

Spotlight on National Substance Abuse Prevention Month

Opioid Overdose Events and Child Maltreatment Indicators

A 2020 [article](#) in *Children and Youth Services Review* explores the potential correlation between opioid overdose events and child maltreatment. The authors posited that conducting research that encompasses broader aspects of the opioid epidemic and child maltreatment can lead to a better understanding of the link between the two and better inform policy and practice decisions that improve child outcomes. Opioid overdose mortality rates have increased nearly six times since 1999, and there have also been significant increases in the number of children born with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and the percentage of home removals attributed to parental drug use. Many researchers have prioritized better understanding the specific impact of the opioid crisis on the child welfare system.

This study examined the link between county-level opioid overdose event rates and child maltreatment indicators (e.g., intake, substantiation, placement rates). The study also included additional county-level variables and characteristics. Data were obtained from 39 Washington state counties from 2005 through 2017 to model predictors of child protective services (CPS) outcomes over time.

The study did not identify any significant trends for CPS indicators as counties experienced increased opioid overdose events, which contrasts with previous findings of positive relationships between the epidemic and NAS. The data revealed the relationship to be more complex and requires the incorporation of macro-level contextual factors to better understand the link.

To learn more, read "[Opioid Overdose Events and Child Maltreatment Indicators: Differential County-Level Associations.](#)"

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