE & MEMORIAL % of hospital total		YALE NEW HAVEN % of hospital total		NETWORK % of network total		STATE % of state total	
	PRE N=228	POST N=18^	PRE N=9^	POST N=3^	PRE N=310	POST N=93	PRE N=609	POST N=124	PRE N=1156	POST N=238	PRE N=5657	POST N=1677
NUMBER OF CAPTA NOTIFICATIONS TO DCF												
2019 - <i>Partial Year beginning March 14</i>	83	-	1	-	81	-	207	-	372	-	1610	-
2020	85	-	0	-	133	-	251	-	469	-	2044	-
2021	60	-	8	-	96	-	151	-	315	-	2003	-
2022 – <i>Partial Year ending November 30</i>	-	18	-	3	-	93	-	124	-	238	-	1677

	BRIDGEPORT % of hospital total		GREENWICH % of hospital total		LAWRENCE & MEMORIAL % of hospital total		YALE NEW HAVEN % of hospital total		NETWORK % of network total		STATE % of state total	
CAPTA OUTCOMES	PRE N=228	POST N=18^	PRE N=9^	POST N=3^	PRE N=310	POST N=93	PRE N=609	POST N=124	PRE N=1156	POST N=238	PRE N=5657	POST N=1677
Family Care Plan												
<i>No Family Care Plan</i>	9.2	38.9	11.1	0	10.6	23.7**	45.5	13.7***	28.7	19.3**	32.4	27.5***
<i>Yes, Developed by Reporter</i>	65.4	22.2	77.8	66.7	27.4	26.9***	16.1	27.4***	29.3	27.3**	41.2	42.8***
<i>Yes, Verified by Reporter</i>	25.4	38.9	11.1	33.3	61.9	49.5**	38.4	58.9***	42.0	53.4**	26.4	29.8***
CPS Referral Triggered	39.5	44.4	55.6	33.3	32.3	37.6***	72.4	34.7***	55.0	36.6***	47.4	41.0***

	BRIDGEPORT % of hospital total		GREENWICH % of hospital total		LAWRENCE & MEMORIAL % of hospital total		YALE NEW HAVEN % of hospital total		NETWORK % of network total		STATE % of state total	
BIRTHING PERSON & FAMILY DATA	PRE N=228	POST N=18^	PRE N=9^	POST N=3^	PRE N=310	POST N=93	PRE N=609	POST N=124	PRE N=1156	POST N=238	PRE N=5657	POST N=1677
Mean Age	26.58	29.11	31.44	36.33	28.35	29.41	28.58	29.62	28.15	29.58	27.99	28.55
Hispanic	29.4	33.3	22.2	33.3	13.2	16.1	12.6	9.7	16.2	14.7	20.6	22.9
Race^^	n=189	n=15	n=6	n=1	n=272	n=79	n=453	n=95	n=920	n=190	n=4336	n=1244
<i>Black/African American Only</i>	52.9	46.7	33.3	0	18.8	20.3	43.7	57.9	38.2	41.1	29.5	27.1
<i>White Only</i>	46.6	53.3	66.7	100	79.0	21.0	53.6	41.1	59.3	54.7	68.6	70.8
<i>Multi/Other</i>	0.5	0	0	0	3.7	8.9	2.6	1.1	2.5	4.2	1.9	2.1
Mean Number of CPS Risks (scale 0-3)	0.62	0.67	0.56	0.33	0.45	0.39	1.28	0.58	0.93	0.51	0.57	0.42
<i>Child Tested Positive for Maternal Misuse#</i>	17.5	0	22.2	0	7.4	1.1***	5.7	0.8***	8.7	0.8***	12.2	10.7
<i>Current Maternal Substance Misuse</i>	31.6	33.3	33.3	0	23.5	25.8	64.9	29.0***	47.0	27.7***	26.4	17.6***
<i>Family Present, Suspect Abuse/Neglect</i>	13.2	33.3	0	33.3	14.5	11.8	57.8	28.2***	36.9	22.3***	18.3	13.2***

	BRIDGEPORT % of hospital total		GREENWICH % of hospital total		LAWRENCE & MEMORIAL % of hospital total		YALE NEW HAVEN % of hospital total		NETWORK % of network total		STATE % of state total	
	PRE N=228	POST N=18^	PRE N=9^	POST N=3^	PRE N=310	POST N=93	PRE N=609	POST N=124	PRE N=1156	POST N=238	PRE N=5657	POST N=1677
Child Tested for Substances	61.8	0	44.4	33.3	44.8	5.4***	27.6	2.4***	39.1	3.8***	72.8	69.3**
<i>Meconium</i>	0	0	0	0	1.3	0	0	0	0.3	0	43.4	49.1***
<i>Urine</i>	60.5	0	44.4	33.3	15.2	1.1***	26.6	2.4***	30.4	2.1***	60.6	58.3
<i>Umbilical Cord</i>	0	0	0	33.3	39.7	4.3***	0.2	0	10.7	2.1***	6.4	2.7***

	BRIDGEPORT % of hospital total		GREENWICH % of hospital total		LAWRENCE & MEMORIAL % of hospital total		YALE NEW HAVEN % of hospital total		NETWORK % of network total		STATE % of state total	
	PRE N=228	POST N=18^	PRE N=9^	POST N=3^	PRE N=310	POST N=93	PRE N=609	POST N=124	PRE N=1156	POST N=238	PRE N=5657	POST N=1677
NEWBORN DATA CONTINUED												
Substance Exposures Reported												
<i>Alcohol</i>	3.1	0	0	33.3	5.8	6.5	6.7	7.3	5.7	6.7	3.0	3.0
<i>Buprenorphine</i>	0.4	0	22.2	0	8.7	6.5	3.0	5.6	4.2	5.5	5.2	4.9
<i>Cocaine</i>	6.1	38.9	11.1	0	10.6	15.1	13.6	16.5	11.3	16.8*	8.1	8.7
<i>Marijuana</i>	85.5	72.2	66.7	100	73.5	73.1	71.3	68.5	74.7	71.0	79.1	82.2**
<i>Methadone</i>	10.5	16.7	11.1	0	17.1	11.8	14.4	22.6*	14.4	17.6	8.8	8.6
<i>Non-Rx Opiate</i>	2.6	11.1	0	0	6.1	7.5	9.9	12.9	7.4	10.5	6.0	7.9**
<i>Other Illegal/Non-Rx Substance</i>	5.3	5.6	11.1	0	4.8	11.8*	5.4	7.3	5.3	8.8*	4.3	4.2
<i>PCP</i>	1.8	11.1	0	0	0.6	0	4.4	1.6^	2.9	1.7	1.2	0.8
<i>Rx Benzodiazepine</i>	1.8	0	33.3	0	2.3	2.2	4.3	8.1	3.5	5.0	2.7	2.0
<i>Rx Opiate</i>	3.1	0	0	0	2.3	0	3.1	10.5	2.9	5.5*	3.0	2.3
<i>OTC Exposure</i>	0	0	0	0	1.3	0	1.1	1.6^	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.2

To summarize...

- Newborn toxicology testing in the setting of prenatal substance exposure is usually not necessary to provide optimal clinical care
- When it is clinically indicated, urine toxicology testing provides actionable clinical information
- Informed consent should be obtained before obtaining newborn toxicology testing in the vast majority of circumstances
- In enacting a practice guideline with these key messages, we did not see safety events occur as a result
- Please get in touch with questions, conversation, or information:
 - sharon.ostfeld-johns@yale.edu