

Section 14 – Substance Abuse Overview

“All children wake up in a world that is not of their own making, but children of alcoholics and other drug-addicted parents wake up in a world that doesn’t take care of them.”

- ***Jeannette L. Johnson & Sis Wenger***

Many cases bringing children into the dependency system have substance abuse as a primary or secondary issue. Parents who abuse substances or are addicted may be neglectful in meeting their children’s safety or well-being needs. Attachment may be impaired, the stability and consistency children need to follow a typical developmental trajectory may be missing, and the lack of good decision-making while under the influence or as a symptom of addiction may endanger the welfare of the children. Parents who are unable to function while intoxicated may leave children unattended, leading to the possibility of serious consequences. The treatment of these issues becomes paramount in many dependency cases, often directly impacting the timeliness of reunification.

This section includes three primary resources providing an overview of issues related to adults and adolescents and a link to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable’s Drug & Alcohol Workgroup website. Additional resources highlight the brain science of addiction, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and the importance of multi-system treatment approaches.

- I. Written by a retired superior court judge, this resource discusses the complex nature of parental substance abuse and dependency. (See, *Hon. Milliken, J.R., & Rippel, G., 2004*)
- II. This article contains a concise fact sheet providing statistics, associated risk factors, and strategies for addressing the unique needs of adolescent substance abusers. (See, *Knight, J., Roberts, T., Gabrielli, J., & Hook, S., 2010*)
- III. The Pennsylvania State Roundtable Drug & Alcohol Workgroup created resources including links, a benchcard, an educational video, handouts, reports, and other resources for judges and legal professionals working with individuals impacted by substance abuse. (See, *Office of Children & Families in the Courts: Drug & Alcohol, n.d.*)

