Americas Opioid Crisis: The Unseen Impact on Iowa Children

As Iowa families struggle with addiction, children are caught in the fray.

A Growing Crisis

- 28% more opioid-related deaths nationwide since 2015.
- 86.8% of people in Iowa suffering from drug dependence or abuse go untreated.
- 8.7 million children nationwide have a parent who suffers from a substance use disorder.

A Devastating Toll on Children

- Foster care placements on the rise:
  - 4,184 Iowa children were placed in foster care in 2016.
  - 14% were infants.
  - In 43% of these placements, parental substance use was a factor.

- More babies born exposed to opioids:
  - Every 25 minutes in America, a baby is born suffering from opioid withdrawal, which can mean:
    1. Lower birthweights
    2. Respiratory conditions
    3. Feeding difficulties
    4. Seizures
    5. Longer hospital stays

A Lifelong Impact

- Children dealing with traumatic experiences can face social, emotional, physical, and mental health challenges that last into adulthood.
- Left unaddressed, early childhood adversity can lead to school failure, risky behaviors like alcohol and drug use, and increased chance of health conditions like obesity and heart disease.

A Need for Family-Centered Policies

- Keeping families together improves outcomes and lowers costs.
- More than half of children placed in foster care go home to their families. Keeping families together from the start helps prevent further trauma and improves outcomes.

- Medicaid paid 81% of the $1.5 billion that hospitals billed for treating babies suffering from opioid withdrawal in 2012.

What You Can Do

- Rethink our approach: Support children and families in healing together
  - Create policies that prioritize prevention and allow children to remain safely with their families during treatment.
  - Give providers tools to recognize, treat, and support children and their parents affected by trauma to lessen the lifelong impact and promote healthy families.
  - Ensure families have real and timely access to services through Medicaid and other prevention and treatment programs.

Sources for this document are available at www.aap.org/OpioidFactsheets.