

— TOP TAKEAWAYS —
**The Opioid Epidemic
Effects on Women**



**THE SHRINKING DRUG
ABUSE GENDER GAP**

- Opioid-related deaths in women multiplied by 5 during 1999 to 2010, by 3.6 for men.
- Unlike other substance abuse, opioid addiction often starts with misuse of pain drugs.
- Women experience more pain and therefore get more/longer pain prescriptions.

Source: [CDC](#)



**DEVASTATING IMPACT ON FETAL/
MATERNAL HEALTH**

- Every 25 minutes, a baby with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) is born.
- Approximately 17 percent of pregnant women get an opioid prescription.
- NAS babies stay in hospital approximately 15 days longer, costing \$63,000 more on average than healthy babies.
- 81 percent of NAS babies are covered by Medicaid.

Source: [NIDA](#)



DESTROYING FAMILIES

- Opioid addiction most affects people in prime parenting years: 25-54 years old.
- Huge increases in drug-related home removals by Depts. of Child Services.
- Responsibility for children makes it harder for women to seek/receive treatment.

Source: [NCSL](#)



WOMEN IN ILLICIT DRUG MARKETS

- Opioid-related deaths continue to rise despite prescriptions falling. The culprit? Illicit drugs.
- 80 percent of heroin users first misused a prescription opioid.
- Users are at higher risk of HIV/Hep C infection due to needle use.
- Women particularly at risk of sexual violence or exploitation through trafficking.

Source: [NPR](#)



SOLUTIONS

- Encourage doctors and patients to pursue alternative pain treatment methods.
- Strengthen response to drug addiction in pregnancy, especially within Medicaid.
- Foster state-based interagency programs to combat addiction and keep families whole.
- Encourage public-private partnerships with organizations already fighting drug abuse.
- Strengthen response for women who face violence and abuse in illicit markets