

# Working Across Systems to Improve Outcomes for Young Children

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# Sounding the Alarm

- 250,000 maltreated infants and toddlers - the highest rate for all children
- 100,000 maltreated babies under age 1
- < 75% of maltreatment deaths involve children under age 3
- 100,000 maltreated children are removed and placed in foster care
- Infants and toddlers constitute the majority of substantiated medical neglect cases

## Sounding the Alarm (cont'd)

- 1/3 of all children admitted to care under age 3
- 1 in 6 children admitted to care under age 1
- Half of infants found maltreated are placed in care
- Infants and toddlers are more likely to remain in and return to care than older children

## Sounding the Alarm (cont'd)

- Nearly 80% of young children exposed prenatally to substance use
- Nearly 40% are born premature or low-birth weight
- > 50% have a chronic medical condition
- > 50% have a developmental delay

## Sounding the Alarm (cont'd)

- 4 – 5x rate of developmental delays as age cohorts
- > 50% have a speech or language delay
- 30% have motor delay
- Half have behavior or emotional delays warranting clinical intervention



# Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (1980)

- Designed to preserve families and promote permanency planning
- Required states to develop preventative care and family reunification programs
- Required case plans for services
- Required “reasonable efforts” to avoid removal of children from their biological homes
- Increased reliance on kinship foster care

# Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)

- Passed in 1997
- Changed the paradigm
- Move from focus on preventive services to permanency
- Child's health and safety are paramount concerns in child protection procedures



# Adoption and Safe Families Act (cont'd)

- Emphasized child welfare system's goals of:
  - Safety
  - Permanency
  - Child & Family Well-being
- Clarifies circumstances under which states do or do not remove or reunify
- Child's health and safety is the paramount concern
- Time frame for Termination Parental Rights
  - 15/22 months



# Adoption and Safe Families Act (cont'd)

- Federal ASFA regulations specifically hold States accountable for providing services to address the "safety, permanency and *well-being* of children and families." (45 C.F.R. Part 1357 §1355.33 b (2))  
Child's health and safety is the paramount concern
- States must ensure that:
  - "families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs;
  - children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs; and
  - children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs."

# Medicaid/EPSDT

- All foster children eligible for Medicaid
- All children under age 21 enrolled in Medicaid are entitled under federal law to receive EPSDT services
- Includes immunizations, physical and mental health, vision, hearing, dental, lead exposure screening and health education
- Includes care coordination and transportation



# Early Intervention Program

## Part C of IDEA

- Children age 0-3 having developmental delay or a condition with a high probability of resulting in developmental delay
- Child and family support services
- “Parent” includes birth or adoptive parents, legal guardian, relative and some foster parents
- Surrogate parent appointed where no parent available



# Early Intervention Services

- Assistive technology services and devices
- Parent training and counseling
- Respite
- Home visits and support groups
- Medical services for diagnostic purposes
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Service coordination
- Social work services
- Special instruction
- Speech-language therapy
- Vision services
- Hearing services
- Transportation and related costs

# The Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003

- Amends the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA)
- Requires States to develop “provisions and procedures for referral of a child under age 3 who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect to early intervention services funded under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).”
- Focus on infants exposed to maternal substance abuse





# Individuals with Disabilities Act Part C of 2004

**States receiving Part C funds must describe “State policies and procedures that require a referral for Early intervention services of a child under the age of three who is involved in a substantiated case of abuse or neglect.”**

# Fostering Connections Act of 2008

- **Creates kinship guardian assistance program**
- **Requires states to develop state plan to coordinate health care for all children in foster care**
- **Enhances school stability for school-aged children**
- **Clarifies requirements for adoption assistance**



## Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children Checklist for the Development of Foster Children

- Has the child received a comprehensive health assessment since entering foster care?
- Are the child's immunizations complete and up-to-date for his or her age?
- Has the child received hearing and vision screening?
- Has the child received screening for lead exposure?
- Has the child received regular dental services?
- Has the child received screening for communicable diseases?



## Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children Checklist for the Development of Foster Children (cont'd)

- Has the child received a developmental screening by a provider with experience in child development?
- Has the child received mental health screening?
- Is the child enrolled in an early childhood program?
- Has the adolescent child received information about healthy development?

# Infant Checklist

- What are the medical needs of this infant?
- What are the developmental needs of this infant?
- What are the attachment and emotional needs of this infant?
- What challenges does this caregiver face that could impact his or her capacity to parent this infant?
- What resources and supports should be tapped to enhance this infant's healthy development and prospects for permanency?



# Portals for Healthy Development

Paving a path to evidence-based stepping stones—availability of strong and stable family, provision of basic and consistent health care, participation in the 2-generational Early Intervention program and enrollment in a quality early childhood education program

## Portals or gateways:

- Oversight by the courts
- Provision of medical home
- Participation in Early Intervention (Part C) or Preschool Special Education
- Enrollment in a high quality early childhood education program

# Early Head Start and Head Start

- Not entitlements
- Abused and neglected children priority
- Requires 10% special needs
- Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007- linkage with CAPTA agencies, inclusion of children in foster care for training, needs assessments and demonstration projects



# REVERSING THE ODDS

Improving Outcomes  
for Babies in the  
Child Welfare System



Sheryl Dicker

Foreword by Carol H. Rasco