

## Children of Substance Abusers

Alcoholism and drug addiction is taking a toll on the American family. As a result, 8.3 million children in the United States, approximately 11 percent, live with at least one parent who is in need of treatment for alcohol- or drug-dependency. One in four children younger than the age of 18 is living in a home where alcoholism or alcohol abuse is a fact of daily life. Countless others are exposed to illegal drug use in their families.

The toll addiction takes on these children can be substantial. Children of addiction (or COAs) are at significantly greater risk for:

- mental illness or emotional problems, such as depression or anxiety
- physical health problems
- learning problems, including difficulty with cognitive and verbal skills, conceptual reasoning and abstract thinking

In addition, children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are almost three times more likely to be verbally, physically or sexually abused; and four times more likely than other children to be neglected. Strong scientific evidence also suggests that addiction tends to run in families. Children of a parent with alcoholism are four times more likely than non-COAs to develop alcoholism or other drug problems.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)