

**Child Welfare Council  
June 7th Meeting  
Data Linkage Committee**

Laurie Kappe,  
President,  
*i.e.* communications

# A Matter of Substance

## Challenges and Responses to Parental Substance Use in Child Welfare



When the crack epidemic hit our state, agencies and the courts were not as focused on keeping families together, which had ripple effects for a generation. The good news is we are more integrated and prepared now for what may be coming."

*State Sen. Holly J. Mitchell, Chair of the Senate Budget Committee*



California Child Welfare  
Co-Investment Partnership

# The Challenge

Has the National opioid epidemic affected child welfare entries in California?

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The available data does not give a complete picture, and data comparisons and case file reviews did not show a clear correlation.

# Data Sources

**CWS/CMS analysis:** available data for parental substance use as a circumstance of removal is limited. CWS/CMS has an optional field for entering this information, but it is used infrequently.

**California Department of Public Health  
California Opioid Overdose Surveillance  
Dashboard:**

[https://pdop.shinyapps.io/ODdash\\_v1/](https://pdop.shinyapps.io/ODdash_v1/)

# Other Data Sources

## National

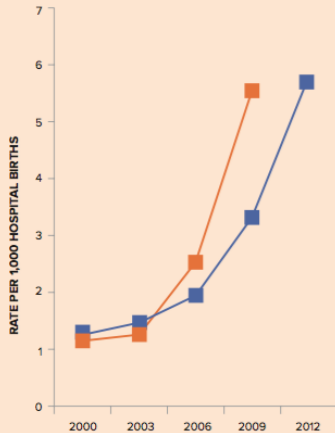
- AFCARS
- SAMHSA National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare Reports

## California

- OSHPD
- The California State Inpatient Databases
- CalOLMS
- Structured Decision Making

# Other Indicators: Newborns and NAS

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome and Maternal Opioid Use in the U.S.

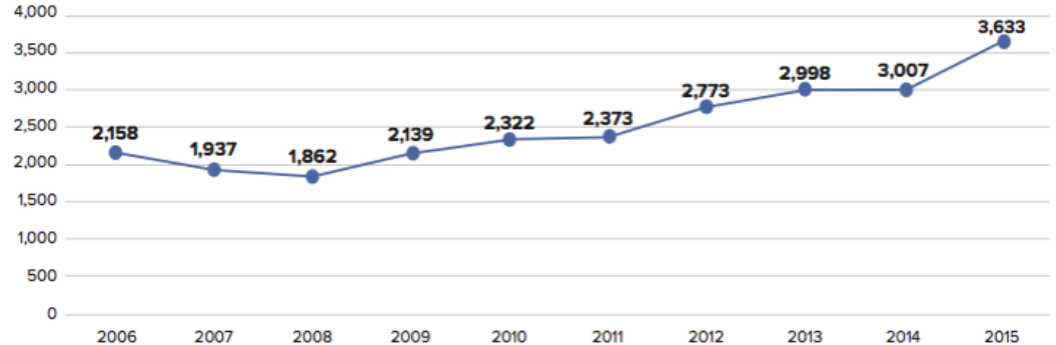


■ Newborns suffering from opioid withdrawal  
■ Maternal opioid use\*

\*2012 maternal opioid use data not currently available

There was a five-fold increase in the proportion of babies born with NAS from 2000 to 2012, when an estimated 21,732 infants were born with NAS. Source: The Kids Inpatient Database 2000-2012.

California Newborns Affected by Substance Use\* Transmitted Via Placenta or Breast Milk

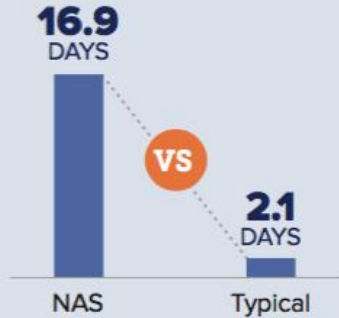


\*Includes cocaine, hallucinogenic agents, other narcotics, other drugs of addiction, or noxious substances, or those that displayed withdrawal symptoms of the same.  
Source: Inpatient Discharge Data, 2006-2015; Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development

California has seen a 68% increase in newborns affected by NAS since 2006.

# Other Indicators: Newborns and NAS

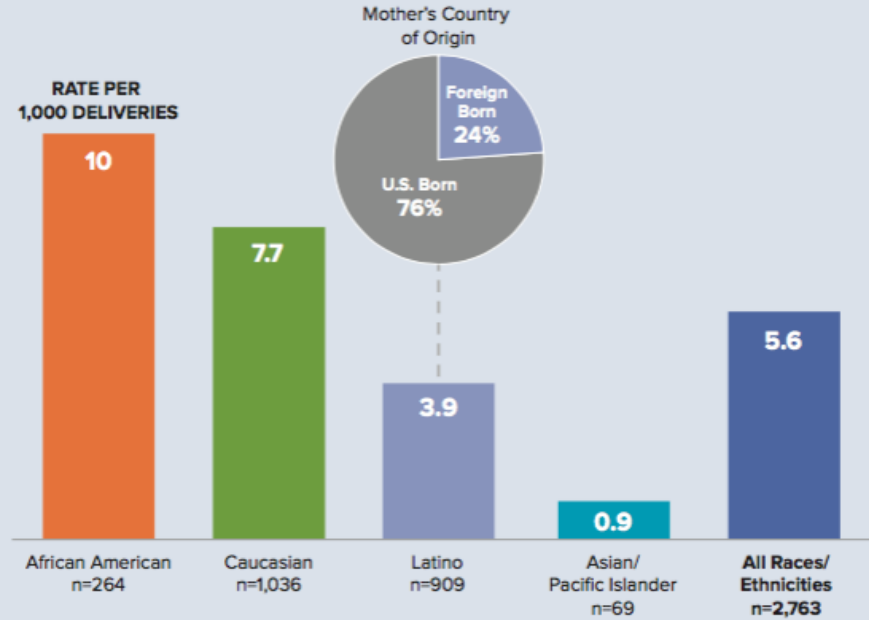
Average Hospital Stay  
for Newborns in the U.S.



Annual Cost to  
U.S. Hospitals



Infants Born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome  
By Race/Ethnicity, California, 2014



Source: California Health Care Almanac, "Maternity Care in California: Delivering the Data", Jun. 2016.<sup>11</sup>  
Not included: Other (rate 18.1 n=485).

# Ethical Dilemma: Universal Screening & Testing

## Supports

“To address the bias, we need universal testing and I believe this is the right climate to advocate for this, especially as the opioid epidemic is hitting states which may have considered this not their problem.”

*Debi Moss, Director, Marin County Child Welfare*

“We get very few referrals from affluent hospitals.

All of our tox-positive tests come from the county hospital.”

*Judy Webber, Deputy Director, Ventura County DCFS*

*Emily Putnam-Hornstein, Associate Professor and Director, Children's Data Network, USC*

## Concerns

“There are some strong arguments to be made on both sides. But I do worry about false positives, the expense, and that without the proper treatment options, universal testing might do nothing more than create a punitive health surveillance system in which some women avoid needed health care and services because of fear of criminalization or losing their child.”



# Wins from Research

- Likely addition of dedicated field to capture parental substance use in CWS/CMS New System.
- Initial data comparison between CDPH and CDSS may lead to further data analysis.