

What is a COA?

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The term COA refers to children who grow up in families where a family member, often a parent or caregiver, struggles with alcohol use disorder or substance use disorder, otherwise known as addiction. This experience often shapes their childhood, leaving lasting emotional, psychological, and social effects. These children mature into adults who still can be affected, often referred to as ACOAs.

For children in families impacted by the disease of addiction, daily life can be unpredictable and challenging. They may face emotional turmoil, including feelings of shame, fear, or loneliness. Many COAs take on caregiving roles early, sacrificing their own needs to support their family. Others act out negatively for attention, or withdraw completely. Despite these difficulties, COAs often display remarkable resilience and strength.

UNDERSTANDING THE COA EXPERIENCE

WHY AWARENESS MATTERS

Raising awareness about COAs during this week is critical for fostering understanding, breaking the cycle of intergenerational addiction, and ensuring these children receive the support they deserve. By acknowledging the struggles of COAs and creating supportive environments, we can empower them to thrive.

For adult COAs, the impact of growing up in a family affected by the disease of addiction can linger into adulthood, influencing relationships, self-esteem, and emotional well-being. The good news is that it's never too late to seek help and begin the healing process. Many adult COAs find strength and renewal through therapy, support groups, and educational resources. By addressing these challenges, adult COAs can break free from the cycle of dysfunction and embrace a future defined by resilience, self-compassion, and hope.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO HEAL

We are the National Association for Children of Addiction (NACoA). Our mission is to eliminate the adverse impact of alcohol and drug use on children and families. We envision a world in which no child who struggles because of family addiction will be left unsupported.

Help us make a difference in the lives of children impacted by the disease of addiction. Together, we can transform these children at risk into children of promise.