

# Data Elements Needed to Inform Practice and Policy to Reduce Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities and Near Fatalities

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Presented to the National Commission to Eliminate  
Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities

Philadelphia, PA

December 4, 2014

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# Data Organized by Family

- Nothing else that you hear today will be as vital as this
  - As long as we think that it is acceptable or sufficient to treat cases as independent of prior family birth, child welfare, and criminal justice history, we will not make significant progress
  - This can be done
  - This should be done (if the benefit of this entire enterprise is to be realized)

## 2 Obvious Ways to Create Family Data

- Use all available administrative data (Medicaid enrollment data, CWS, SNAP, Child Support, TANF)
  - Some states have their data organized by families
  - This can be improved
- Link CWS data to birth (vital statistics) records

# Linked to Birth Records

- Obvious solution
- CDC shapes the way that states make vital records available with their guidance & \$
- CDC is interested in improving the use of vital records for injury prevention
- Several states are now doing this (MD, MI, MN, & TX)

# Severe Maltreatment (Near Fatalities) Should Be Included as Dependent Variables

- Major advantages in analyzing data that includes behavior that could have resulted in child abuse deaths, even if it did not, for all children in the family
  - Increases sample significantly
  - Helps

# Predicting Harm

- Best predictions likely to be made when they include information about the:
  - Parents
    - Criminal child abuse charges
    - TPRs for previous children
    - Loss of full custody via transfer of child to Guardianship
    - Birth related information for each child in family
    - Psychosocial factors (does the family indicate that parent received juvenile services)
  - Children
    - Health indicators at birth
  - Child Welfare Professional's Characteristics
  - Case Formulation

# Using Birth Data in Real Time

- Is allowable, reasonable, and achievable
- We have precedent for using data about prior parental involvement with CWS
  - ASFA expects CWS to include this information in determining how to respond to protect children born to parents who have previously had a TPR
- With more analysis (research on existing birth match programs), this could become the standard of care

# Other High Risk Mothers We Could Learn About from Birth Records

- 40% of children, born to teen mothers who were involved with CWS as victims, will be reported for child abuse by age 5 (Putnam-Hornstein, 2014)
- Children who are born following the birth of a small for gestational age child have 3Xs the likelihood of dying by the age of 1 than other children (Salihu, et al., 2012).

# Birth Match: Significance & Challenge

- This is an opportunity to use available data in REAL time to identify high risk children and bring protective resources to them
- CHALLENGE: To overcome our reluctance to identify any false positives using the heavy hand of CPS.
  - The responsibility to use parents prior performance to determine whether to bypass reunification efforts has now been integrated into CWS policy and practice; Birth Match is a logical next advance

# NCANDS: Fatalities+ Near Fatalities After Placement into Adoption

- Should be included in NCANDS to get a better estimate of the risks of adoption and foster care and because we actually do have reasonably good parent data for foster care and adoption
  - SAFE, or other standardized home studies, do include a psychosocial assessment of foster and adoptive families

# Preventing Child Abuse Deaths of Adopted Children

- Children who were reported for abuse and neglect die in foster care and adoption every month
- Although there is evidence that these death rates are lower than for maltreated children remaining at home, or who were reunified from foster care (Barth & Blackwell, 1998), the rate of murder of children in foster care and adoption is certainly unacceptably high
- Better data needs to be collected about such filicides

# Yes, Adopted Children, Too

- *Child Maltreatment* reports the proportion of child fatality cases that had prior contact with CWS.
- We count children who were in family preservation and then go on to be killed by parents
  - About 12% of all the child abuse fatality cases were previously known to have received family preservation services and 2.5% had been reunified.
- Abused children who later go into foster care or adoption and are then killed are not counted in NCANDS, but should be

# Gather Data on Adoption Deaths

- **Child Fatalities Who Received Family Preservation Services Within the Past 5 Years (CM, 2012; Table 4-5).**
- **Child Fatalities Who Were Reunited With Their Families Within the Past 5 Years, 2012 (CM, 2012; Table 4-6).**
- **WHY NOT: Child Fatalities Who Were Placed Out of Home (Foster Care, Guardianship, Adoption) Within the Past 5 Years**

# Precedent Setting: Fostering Connections for Success

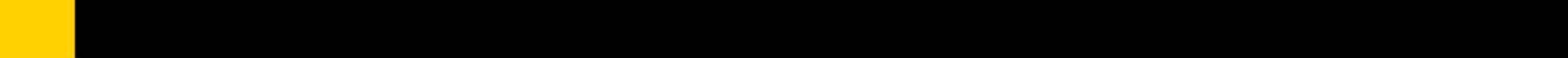
- *Fostering Connections for Success* (PL 110-351), requires parents of children who have been adopted from foster care and who receive a subsidy to show that the children are in school.

**This is the first federal law to require any check on an adopted child's well-being be made on an annual basis (although some states have had such checks).**

- Keeping statistics on abuse or murder by foster and adoptive parents is consistent with the responsibility of the federal government to ensure quality long-term care of former foster children that promotes their well-being.

# CAPTA Changes

- As a first step, CAPTA should be revised to clarify the importance of providing information, in the child-level child maltreatment fatality reporting, on child fatalities of children or children who have been adopted from foster care
- All deaths of children in foster and adoptive care should be captured so that a comprehensive and complete picture can be drawn



Thank You

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