



RESEARCH BRIEF

EVALUATING OHIO START

AN INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT SUBSTANCE-ABUSING FAMILIES IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

OBJECTIVES

- *Understand how substance use—especially the use of opioids and heroin—is related to involvement in the child welfare system*
- *Assess what programs work when trying to reduce substance use-related child maltreatment*
- *Examine what elements are most important for parents to regain sobriety, maintain treatment, and reduce future recurrence of child abuse and neglect*
- *Understand risk and protective factors that lead to the most serious child welfare situations*

Background of the Problem

The United States is in the midst of an opioid epidemic. Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death for adults in the US.¹ In Ohio, rates of heroin-related deaths increased by 50% in just three years from 2013 to 2015.² An innocent victim of the epidemic is the children of substance-abusing parents.

For children involved with the child welfare system,

- ◆ Heroin use is associated with lower rates of reunification compared to alcohol use^{3,4} and longer stays in out-of-home care⁵
- ◆ Among mothers in an opiate treatment program in Sydney, Australia, over 60% had been reported to child protection and over 30% had at least one child in out of home care due to maltreatment⁶

The opioid epidemic is significantly impacting Ohio's child protection system. Since 2010, when the epidemic was just beginning to take root, there has been an 11% increase in children taken into agency custody.

In Ohio,

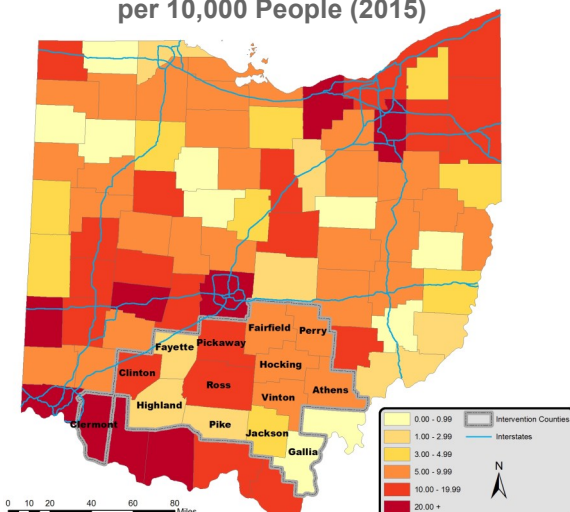
- ◆ 50% of children taken into state custody due to child abuse and neglect had parents with drug use as a safety concern⁷
- ◆ 1/3 had a parent currently using opiates at the time of the removal⁷

The current opioid problem in the United States appears to be disproportionately affecting rural areas, yet we know very little about how rural counties are coping with this epidemic.

Ohio START *Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma*

- ◆ The Ohio Attorney General's Office is providing \$3.5 million to public child welfare agencies in 14 southern Ohio counties
- ◆ START supports families with co-occurring substance abuse and child maltreatment
- ◆ Parents will receive enhanced services, such as recovery coaches
- ◆ Children will receive additional trauma services

Rate of Naloxone Administration per 10,000 People (2015)



EVALUATING OHIO START

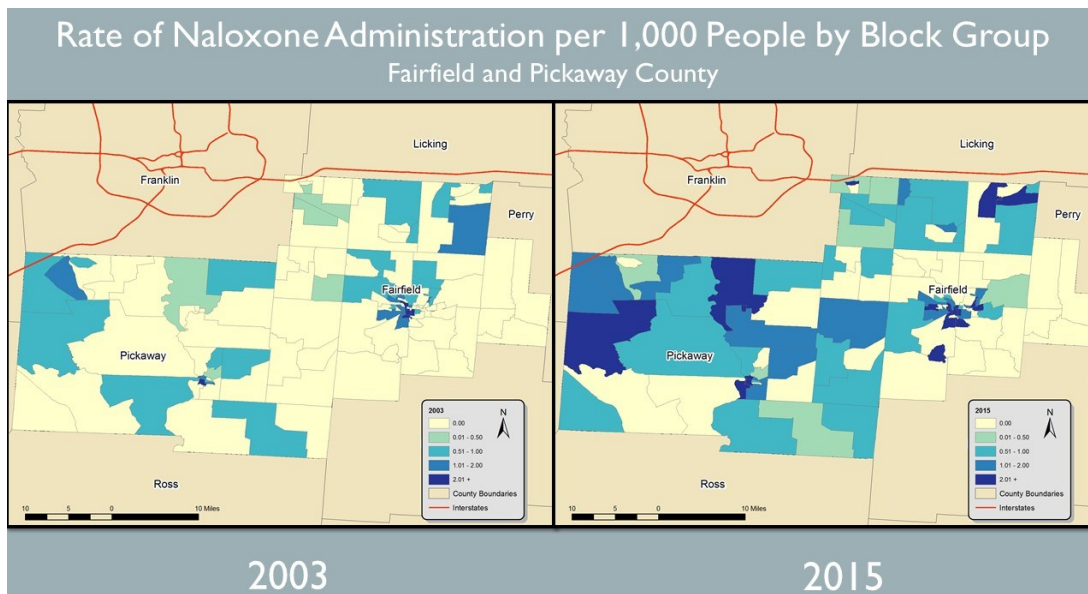
The role of Ohio State's College of Social Work

CSW will evaluate the effectiveness of Ohio START by:

- ♦ Examining what elements are most successful in parents regaining sobriety and maintaining treatment to reduce future recurrence of child abuse or neglect.
- ♦ Identifying improvements to the well-being of the children affected by parental opioid use.
- ♦ Understanding risk and protective factors that lead to most serious child welfare outcomes.
- ♦ Assisting in identifying and developing additional partnerships to sustain these community-level efforts.

Expected Outcomes

- ♦ Reduce length of stay in out-of-home placements for children
- ♦ Increase rates of reunification (i.e. reuniting children with their birth families)
- ♦ Reduce re-referrals for child maltreatment investigations



References

- ¹Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality File. (2015). *Number and age-adjusted rates of drug-poisoning deaths involving opioid analgesics and heroin: United States, 2000-2014*. Atlanta, GA: Center for Disease Control and Prevention;
- ²CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality. 2017. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>;
- ³Choi, S. & Ryan, J.P. (2007). Co-occurring problems for substance abusing mothers in child welfare: Matching services to improve family reunification. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(11), 1395-1410.
- ⁴Grella, C.E., Needell, B., Shi, Y., & Hser, Y-I. (2009). Do drug treatment services predict reunification outcomes of mothers and their children in child welfare? *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 36(3), 278-293;
- ⁵Green, B.L., Rockhill, A., & Furrer, C. (2007). Does substance abuse treatment make a difference for child welfare case outcomes? A statewide longitudinal analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(4), 460-473;
- ⁶Taplin, S. & Mattick, R.P. (2015). The nature and extent of child protection involvement among heroin-using mothers in treatment: High rates of reports, removals at birth, and children in care. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 34, 31-37;
- ⁷Public Children's Services Association of Ohio. (2017). *The Opioid Epidemic's Impact on Children's Services in Ohio*. Columbus, OH: Public Children's Services Association of Ohio. Retrieved from: <http://www.pcsao.org/pdf/advocacy/OpiateBriefingSlides.pdf> on March 11, 2017.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Drs. Bridget Freisthler, Katie Maguire-Jack, Alicia Bunger and Susan Yoon are directly involved in evaluating the effectiveness of Ohio START. Drs. Freisthler, Maguire-Jack and Yoon have an expertise in the field of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, Dr. Freisthler brings years of research experience in drug and alcohol misuse (particularly marijuana and opiates). Dr. Bunger is an expert in organizations and systems, and focuses her analyses on the child welfare population.

Contact information: freisthler.19@osu.edu



L to R: Maguire-Jack, Bunger, Freisthler, & Yoon

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The Ohio State University College of Social Work has faculty expertise in child welfare and drug misuse prevention. The college is at the forefront in the fight against the opioid epidemic in Ohio with multiple research collaborations, grants, and community partnerships.

CONTACT US

The Ohio State University
College of Social Work
Stillman Hall, 1947 College Rd.
Columbus, OH 43210-1162
csw.osu.edu/research
Phone: 614-292-9229



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK