

Opioid Fact Sheet

Opioids by the Numbers:

- The opioid crisis is the deadliest drug epidemic in the country's history. **42,000** people died from opioid use in 2016 alone.
- **Opioid overdoses** have led to the deaths of almost as many Americans per year as AIDS at its peak.
- Last year, opioid-related deaths increased by **17 percent**, and deaths are expected to rise.
- Although the **Rust Belt and Appalachia** have been hard-hit by the opioid crisis, there isn't a corner of the country that hasn't been affected.
- West Virginia has the **highest age-adjusted opioid overdose death rate** in the country, according to 2016 data. These opioid deaths in Washington, D.C. more than doubled that year, accounting for most of the total increased drug deaths in the district.
- **Massachusetts** declared a public health emergency in 2014 and a handful of states followed suit.
- The White House released a report in November looking at the "underestimated cost of the opioid crisis." According to the report, the opioid crisis cost the U.S. **\$504 billion** or almost 3 percent of the GDP in 2015.
- Now, the White House is putting **\$4.6 billion** into the fight against the opioid crisis and launched an ad campaign earlier this month on the dangers of opioid use.



The Effect of Opioids on Foster Care:

- Across the country, the number of children in foster care enjoyed a 25-year record low in 2012. Since then, the numbers have ticked upward to **about 500,000 children in care**.
- The number of kids in Montana's child welfare system has **doubled** since 2010. Georgia's placements are up **80 percent**, and West Virginia's have increased by **nearly half**.
- Many of these systems are already overcrowded and underresourced, leading to **kids sleeping in agency offices** in places like Kansas.

Where We Are Now—Actions Taken:

- The effect of opioids on children was largely overlooked at the federal level until an investigative series by Reuters in 2015, which reported that **every 19 minutes** a baby is born dependent on opioids.
- In 2016 Congress issued the **Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act**, which required child welfare agencies to create plans of safe care for newborns affected by any drug use.
- This year the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that states lack federal direction about how to best implement plans of safe care for children affected by drugs and suggested that the **Children's Bureau** provide more guidance and assistance to states. The Children's Bureau disagreed with the recommendation.
- In February, Congress passed the **Family First Prevention Services Act**, which will put \$1.5 billion over a decade toward services for drug-affected babies and their families.

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