

# Rapid Response: Maltreatment in Foster Care

March 19, 2015

## Question:

Oregon child welfare leadership is looking for some immediate, short term technical assistance from Casey Family Programs regarding states that have reduced incidence of maltreatment in foster care (among other topics). Oregon is interested examples from at least two states that have a comparatively low level of abuse in foster care in addition to possible reasons for this success (e.g., are the lower rates due to training, monitoring and oversight of foster families, etc?).

## Response:

This Rapid Response includes links to resources regarding maltreatment in foster care and examples of states that have been recognized as reducing maltreatment in public child welfare settings. These resources were compiled on March 19, 2015. The links contained in the summary are not an exhaustive list or endorsement of any one approach; instead, this Rapid Response presents information on a topic of interest to Oregon's child welfare leadership as part of a larger request from Oregon for subject matter expertise and technical assistance from Casey Family Programs.

## National Reports

### Child Maltreatment Report 2013: Absence of Maltreatment In Foster Care Data

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). *Child maltreatment 2013*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2013.pdf>

This report describes how the federal government measures the performance of states regarding child welfare through the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. Through the CFSR, the Children's Bureau has established a national standard for the absence of maltreatment in foster care as 99.68 percent, defined as:

"Of all children in foster care during the reporting period, what percent were not victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment by foster parents or facility staff members (page 22).

According to Table 3-17 on page 53, Absence of Maltreatment in Foster Care, 2008-2012, number of states in compliance increased from 23 states for 2009 to 24 states (47.1%) for 2013.

Two states had absence of maltreatment rates of 100%: New Hampshire and Wyoming Vermont. The following is a sampling of states that exceeded the 99.68% standard in 2013, and links to each of these states are included in this document.

State	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Pennsylvania	99.81	99.86	99.92	99.86	99.89
Texas	99.80	99.90	99.81	99.73	99.71
Virginia	99.75	99.82	99.74	99.84	99.79

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## **Federal Child Safety Indicators: National-level Data**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *Child welfare outcomes: 2009–2012 report to congress*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cwo09\\_12.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cwo09_12.pdf)

This report to the U.S. Congress includes information regarding national data of the recurrence of child maltreatment within six months (Outcome 1) and maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member (Outcome 2). National findings include (p. iv, Executive Summary) that:

### **Outcome 1: Reduce recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect**

- Performance with regard to recurrence of child maltreatment (measure 1.1) improved significantly between 2009 and 2012.
- The median improved from 5.7 percent in 2009 to 5.1 percent in 2012, a 10.5 percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure). Furthermore, a higher percentage of states demonstrated an improvement in performance on this measure (43 percent) than showed a decline in performance (35 percent).

### **Outcome 2: Reduce the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care**

- In 2012, state performance regarding the maltreatment of children while in foster care (measure 2.1) ranged from 0.00 to 1.65 percent, with a median of 0.32 percent.
- Between 2009 and 2012, national performance improved with regard to the maltreatment of children in foster care (measure 2.1). While nearly equal numbers of states improved and declined in performance between 2009 and 2012, the national median declined from .34 in 2009 to .30 in 2012, an 11.8 percent decrease (note that a lower percentage is desirable for this measure).

## **Examples of Promising and Effective Practices**

### **Child Welfare League of America Best Practices in Child Maltreatment in Foster Care**

Child Welfare League of America. (2003). *Child maltreatment in foster care: CWLA best practices*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/policy-issues/maltreatment-guidelines.pdf>

CWLA, in partnership with Casey Family Programs, developed these best practice guidelines to provide direction to child welfare agencies providing placement and child protective services (CPS). These guidelines provide agencies with an effective tool to develop administrative policies, procedures, and practices that will ensure a coordinated, effective response to reports of maltreatment of children in foster care. These guidelines contain specific practices to assist child welfare professionals in responding to allegation of maltreatment in foster care in the following chapters:

- Preventing maltreatment in family foster care, and
- Receiving and responding to the report,
- The investigative process, and
- Post-investigation response activities.

### **Safety of Children in Foster Care: Data Collection, Best Practices, Engagement**

The Planning Council for Health and Human Services. (2009). *Key informant suggestions for keeping children safe in foster care*. Milwaukee, WI: Author. Retrieved on March 19,

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2015 from [http://www.impactinc.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/planning-council/PDF/Key Informant Report.pdf](http://www.impactinc.org/fileadmin/user_upload/planning-council/PDF/Key_Informant_Report.pdf)

The Planning Council for Health and Human Services in Wisconsin was asked to conduct a study focusing on the safety of children in foster care. This report from 2009 describes the study and includes descriptions of:

- The collection of data and information about the current foster care system,
- The identification of best and evidence-based practices related to the safety of children in foster care, and
- The engagement of the community in a discussion about the issues that relate to safety in foster care.

### **Inventory of Best and Evidence-Based Practices to Enhance Safety of Foster Care**

The Planning Council for Health and Human Services. (2009). *Best and evidence-based practices that enhance safety of children in foster care*. Milwaukee, WI: Author. Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from [https://ncwwi.org/files/Evidence Based and Trauma-Informed Practice/Best Evidence-Based Practices that Enhance Safety.pdf](https://ncwwi.org/files/Evidence_Based_and_Trauma-Informed_Practice/Best_Evidence-Based_Practices_that_Enhance_Safety.pdf)

The Planning Council for Health and Human Services, as part of a system-wide review in Milwaukee, Wisconsin compiled a summary of best practice and evidence-based programs in the following areas:

- Screening and assessment,
- Recruitment and retention,
- Foster parent training,
- Healthcare issues, and
- Workforce issues.

In each area, Planning Council researchers suggest principles of best practice, describe effective interventions and include links to tools, practices and organizations that can be used in addressing child maltreatment in out-of-home care.

## **Select State Examples**

### **Pennsylvania Annual Child Abuse Report**

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2014). *Annual child abuse report*. Harrisburg, PA: Department of Public Welfare. Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from [http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c\\_086251.pdf](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/report/c_086251.pdf)

This Commonwealth-wide report summarizes not only DPW responses to allegations of child maltreatment in foster care, but also includes summaries from each regional Children's Review Panel in Pennsylvania. The document includes review panel recommendations and DPW's response to those recommendations, which includes information on targeted media recruitment efforts to recruit new foster parents, improved training for foster parents and new opportunities for the Commonwealth's foster parent association to train current and prospective foster parents.

The report states that, in 2013, regional staff investigated 1,823 reports of suspected abuse involving agents of a county agency, a one percent increase from 2012. The overall regional substantiation rate in 2013 decreased by half a percentage point from 2012 (pages 22-23)

In Pennsylvania, the Child Protective Services Law requires DPW to report on the services provided to children abused in child care settings and the action taken against perpetrators. Child care settings include family day care homes, child care centers, foster homes, boarding homes for children, juvenile detention centers, residential facilities and institutional facilities. In 2013, there were 2,028 reports of suspected abuse of children in child care settings. A total of 143, seven percent, were substantiated. The department investigated 74 of the substantiated reports because the alleged perpetrators were agents of county agencies. Social services were planned and/or provided to alleged victims involved in the investigated reports, when appropriate. In 914 reports, 45 percent, information was referred to law enforcement officials for criminal investigation and prosecution; 119 of these reports were substantiated by the county agency investigation. Of the 143 reports substantiated in child care settings, the most frequent services planned or provided for a child, parent or perpetrator were protective and preventive counseling services, emergency shelter care in seven cases, multidisciplinary team case reviews and self-help groups.

### **Texas: Human Services Collaborative Recommendations for Improvement**

Barillas, K. (2014). *Recommendations to improve the safety of children in the Texas foster care system*. Houston, TX: One Voice Texas. Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from <http://www.onevoicetexas.org/14-4-2a%20Recommendations%20to%20Improve%20the%20Safety%20of%20Children%20in%20the%20Texas%20Foster%20Care%20System.pdf>

One Voice Texas, a human services collaborative based in Houston, has developed a series of policy and practice recommendations designed to improve the safety and well-being of children and youth served by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This document makes specific recommendations to Texas' child welfare system in the following areas:

- Reporting and investigation reports of abuse in licensed homes and facilities,
- Assessment and training of caregivers,
- Youth who identify as LGBT

### **Texas: New Child Safety Rules for Children and Youth in Foster Care September 1, 2014**

George, C. (2014). *New foster care rules to increase child safety take effect September 1*. Houston, TX: The Houston Advocate. Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from <http://blog.chron.com/advocate/2014/09/new-foster-care-rules-to-increase-child-safety-take-effect-sept-1/>

This Houston Chronicle blog post describes new rules regarding child safety in Texas' foster care system. The article presents information on the development and use of the new rules, which include:

- Safety assessments of homes and more unannounced visits, the updated regulations require new foster homes to have,
- An additional interview of a relative not living in the home.
- Two additional interviews of neighbors, clergy, school employees or other community members,
- Interviews of all adult children of foster parents, regardless of their residence, which deletes an earlier exception for adult children who could not be contacted,
- An assessment of foster parents' previous and current personal relationships, including common-law marriages and others who have shared a domestic life, and a review of household finances,

- Review of all law enforcement agency service calls to the foster home in the past two years, in addition to the current requirement for domestic violence calls in the previous year, and
- Verification of identity and background checks for any person designated as an emergency caregiver.

### **Texas DFPS Safety Plan for Children in Foster Care**

State of Texas. (2013). *DFPS safety plan for children in foster care*. Austin, TX: Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from <http://texascasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DFPS-Child-Safety-Plan-Final-Corrected.pdf>

This plan is part of a review of DFPS policies and practices led by Commissioner Judge John Specia. In Texas, child abuse and neglect-related child fatalities in the general population appear to have declined from fiscal year 2012 to fiscal year 2013, but this report indicates that there is a decrease in abuse and neglect-related fatalities in general, abuse and neglect-related fatalities in foster care have increased sharply. The goal of this safety plan is to address preventable deaths of children in foster care. The report includes action steps, points of accountability and timelines to address this issue with specific direction regarding:

- Serving children with medical needs,
- The safety responsibilities of providers, and
- The safety responsibilities of DFPS.

### **Virginia: Measuring Child Abuse and Neglect**

Commonwealth of Virginia. (2015). *Measuring child abuse and neglect*. Richmond, VA: Council on Virginia's Future. Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from <http://vaperforms.virginia.gov/indicators/healthfamily/childabuse.php>

This site notes that Virginia emphasizes parental outreach and education as well as protection of abused children, and that the Commonwealth's approach has resulted in an abuse rate that is substantially lower than the national average. In addition, the site reports that Virginia has a relatively low child maltreatment rate, ranking 5th lowest in the United States for substantiated cases of abuse. Nationally, the child maltreatment rate in 2013 was 9.8 substantiated cases per 1,000 children. This site reports that Virginia's rate was much lower, at just 3.2 cases per 1,000 children for the same year. Pennsylvania's rate of 1.3 was the lowest in the nation. Compared to its peer states, Virginia's child abuse rate in 2013 was lower than that of Maryland (10.0), North Carolina (9.3), and Tennessee (7.2).

### **Virginia Strategic Plan: Family Services Data Indicators**

Commonwealth of Virginia. (2014). *Strategic plan 2008-2010*. Richmond, VA: Department of Social Services (DSS) Retrieved on March 19, 2015 from [http://vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/Archive/AGY765\\_2008-2010StrategicPlan.pdf](http://vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/Archive/AGY765_2008-2010StrategicPlan.pdf)

The following report indicates that the Department of Social Services achieved the following benchmarks for the 2006-2007 biennium:

#### **Family Services**

- Repeat maltreatment (number of Child Protective Services (CPS) complaints with a second complaint within 6 months) – 1.78%.

- Number of children with a CPS maltreatment complaint while in foster care - 0.10%.
- Percentage of adoptions that are finalized within 24 months of the child entering care.

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