

Children of the Opioid Crisis

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## Running Head: CHILDREN OF THE OPIOID CRISIS

The opioid epidemic threatens an overworked foster-care system. Opioid addiction, killing over 130 Americans daily, has more than doubled the amount of children requiring care in the past 20 years (Becker & Ruckstuhl, 2019). This narrative is echoed in media sources targeting all audiences, including children. Karli, a new puppet on Sesame Street is a child in foster care due to her mother's "adult problems" (Locker, 2019). Media coverage surrounding the opioid epidemic focuses entirely on the recovery of adults, minimizing the upheaval of children's lives caused by removal. The media fails to account for the trauma that separation from parents, including impairments to emotional development. In addition, judges to keep children with their biological families if at all possible because the foster system is no longer a viable option for child care (Kohomban, Rodriguez, & Haskins, 2018). The children's safety is in question when they are placed with guardians facing a life of addiction recovery. It is essential for foster care stakeholders to consider all risks of parents facing addiction on children.

- This crisis significantly overworks parents who are willing to foster, such that children are unable to be placed in any sort of timely or permanent manner (Kohomban, Rodriguez, & Haskins, 2018).
- Foster-care stakeholders should be concerned about the return of children to homes with parents who are struggling to manage addiction. 72-88% of adults relapse in the first three years or recovery (Chalana, Kundal, Gupta, & Malhari, 2016).
- The meta-narrative addressed by the media is that of a crisis for adults with children as a contribution to the state of overwhelm. There is little consideration of trauma upon the children being removed from their homes, including the interruption of identity construction due to constant upheaval.

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**COMPOUNDING TRAUMA:  
CHILDREN OF THE  
OPIOID CRISIS**

**THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM CAN'T SUPPORT THE  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN NEEDING CARE**  
The number of children in care doubled in the last 20 years.  
With a system overwhelmed, judges  
often send children back to their  
biological parents.  
(Kohomban, Rodriguez, & Haskins, 2018).

**ADDICTION TEARS FAMILIES APART**  
**72-88% of those addicted to opioids  
relapse in 12-36 months**  
(Chalana, Kundal, Gupta, & Malhari, 2016).  
Addiction is a lifelong illness--there is no "cure." Returning children to  
their homes with parents who relapse causes additional trauma.

**CHILDREN FACE COMPOUNDED TRAUMA**  
"Being removed from one's family and placed into foster-care often  
results in life-changing trauma for a child, making the role of foster  
parents critically important to the child's ability to cope and recover from  
trauma."  
(Kohomban, Rodriguez, & Haskins, 2018).