



OUR FORGOTTEN FUTURE

The Story of Children Birth to Five Years Old in Howard County Affected by Opioids

Howard County, Indiana

United Way of Howard County

November 12, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Our nation is facing a health crisis with the misuse of illegal and synthetic opioids, and as this “Opioid Epidemic” indiscriminately impacts our society, Howard County has not escaped its effects. No demographic group or population has been spared from tragedy related to this crisis, including our community’s most vulnerable population: our children. Children today are being affected by the opioid crisis in ways that have the potential to impact their entire lives.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine and many others.”¹

National Level Data

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that in 2016, 42,249 people died in the United States from an overdose involving opioids, while 2.1 million Americans were living with opioid use disorder (Figure 1).²

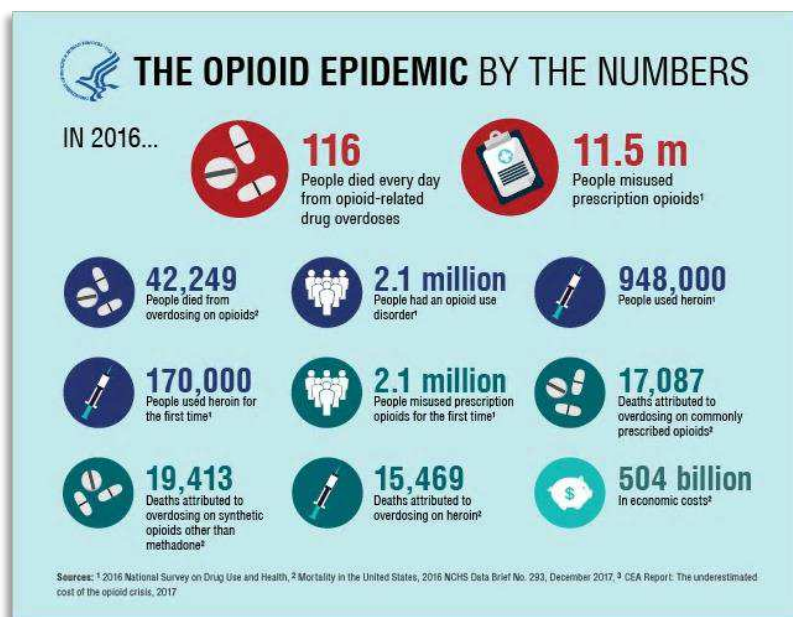


Figure 1: U.S Department Health and Human Services

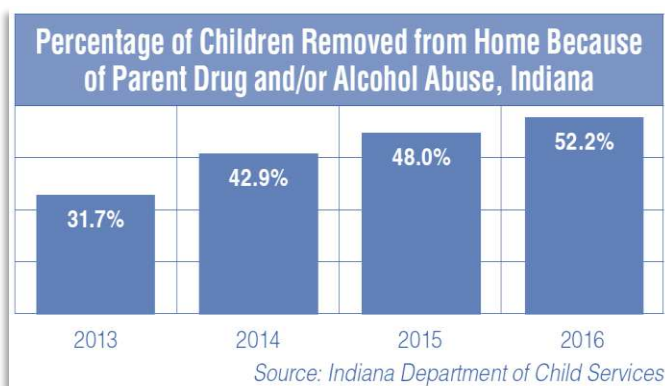


Figure 2: Indiana Youth Institute

State Level Data

As our nation has been profoundly changed by this crisis, so too has Indiana. In 2016, Indiana had 2, 426 non-fatal hospitalizations due to opioid use and 1,518 Indiana residents died from a drug overdose.³

Indiana’s children have been impacted by the opioid crisis: our state has experienced a 58% increase in the number of children in foster care over the last 5 years. 2016 statistics show that 52.2% of children removed from their homes in Indiana were removed due to parent drug and/or alcohol abuse (Figure 2).⁴

¹ Opioids. “National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018, www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids

² “What is the U.S. Opioid Epidemic?” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018, www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/index.html

³ “Indiana Specific Data.” Indiana State Department of Health, 2018, www.in.gov/isdh/27393.htm.

⁴ Indiana Youth Institute, 2018 Indiana KIDS-COUNT Data Book, 2018.

Local Level Data

Howard County has certainly experienced the effects of the opioid crisis; as a county, we have an abundance of opioid drugs. With a 2016 prescription dispensation rate of 123 prescriptions per 100 residents, Howard County continues to have more opioid prescriptions available to residents than the Indiana average (Figure 3).⁵

Information provided by the Howard County 9-1-1 Dispatch Center indicates that 508 calls made to 9-1-1 in 2017 were overdoses in progress.⁶ The Howard County hospital data for 2017 shows 564 hospital admissions for suspected nonfatal overdose.⁷ In 2017, Howard County experienced the highest number of overdose deaths in its history. Forty-four individuals died of a drug overdose in our community. Twenty-seven of these deaths directly involved opioids (Figure 4).⁸

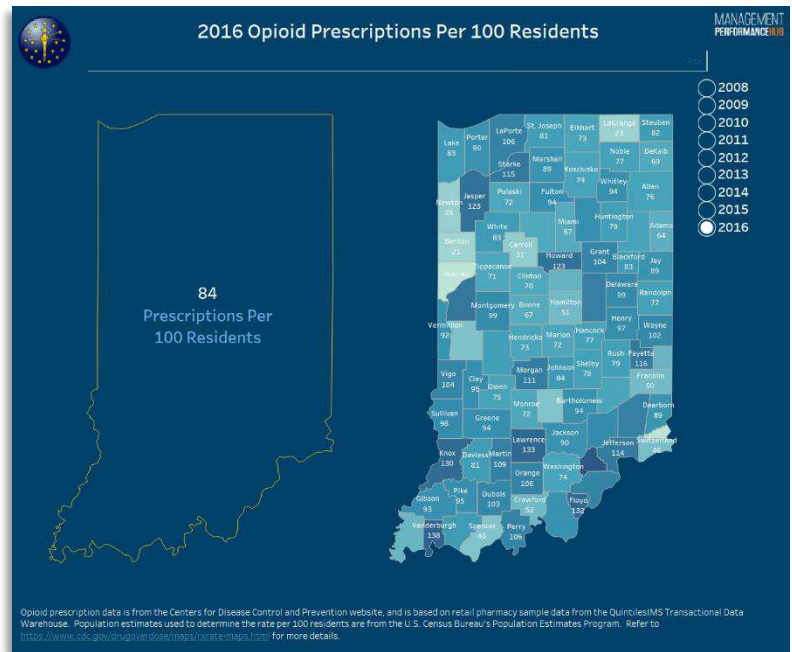


Figure 3: Next Level Recovery

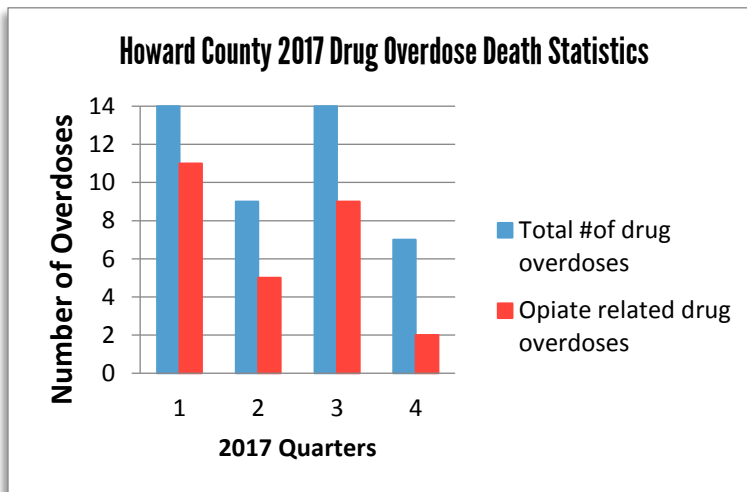


Figure 4: United Way of Howard County

Our Response

Recognizing the depth of the Opioid Epidemic's impact in our community, United Way of Howard County responded by participating in the UNITED Against Opioid Abuse AmeriCorps program, in partnership with other United Way's in Indiana's hardest hit counties. In alignment with the community's kindergarten readiness initiative, we have chosen to focus on how the opioid epidemic is impacting families with children birth to five.

Collaborating with Indiana United Ways and AmeriCorps, we reached out to community members and stakeholders to gather stories and knowledge about their experiences, asking how our youngest and most vulnerable have

⁵ "Indiana by the Numbers." *Next Level Recovery*, 2018, www.in.gov/recovery/1054.htm.

⁶ Howard County 9-1-1 Dispatch Center, Overdose in Progress Report, 2017.

⁷ Howard County Health Department Howard County Health Department, Suspected Non-Fatal Overdose Hospital Admissions, 2017.

⁸ Howard County Coroner's Office, Press Releases, 2017-2018

been impacted by this crisis. In addition to data collection, we facilitated stakeholder surveys around substance abuse and mental health. The following is a report on what we found based on expert data, stakeholder surveys and public knowledge gained through community conversations in Year 1 of the UNITED Against Opioid Abuse project. This report also includes our recommendations for action in response to the community's needs.

FINDINGS

Expert Data

Expert data includes statistics and analysis from professionals in the fields of child welfare, substance abuse, mental health and education. This data assists in establishing the scope of the opioid epidemic in Howard County as well as in making evidence-based decisions regarding how to respond to the needs of our community.

Effects on Families with Children Birth to Five

The impact of opioid and other substance use on families with children birth to five can be seen in almost every aspect of life.

Effects include:

- Bonding and attachment issues
- Financial instability
- Homelessness
- Increased risk of neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Less prepared to begin school
- Prenatal drug exposure, including neonatal abstinence syndrome
- Increase risk of placement of children in foster care or kinship care

“ Even though the child may not be able to recall the event, the trauma is literally encoded in the psyche and in the cells of the body, and its effects are felt throughout the biological system.”

—Barbara Sorrels, EdD, *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma*

These experiences all involve children being exposed to trauma that can influence them for the rest of their lives. According to Dr. Barbara Sorrels, EdD *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma*, “even though the child may not be able to recall the event, the trauma is literally encoded in the psyche and in the cells of the body, and its effects are felt throughout the biological system.”⁹ For the purposes of this landscape scan, we have focused specifically on the effects that became reoccurring themes in our discussions in Howard County.

Data from an evaluation of kindergartners completed by teachers in Howard County in 2017 shows that 55% of Howard County students who started school were not kindergarten ready.¹⁰ This data does not disaggregate which of these children have been impacted by parental substance use. However, expert

⁹ Sorrels EdD, Barbara. *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma*. Gryphon House, Inc. 2015.

¹⁰ Uniform-Assessment, United Way of Howard County, 2017.

knowledge indicates that children who come from environments where substance use disorder is a factor typically experience educational delays.¹¹

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome and Prenatal Drug Exposure

In 2016, the Indiana State Department of Health began conducting a perinatal substance use hospital study. Since the study began, 3,705 out of approximately 84,000 live births in Indiana have been tested. Results of this testing determined that 7.4 infants per 1,000 live births are born exposed to substances. This is higher than the national rate of 5.8 per 1,000 live births reported in 2012. Because universal screening is not being conducted, these results are merely a snapshot of the prevalence of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome and are likely an underrepresentation.¹²

Local hospitals informed us that an estimated 15% of live births in Howard County test positive for prenatal drug exposure, which would represent approximately 149 babies a year. Testing methods vary and are not performed on all live births, so this is likely a conservative estimate.¹³

Kinship Care

Kinship care refers to when a child is being raised by their grandparents, other family members or close friends. In her article *Kinship Care: A New Kind of Family*, Dr. Karen Foli writes “Kinship care arrangements can be defined by the extent of the child welfare system’s involvement with the family.”¹⁴ Kinship care placements during which the Department of Children’s Services is involved are most commonly known as relative placements or formal kinship care. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Howard County reported that 31% of the children they serve through the Department of Children’s Services are placed in kinship care.¹⁵

Informal kinship care arrangements also exist. These arrangements are made between the biological parents and kinship caregivers without any involvement from local or state agencies and often do not include any legal transfer of custody or guardianship. Due to the informal nature of these placements, it is difficult to track the exact number of children in informal kinship care. A Howard County provider of early childhood services reported that of the 80 children they serve who are in out-of-home care, 66 are involved in informal kinship placements.¹⁶

In 2017, Howard County had 31 children birth to five placed with relatives through the Department of Children’s Services.¹⁷ According to Generations United’s 2016 report on the state of grandfamilies, “for every child in foster care with relatives, there are

“ According to Generations United’s 2016 report on the state of grandfamilies, for every child in foster care with relatives, there are 20 children being raised by grandparents or other relatives outside of the foster care system.”

- The State of Grandfamilies in America: 2016

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¹¹ Smith, Vincent C. & Wilson, Celeste R. “Families Affected by Parental Substance Use.” *Pediatrics*, American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016.

¹² Indiana State Department of Health, Perinatal Substance Use Study, 2018.

¹³ Data from local hospitals, 2018.

¹⁴ Foli, Dr. Karen J., “Kinship Care: A New Kind of Family” *Purdue Extension-The Education Store*, 2014.

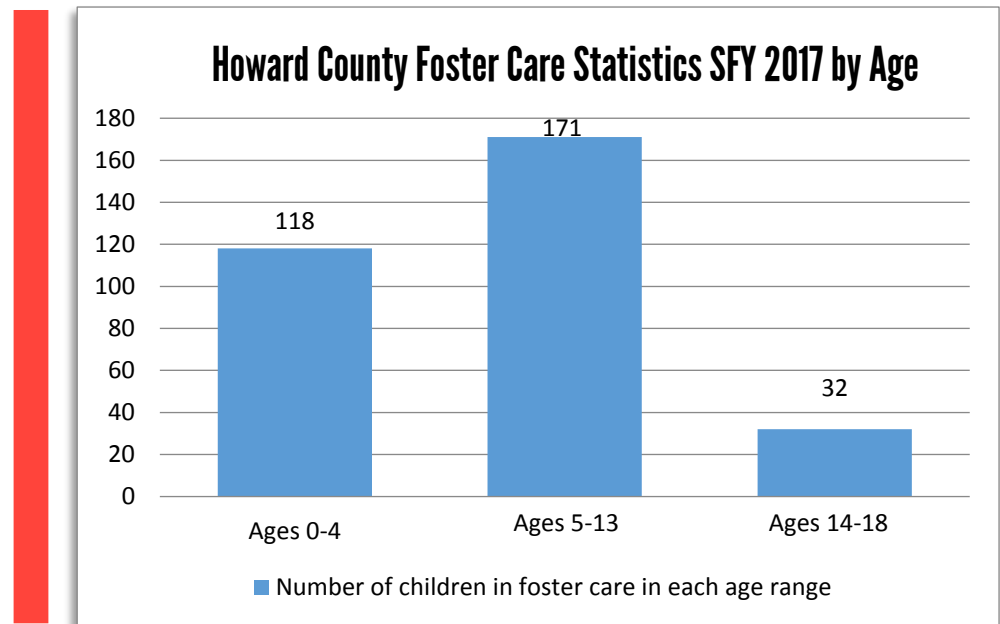
¹⁵ Discussion with director of CASA of Howard County, April 2018.

¹⁶ Discussion with early childhood services provider, April 2018.

¹⁷ Indiana Youth Institute, May 2018.

20 children being raised by grandparents or other relatives outside of the foster care system.”¹⁸ If these numbers hold true for Howard County, our community has an estimated 620 children, ages birth to five in informal kinship care placements.

Figure 5:
United Way of Howard County



Foster Care

Nearly 3% of children in Howard County are living in foster care or with another unrelated adult.¹⁹ According to the Indiana Department of Children’s Services, “foster care provides a safe, nurturing, stable and temporary environment for children who can no longer remain in their own homes due to the risk of neglect or abuse.”²⁰

321 children were in foster care in Howard County in 2017. 118 of the 321 children were age birth to four (Figure 5).²¹ A local provider of child welfare services estimates that around 70% of these cases involve parental substance use.²²

¹⁸ “The State of Grandfamilies in America: 2016.” *Generations United*, 2016, www.gu.org/resources/the-state-of-grandfamilies-in-america-2016/.

¹⁹ Indiana Youth Institute, *2018 Indiana KIDS-COUNT Data Book*, 2018

²⁰ “About Foster Care.” *Indiana Department of Children’s Services*. 2018, www.in.gov/dcs/2983.htm

²¹ Indiana Youth Institute, April 2018.

²² Discussion with local provider of child welfare services, 2018

STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

A goal of the UNITED Against Opioid Abuse program is to assist in increasing collaboration among stakeholders who work to address substance abuse and mental health issues in Howard County. The stakeholder surveys provided baseline data needed to begin working toward achieving this goal. 13 community stakeholders completed these surveys and will be asked to complete the same survey during years 2 and 3 of the program.

The 23 items on the survey included multiple choice and open-ended questions as well as questions using a rating scale.

77% of stakeholders reported that they believe the community sees opioid or heroin addiction as a critically urgent or urgent local problem (Figure 6).²³

Stakeholders were asked to rate their responses to the following questions on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest.

To what degree do you think the community as a whole sees opioid or heroin addiction as an urgent local problem?

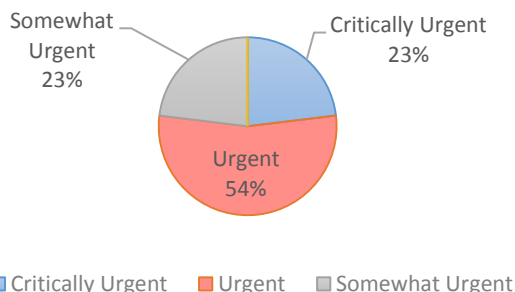


Figure 6: United Way of Howard County

State of Collaboration Spring 2018

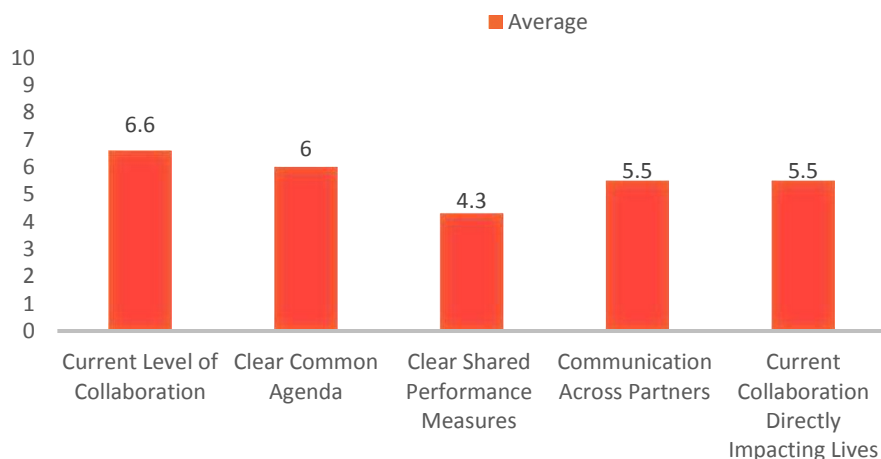


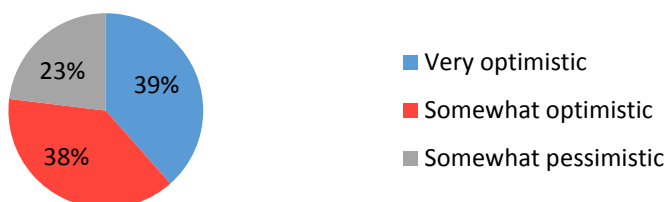
Figure 7: United Way of Howard County

Among the stakeholders currently addressing these issues in your community (Figure 7):

- How would you rate the current level of collaboration?
- To what degree is there a clear common agenda upon which most organizations have signed on to combat problematic substance use?
- To what degree are there clear shared performance measures about how the community will combat problematic substance use?
- To what degree are there clear shared performance measures about how the community will combat problematic substance use?
- How would you rate communication across partners?

²³ UNITED Against Opioid Abuse, Community Assessment data, 2018

How hopeful are you about the success of the current collaboration around substance use disorder in your community?



77% of stakeholders reported that they are very optimistic or somewhat optimistic about the success of the current collaboration around substance use disorder in Howard County (Figure 8).²⁴

Figure 8:
United Way of Howard County

The Howard County System of Care has been working to address substance abuse and mental health issues in our community. It is important to note that multiple stakeholders mentioned “Turning Point,” a specialized information and referral service through the System of Care, as an entity that would increase the direct impact of collaboration on the lives of individuals in our community. Turning Point had not yet opened at the time the initial surveys were completed.

Organization and Service Provider Discussions

Over the course of the service term, we met with representatives from 24 local organizations providing direct service support to clients to discuss their experiences regarding the opioid epidemic’s impact on families with children birth to five. During the conversations, service providers stressed the impact of parental substance use on children under five is often overlooked. One service provider involved in substance abuse prevention commented that in eight years of experience, no one had asked about the impact on families with children birth to five.²⁵ Another provider stated that it would be interesting to hear what others had to say about the effects of substance use on children. This provider mentioned it was often assumed that there are no effects because the children themselves are not abusing substances.²⁶

Providers also reported that while opioid use in Howard County is a serious problem, people using opioids are often also using other illicit substances. Providers indicated that methamphetamine use in Howard County is on the rise again with many providers wondering what the next drug will be.²⁷ A provider of in-home case management services spoke to the potency and power of the drugs that are currently available, stating, “Drugs parents are using now are so powerful. It completely changes their priorities, and they don’t care about anything but getting the drug.”²⁸

Service providers at many organizations commented on the need for more local mental health services, with providers highlighting the connection between substance abuse and mental health issues.²⁹

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Discussion with Howard County service provider, March 2018.

²⁶ Discussion with Howard County service provider, February 2018.

²⁷ Discussions with Howard County service providers, 2018.

²⁸ Discussion with Howard County service provider, April 2018.

²⁹ Discussions with Howard County service providers, 2018.

PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

Public knowledge is knowledge that can only be gained by deeply listening to members of our community and meeting people right where they are. This knowledge is based on information community members share about their lives, what matters to them and how they see and experience our community. We wanted to gather enough public knowledge so that we can take action in a way that is most meaningful to Howard County.

Harwood Community Conversations

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation has 30 years of experience supporting organizations as they “bridge divides, build capacity and tackle shared challenges” in their community. Community conversations are a part of the Harwood Institutes turning outward model of community change.³⁰ A conversation leader facilitates these conversations using a structured discussion guide that has been vetted and utilized in all types of communities over the past 25 years.³¹

We facilitated four Harwood Community Conversations with 60 Howard County community members. During these conversations, guests shared their aspirations, concerns and ideas for strengthening the community regarding the opioid epidemic’s impact on families with young children. Following the conversations we collected the public knowledge we received, looked for shared aspirations and analyzed it for themes that were important to community members across the conversations.

While we heard many ideas, more than anything else, we heard people want to live in a community where they feel safe, but they are concerned that a lack of community connection leading to increased drug use and crime is in the way of achieving this aspiration. As people talked more about those concerns, they talked about the effects on young children when they do not live with engaged parents because of substance use. They said we need to focus on connecting foster and kinship care families with more resources, supporting parents struggling with addiction, providing affordable child care and building resiliency in children affected by parental substance use.



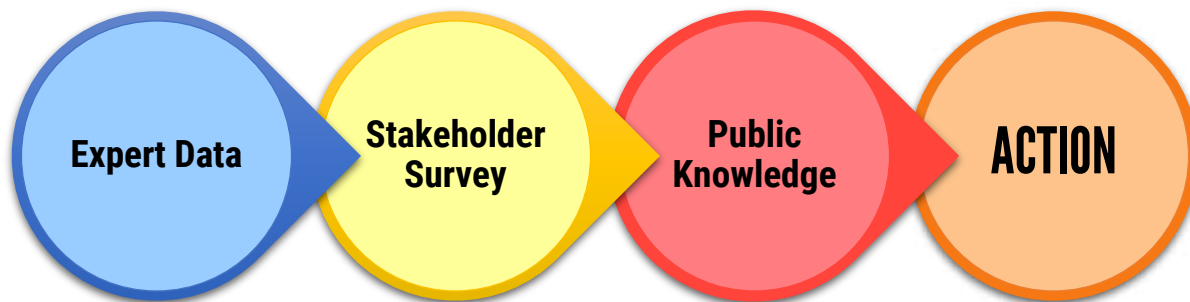
Community Conversations in Howard County, Jan-July 2018

³⁰ Harwood Institute, 2018, <https://theharwoodinstitute.org/>.

³¹ “Community Conversation Workbook.” *The Harwood Institute*, 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion



Action Items:

- Continue to send a representative from UNITED Against Opioid Abuse to applicable community coalition meetings in order to provide support and remain engaged in substance abuse and mental health issues in Howard County.
- Begin tracking data on the number of children in informal kinship care.
- Explore possibility of ongoing kinship care case management program.
- Further review of substance use and mental health resources available in Howard County. Assist in advocating for an increase in available services.
- Create an asset map specific to services available for families with children birth to five in Howard County.
- Place an AmeriCorps member with Howard County System of Care and Turning Point to provide additional support and assist in building capacity.
- Yearly trauma-informed care training for early childhood education staff at early learning centers.
- Explore possibility of a specialized case management program, including education and/or mentoring services for families with children birth to five who are dealing with effects from substance use disorder.
- Committee for advocacy for families with children birth to five, including kinship care providers.
- Child care scholarships for kinship care providers.

CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you

United Way of Howard County and AmeriCorps would like to thank the many stakeholders and community members who have taken the time to meet with us and discuss this important issue in our community. We thank you for your role in creating solutions that will support Howard County's young children impacted by substance use.

This landscape scan was primarily written by Libby O'Brien during her AmeriCorps membership year. She would, however, like to acknowledge the help she received in concept, strategy, editing, data, graphic design, and general support as she researched this topic.

This work is a true collaboration of many people's gifts, including:

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