

# Therapeutic Pathways for Children Affected by Caregiver Substance Misuse

## INTRODUCTION

- One in 8 children in the United States live with a parent diagnosed with a substance use disorder
- One in 5 children live with a parent who misuses substances
- These children experience higher rates of abuse and neglect, parental separation, and housing instability
- Behavioral health services available for many of these children is lacking
- The Family Oriented Resilience Growth and Empowerment (FORGE) Program was developed to address these needs

## METHODS

### FORGE Program Development

- Launched in August 2019
- Identify and treat children ages zero to 17 affected by familial substance use.
- Provided individual, family, and group interventions
- “No-wrong-door” approach

### FORGE Eligibility Criteria

Parental Substance Abuse      Homelessness/Housing Instability  
 Intimate Partner Violence      Parental Incarceration

### Data Collection

- Demographics: child age, gender, racial identity, ethnic identity, insurance status, and child’s primary language
- Referral source, substance(s) used by parents, child diagnosis, social services involvement, and removal from parent’s care
- Treatment engagement:
  - if the family scheduled a first appointment
  - if the family attended a first appointment, consult, or intake,
  - if the family attended any treatment sessions and the number of sessions attended over a two-year period

## RESULTS

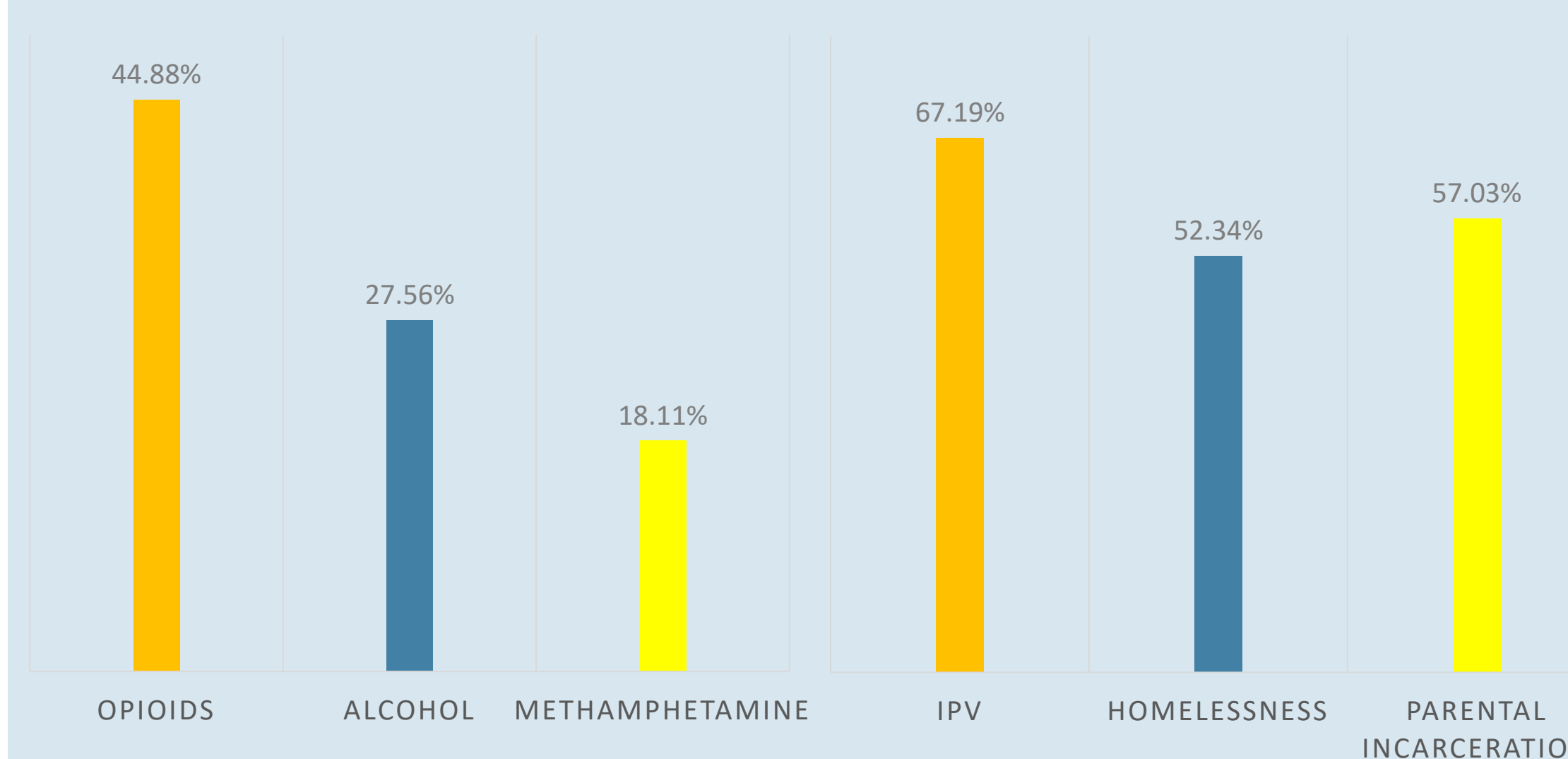
### Demographics

- White-Hispanic (41.9%), White Non-Hispanic (24.6%), and Black/African-American (12.7%)
- Children ages 4 months to 17 years ( $M(SD)=9.11(5.16)$ ); 52% female
- 91.6% publicly insured

### Referral Data

- 127 children referred between August 2019 and March 2020
- Denver Health referrals from substance use treatment clinics (43%) and pediatric primary care clinic (27.56%)
- Trauma and stressor related disorders most common diagnoses (42.97%)
- 32.81% of children referred during an active DHS case
- 40% of children had been removed from their biological parents’ custody in their lifetime

MOST COMMON SUBSTANCES USED BY PARENTS



### Treatment Engagement Results

- 90 (71%) children completed initial consult and/or intake
- 57 (63%) attended one therapy session
- 1 to 59 therapy sessions attended ( $Mdn = 7$  sessions)

## CONCLUSION

### Key Findings

- FORGE program is the first integrated outpatient program for children of all ages affected by parental substance misuse in the nation
- Eligibility criteria successful in identifying families with parental substance misuse
- Account for both parental substance abuse and adverse experiences in design of service and intervention approaches
- Successful program implementation in a safety-net hospital

### FORGE Growth

- Routine outcome monitoring
- Empirically standard treatments
- Behavioral health services in other areas of our hospital

### Limitations

- Retrospective chart review
- Missing data on child and family characteristics
- No outcome measurement of treatment success

## AUTHORS & DISCLOSURES

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 A. Nothing to disclose

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