

INFOCUS



Caren Harp, Administrator

September 2020

Supporting Youth and Families Impacted by Opioid Abuse

America is in the grip of an addiction crisis. Powerful synthetic drugs like fentanyl and a reemergence of methamphetamines are compounding the damage caused by illicit opioid use, which accounted for almost 70 percent of the nearly 67,400 drug overdose deaths in 2018.¹ In 2017, more than 4,000 deaths among youth ages 15–24 were attributed to opioid overdose.² Opioid dependency and abuse have disrupted public safety and increased the burden on law enforcement as well as on the healthcare, child welfare, and juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Through opioid-focused programs and specialized training and technical assistance, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is working to break the cycles of addiction and crime and help save lives. In addition, OJJDP's **drug courts** provide services to youth and families with all types of substance abuse challenges, including those related to opioid abuse or co-occurring mental health disorders.

Programs

Opioid Affected Youth Initiative

Grantees provide integrated services that support youth and families through treatment and recovery and help reduce youth's involvement in the juvenile justice and foster care systems. Training and technical assistance helps the grantees analyze data and outcome measures to improve their services.

Mentoring for Youth Impacted by Opioids and Drug Addiction

This program funds mentoring for substance-abusing youth and those at risk for abusing substances, as well as youth with family members who misuse drugs. The Office supports local, regional, and national organizations as they strengthen and expand their mentoring services for these vulnerable youth.

Training and Technical Assistance

Child Abuse Training for Judicial and Court Personnel

This training helps improve participants' response to child abuse cases, including cases that involve children impacted by opioid abuse. The training emphasizes evidence-based treatment, family engagement and reunification when it is in the best interest of the child, and information sharing across the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

For More Information

Access more information about OJJDP's opioid prevention efforts at <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/opioid-abuse>.

¹ Wilson, N., Kariisa, M., Seth, P., Smith, H., and Davis, N.C. 2020. *Drug and opioid-involved overdose deaths—United States, 2017–2018*. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69(11):290–297.

² *Wide-ranging online data for epidemiologic research (WONDER)*. 2017. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

³ In fiscal year 2017, efforts to combat opioid abuse were supported through funding for **drug courts**.

Funding

In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, OJJDP awarded almost \$41 million to respond to the opioid epidemic.

- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2019—\$24 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2018—\$16.7 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2017—Not funded³**

From the Field

The Mentor Connector's Opioid Family Mentoring program is helping families build skills to promote a healthier lifestyle and prevent youth from perpetuating the cycle of drug abuse.

Participating families have one parent in substance abuse treatment and receive weekly guidance from family and youth mentors. The family mentor helps the family develop goals, access healthcare, and establish healthy community connections. The youth mentor supports the social, emotional, and educational growth of the family's children. This unique model has led to a mentor-match length of 4.1 years, which is five times the national average.

"Resiliency, self-sufficiency, and hope for the future. These are the changes we are seeing every day in our youth and families," says Chris Hultquist, the program's executive director. "This is life-transforming work."

OJJDP

Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention
ojjdp.ojp.gov

NCJ 253050