



Mary Jo Pankoke, Chair
Serious Injury/Near Fatality Citizen Review Panel
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508

September 29, 2023

Dear Mary Jo Pankoke,

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) would like to thank all the members of the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for Serious Injury and Near Fatality for their time and efforts to provide thorough case reviews and recommendations. DHHS has reviewed the recommendations and provided corresponding responses below.

1. Continue efforts to ensure law enforcement and medical reports are obtained by DHHS.

DHHS currently has guidance for workers to ensure law enforcement and medical reports are obtained. DHHS partners with law enforcement and medical providers to work through barriers to information sharing. Additionally, internal policy documents related to law enforcement and medical reports will be reviewed as part of an ongoing policy project to determine if further guidance is needed. DHHS is engaged in ongoing efforts to partner with local law enforcement and medical providers across the state to enhance information sharing. Recently, these efforts have been focused in the Eastern Service area.

2. Continue efforts to strengthen coordination across disciplines on child abuse and neglect investigations.

DHHS works closely with Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) across the state to improve coordination in child abuse and neglect investigations. DHHS plans to continue collaborating with local MDTs to analyze the strengths and barriers in the coordination of investigations. Additionally, the Subcommittee under the Commission for the Protection of Children is in the process of reviewing statewide MDT protocols that may help strengthen the coordination of MDTs and create consistency across regions and disciplines throughout the state.

3. Local Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation multi-disciplinary teams should conduct thorough reviews of all near fatalities and serious injuries suspected to be caused by abuse or neglect.

Per DHHS procedure, near fatality and serious injury cases require collaboration with the Child Advocacy Centers and a referral to the MDT. Individual MDTs develop local protocols to determine which cases require review. The Subcommittee under the Commission for the Protection of Children is in the process of reviewing statewide MDT protocols, including the criteria for referral and review of cases. These recommendations will be shared with DHHS when they are finalized.

Updates on previous recommendations per request in 2023 report

1. Increase collateral calls for the hotline in certain situations.

DHHS reviewed several SDM tools and updated collateral call requirements for the Intake tool. The Intake Policy and Procedures manual was updated with the implementation of the new Intake assessment on August 13, 2023. The new Intake assessment requires a collateral call if one or more of the criteria below apply:

- Younger than age 25 AND one of the following:
- Alleged to have a mental health diagnosis
- Alleged to be using methamphetamine
- Former state ward
- Alleged to be involved in a relationship involving domestic violence
- Has a criminal history involving violent crimes
- Has a current open child protection or adult protective services (APS) case
- Has had three unaccepted reports in the past six months
- Has had a previous termination of parental rights or relinquishment due to DHHS intervention with a parent or caregiver not amenable to services

2. Provide more information to the public about the potential impact of meth use on child safety.

The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) provides education to case management staff and other teammates regarding the signs and symptoms of drug use, including methamphetamine. CFS is also currently partnering with the DHHS Communications Department and the Division of Behavioral Health to develop informational materials for the public related to substance use prevention.

Sincerely,



Tony Green, Interim Director
Division of Children and Family Services