

# Drug Endangered Children Initiative

*Enhancing Community Responses to the Opioid Crisis: Serving Our Youngest Crime Victims*

## The Problem

Opioid addiction in the home is the fastest growing adverse childhood experience (ACE) in Massachusetts, specifically in Plymouth County.

- ⇒ In 2018, there were **2,033 overdose deaths** in the state, with **153 fatalities** in Plymouth County
- ⇒ Of the overdoses in Plymouth County, **70% were individuals ages 20-39**, often the ages associated with having children, and **65% occurred in a home**
- ⇒ Since 2012, over **12,000 children** in Massachusetts were being raised by grandparents as a result of their parents' opioid addiction
- ⇒ The **263% increase in opioid overdoses statewide** from 2010-2018 has coincided with a **55% increase in relatives taking over caregiving responsibilities of children**
- ⇒ Of the youth before the Plymouth County Juvenile Court, **the average number of ACEs per child is 5**, with **56% of all youth before the Court reporting household substance use** as one of their ACEs

## The Need

In Plymouth County **there is a need to identify all drug-endangered children, communicate between agencies, and provide direct services for these youth.**

**1. Data Collection:** All sectors (police, hospitals, community-based agencies, etc.) should improve data collection on drug-endangered children in order to identify and close gaps in services.

**2. Training:** Police officers and recovery coaches need training on resources available for children who are impacted by overdoses in the family, and schools need training on best practices in trauma sensitivity.

**3. Resources:** Centralized resources for drug-endangered children will provide police, schools, hospitals, and other agencies a much-needed streamlined referral process.

## The Program

The Drug Endangered Children's Initiative is bringing awareness to agencies that come into contact with drug endangered children, helping agencies identify drug endangered children, assisting drug-endangered children in navigating systems, and providing direct services to drug endangered children.

### For more information:

Melinda Kneeland, Executive Director  
Community Connections of Brockton  
& the Family Center  
(508) 994-5063  
melinda.kneeland@ccbrockton.org

Kati Mapa, MSW, Clinical Advocate  
The Family Center  
(781) 563-4000  
kati.mapa@ccbrockton.org

Ed Jacobs, MSW, Director of Grants  
and Sponsored Projects  
Plymouth County DA's office  
(508) 509-5321  
edward.jacobs@state.ma.us



**The Family Center  
&  
Community Connections of Brockton**

