



2012 Agenda

FAIR DEAL FOR WORKING PARENTS

FACT SHEET: End Child Abuse Deaths and Near Death

All children need loving and safe home environments to help them thrive during childhood and as adults. However, thousands of children experience abuse or neglect from their parents or caretakers each year. While numerous programs work to intervene in child abuse or neglect situations, many children die or nearly die each year due to abuse or neglect. One child death resulting from abuse or neglect is one too many.

FACTS:

Death from child abuse and neglect is tragic yet preventable. In the past five years, 73 percent of child abuse fatalities in Kentucky were to children under the age of four. Of all fatalities and near fatalities during that time, 54 percent of the cases had prior history with child protective services. There are many programs that have proven track records of providing effective child abuse prevention and early intervention with families who are at risk. Funding for evidence-based programs should be increased.

Within current Kentucky law and regulations it is difficult to verify exactly how many children die from abuse and neglect annually. States turn in their numbers annually to the federal government, but they are likely under-reported. The federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently reported that this under-representation could be due to factors such as how child abuse deaths are classified, who determines the cause of the fatality, and missing state data.

Concerned citizens from across Kentucky identified solutions that would have the greatest impact and are most feasible to end child abuse deaths. Judges, professors, physicians, educators, social workers, elected leaders, grassroots advocates, business executives, child care workers, law enforcement officers, moms, dads, and nonprofit executives discussed and voted on the following list of improvements.

SOLUTIONS:

- Improve transparency and accountability of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Options for achieving greater transparency and accountability include the following:
 - addressing how the Cabinet follows up with people who report child abuse;
 - allowing judges to order the Cabinet to investigate certain cases;
 - determining the extent that relevant court proceedings are opened to the public;
 - increasing access to statewide and local child abuse, neglect, near fatality, and fatality data; and
 - improving the external child fatality review panels.
- Increase funds for proven and effective services: in-home services such as START (substance abuse treatment),
- HANDS (home visiting for first time mothers), and parent advocate programs, as well as CASA (help for children going through the court system).
- Increase funds for additional Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) social workers and support to reduce caseloads to more closely follow national caseload recommendations.
- Improve system collaboration among all government agencies involved in the child welfare system, including the courts, schools, medical professionals, and law enforcement.