



Mary Jo Pankoke
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
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12/20/2022

Dear Mary Jo Pankoke,

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) would like to thank all members of the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for Serious Injury and Near Fatality for their time and efforts to support a child welfare response that could lead to reduced child abuse and neglect. DHHS has reviewed the recommendations and has the following response:

- 1. Improve internal policy and process to ensure law enforcement and medical reports are obtained by DHHS.**
- 2. Develop strategies to strengthen coordination across disciplines on child abuse and neglect investigations.**

DHHS makes adjustments to ensure best practices are utilized in working with children and families. In order to serve families well, the Department relies on partners like Child Advocacy Centers, Law Enforcement, Probation, etc. DHHS is adding a level of internal review to ensure the appropriate reports are received from law enforcement and medical providers. DHHS plans to collaborate with local Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) to analyze the strengths and barriers to sharing of information and coordination of investigations to improve the ability of DHHS to obtain requested records. DHHS is making enhancements through the development of training and updating policies and procedures to reflect best practices, including Quick Tips to front-line staff.

- 3. Conduct thorough reviews of all near fatality and serious injuries suspected to be caused by abuse or neglect at local Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation multidisciplinary teams.**

In an effort to improve child safety and realign child welfare toward a more preventative child and family well-being system, CFS joined child welfare leaders representing 26 state, county and tribal child and family serving agencies to form the National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS). The mission of NPCS is to improve child safety and prevent child maltreatment and fatalities by strengthening families and promoting innovations in child protection. Supported by Casey Family Programs, NPCS is a quality improvement collaborative formed to further key [recommendations and findings](#) of the federal

Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities, which highlighted the importance and impact of safety science and data sharing to system change and reform.

Safety science provides a framework and processes for child protection agencies to understand the inherently complex nature of the work and the factors that influence decision-making. It also provides a safe and supportive environment for professionals to process, share and learn from critical incidents to prevent additional tragedies.

Enhancing the ability of child welfare agencies to share data and use data to identify and protect children at risk of maltreatment or fatality will help save children's lives. To strengthen accountability, promote collaboration and improve child safety outcomes, members of this partnership are sharing data and applying a set of strategies, including implementing a standardized platform for critical incident review and reporting of data, comparing critical incident and team culture data, sharing cross-jurisdictional safety notices and more.

- 4. Form a workgroup on improving response to failure to thrive/malnutrition across disciplines.**
- 5. Provide training on failure to thrive/malnutrition.**

DHHS is committed to developing education and training around this topic for child welfare Professionals. Coordination with Children's Hospital, the Department of Health, and other pediatricians across the State of Nebraska who specialize in these areas is necessary to ensure best practices are followed concerning care for these vulnerable children. Failure to thrive has been identified as an in-service topic for Children and Family Services staff and a training plan will be developed to ensure all Children and Family Services staff have an opportunity to enhance their skills regarding this topic.

DHHS looks forward to continued collaboration and recommendations this coming year. Additionally, DHHS appreciates the work the CRP has done and continues to do in reviewing cases of this vulnerable population.

Sincerely,



Stephanie L. Beasley, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services