



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joint State Government Commission
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Released: November 28, 2022

Short Summary in response to Act 2 of 2022

Report of the Opioid Abuse Child Impact Task Force

The opioid epidemic has had devastating consequences for tens of thousands of people in Pennsylvania through loss of life, broken families, and economic turmoil. It may be no more keenly painful than when it is felt by the infants and children who are swept into tragic circumstances as helpless victims. Act 2 of 2022 established the Opioid Abuse Child Impact Task Force to “focus on improving the safety, well-being and permanency of substance-exposed infants and other young children affected by their parents' substance abuse disorders.”

The Task Force included the Secretaries of the Departments of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Health, and Human Services along with experts and stakeholders in medicine, substance use disorder, advocacy, and community services. The group’s objectives were, in short, to identify strategies to mitigate the suffering of infants and children caught in the opioid epidemic. After deliberations based on expertise, experience, and evidence, the Task Force developed over a dozen actionable recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly and Governor.

Three primary recommendations should guide future work. First, every effort to connect families to necessary resources should focus on eliminating the stigma commonly associated with substance use disorder. Second, the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs should form a Work Group to collaborate among themselves and partner with healthcare providers, community-based organizations, schools, people with lived experience, and other entities to work with birthing parents, infants, and families, in the Commonwealth’s diversity of communities. Third, the Work Group should promote economic policies that support families, including tax credits, childcare subsidies, paid parental leave, flexible and consistent work schedules, and increased minimum wage.

On behalf of the Joint State Government Commission, we extend our thanks to the Task Force, staff, care providers, and families for their vital contributions and tireless efforts to help the most helpless emerge from the harm caused by opioid use disorder.

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