APSAC ALERT

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Special Points of Interest:

- *In the U.S., more than 1,500 children die each year as a result of child abuse and neglect.*
- *75% of children who die as a result of abuse and neglect are under 3 years old.*
- *Previous involvement with CPS is the best predictor of death or injury in children aged 4 and younger.*
- *Children who die as a result of abuse or neglect may not have had a previous encounter with CPS, but they have had encounters with other professionals, illustrating the need for multisector efforts.*
- *Racial disproportionality in the child welfare system has significant implications in minority communities. Further attention to the root causes of these biases should be addressed.*

A Public Health Approach to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities: Summary of *Within Our Reach: A National Strategy to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities*

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The Protect Our Kids Act of 2012 called for the development of the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF). Charged with developing a national strategy to reduce child deaths attributed to abuse or neglect, the CECANF released the national strategy report titled *Within Our Reach: A National Strategy to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities* (Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities, 2016). The CECANF proposed a public health approach to child safety including effective leadership at all levels, data-informed decision making, and multisystem participation in all levels of prevention.

To eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities, primary and secondary prevention of child abuse are essential. A collective approach is critical between community agencies, including child protective services (CPS), law enforcement, the courts, medical and mental health professionals, family service providers, and clergy, to provide primary prevention and support the work of the child welfare system. While much of this report is focused on realigning federal and state child welfare policies, there are specific

recommendations for community partners to share the responsibility and accountability in preventing child maltreatment deaths.

CECANF Immediate Recommendations to Prevent Child Fatalities:

Identify children and families most at risk of a maltreatment fatality
Share data electronically and in real time across systems
Review near-fatality cases
Provide accountability of providers, CPS, and mandated reporters to meet quality and training standards
Augment the structure of the federal government and expand its authority and oversight of state policy and practice
Invest money and resources for the 21st-century welfare system.

CECANF, 2016, pp.13–14.

Through the process of holding public hearings, the CECANF noted the importance of identifying patterns associated with increased risk of child fatalities and the importance of early intervention by connecting families with quality, evidence-based supportive services. Action to address these factors includes an ecological approach to address poverty, implicit bias, and disparities. This requires operational partnerships between public and private sectors in the community to build trusting relationships with families and to leverage resources that proactively address risk factors and promote resilience.

The CECANF maintains that coordinated efforts are critical to prevention of child fatalities. Examples of coordinated, multisystem engaged efforts include the following:

- Multidisciplinary professionals informing the development of state fatality prevention plans (Recommendation 5.2, 6.2)
- Shared data on children and families between law enforcement and CPS (Recommendation 6.1)
- Pediatric health information exchanges with shared information on prior child injury visits across systems to enhance surveillance within emergency departments, acute care, and pediatric offices (Recommendation 7.2)
- Access to high-quality prevention and earlier intervention services and supports for children and families at risk (Recommendation 7.1)
- Standardized protocol and guidelines for medical examiners regarding child death investigation across states (Recommendation 6.2)
- Partnerships between CPS, courts, law enforcement, medical professionals, and family service providers to preserve families through enhancing protective factors in the home and community (Recommendation 4.1).

The CECANF discussed the issue of racial disproportionality in the child welfare system and the ways in which implicit biases negatively affect minority children and families. Implicit biases are found across systems and levels of services within the CPS workforce, law enforcement, courts, medical professionals, and family service providers. Recommendations state that child welfare system providers receive racial equity training, including "(1) family engagement, development, and strengthening; (2) understanding racial and ethnic cultures and cultural norms; (3) understanding the historical context of racism; (4) understanding and recognizing biases; and (5) how biases can impact assessment of risk, access to services, and delivery of services" (Recommendation 4.2)(2016, p. 64).

The public health model recommended by the CECANF stresses the importance of building and sustaining community capacity for prevention of child abuse, neglect, and fatalities. In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities* (Fortson, Klevens, Merrick, Gilbert, & Alexander, 2016). This technical package offers three components––strategy, approach, and evidence for providers, communities, states, and other entities to prioritize evidence-based efforts and

build community capacity for prevention across the levels of social ecology––and offers small- and large -scale ways to operationalize recommendations from the *Within Our Reach: A National Strategy to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities* (Fortson et al., 2016). The foundation and findings of this program combined with *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities* support all six of the necessary components for effective public health program implementation as defined by the CDC, providing access to solutions for child advocates that are "within our reach" (Frieden, 2014, p. 17).

References

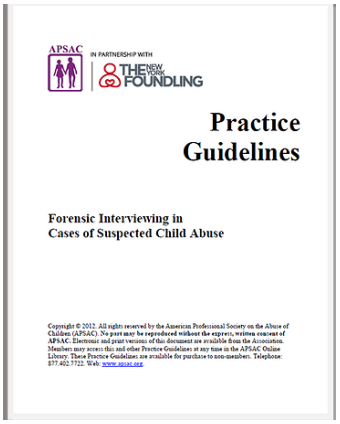
Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. (2016). *Within our reach: A national strategy to eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Fortson, B. L., Klevens, J., Merrick, M. T., Gilbert, L. K., & Alexander, S. P. (2016). *Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities.* Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Frieden, T. R. (2014). Six components necessary for effective public health program implementation. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*, 17–22.

News from APSAC

APSAC Guidelines for Practice Now Available at No Cost



APSAC is pleased to share that our Board of Directors voted to make all Guidelines for Practice available for free! Guidelines are developed by National Interdisciplinary Guidelines Task Forces and include concise, data-based information on key areas of practice in child maltreatment. APSAC Guidelines for Practice are vetted through a rigorous, multi-layered peer review process, involving subject matter experts not on the task force, APSAC members, legal counsel, and APSAC's Board of Directors. Be sure to read the two Guidelines just published in 2017— The Investigation and Determination of Suspected Psychological Maltreatment in Children and Adolescents and Munchausen by Proxy: (MBP): Clinical and Case Management Guidance. Click here to access the guidelines.

APSAC Holds Inaugural Psychological Maltreatment Symposium in Montclair, New Jersey

On December 11th, APSAC held a one-day symposium on Psychological Maltreatment, put on in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey, Montclair State University, and the New Jersey Children's Alliance. The faculty, pictured here, included the authors of the APSAC Guidelines The Investigation and Determination of Suspected Psychological Maltreatment in Children and Adolescents—Marla Brassard, Stuart Hart, and Amy Baker; and Gina Hernandez, Senior Vice President of Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey. The event was certified for CEU's and received rave reviews from the audience of CPS workers, early childhood center staff, home visitors, child advocacy center staff and faculty from Montclair.

Want to bring this one-of-a-kind program to your state? Contact Jim Campbell.

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