

THE U.S. OPIOID EPIDEMIC AND ITS EFFECT ON CHILD WELFARE

What are opioids?

Opioids are pain relief drugs that can be legally prescribed but are also highly addictive for their euphoric effects.



The United States has the **HIGHEST** opioid consumption in the world



2015 Opioid Statistics

12.5 million people misused prescription opioids in 2015



33,000 people died from opioid overdose in 2015



There were **12,989** deaths from heroin



Opioids were responsible for **63%** of all drug overdose fatalities



There were **15,281** deaths from legal prescriptions

States with the most overdose fatalities per 100,000 people

- West Virginia (33.7)
- New Hampshire (28.2)
- Rhode Island (22.7)
- Ohio (22.5)
- Massachusetts (20.9)

OHIO has seen a 775% increase in overdose fatalities since 2003

Why the High Spike?

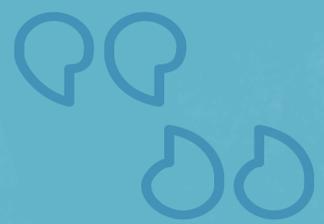
The number of opioid prescriptions has drastically increased over the years. There were 76 million opioid prescriptions in 1991, rising to 259 million prescriptions in 2012. The American Society of Addiction Medicine says that's more than enough to give a bottle of pills to every adult American.



What is the Effect on Child Welfare?

"The opioid epidemic is the main reason for the alarming rise of children in foster care."

— Dr. John DeGarmo, Director of the Foster Care Institute & adoptive father of three children whose biological parents had abused drugs



VERMONT

In 2015, more than half of the children under the age of 6 who entered foster care in Vermont had parents who abused opioids

The case goal for 55% of children in foster care is to be reunited with their parent(s) or principal caretaker

HOWEVER...

Only 1/4 of children in foster care with parents who are drug users will be reunited. Substance abuse is a risk factor for maltreatment, so reunification may not be the best option for a child

22,000



With an increase in children waiting to be adopted and the number of annual adoptions through foster care remaining fairly constant, more than 20,000 youth age of foster care each year without a family.

Drug Abuse Effects on Parenting

Physical or mental impairments

Difficulties regulating emotions and controlling impulses

Disruptions in healthy parent-child attachment

Spending limited funds on drugs rather than food/household needs

Spending time seeking out, making, or using drugs

Incarceration- can lead to inadequate or inappropriate supervision of children

Estrangement from family or other social supports

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway

Sources:

The Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Huffington Post
The Economist
Child Trends
Vox

