Chronic Child Neglect: Multiple Views

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Via LiveMeeting
Welcome

• Introductions
• Agenda
  – Overview
  – Identification of chronic neglect
  – Barriers and solutions
  – Spotlight on: Building Healthy Families
Objectives

- Recognize the import of a lack of common definitions of neglect and chronic neglect
- Review common barriers to intervening with families impacted by chronic neglect
- Examine chronic neglect intervention strategies
- Explore the successes and struggles of Building Healthy Families
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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK
Burning Questions

• Programs, practices, techniques that work
• How long do you work with a family before considering out-of-home placement?
• Motivating parents to make changes
• Differentiating neglect and poverty
(continues on next slide)
Burning Questions cont’d.

- How to educate courts, others about impact of chronic neglect
- How to shift focus from imminent danger to risk of harm
- How to handle frustration over multi-layered, complex issues that are features of chronic neglect
- Law enforcement and CPS – what is efficacy of joint interventions in neglect?
Child Safety, Permanence & Well-Being: Facts

- Magnitude of neglect
- Federal (CFSR) performance measurement:
  - Absence of maltreatment recurrence
  - Expectations for performance = 94.6% or better
- Cost to CPS of families experiencing chronic neglect = 7 times that of a non-chronic family
Child Safety, Permanence & Well-Being: Facts

Child Fatalities 2003-06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Neglect Only</th>
<th>Multiple Forms</th>
<th>Physical Abuse Only</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<td>35.0%</td>
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</table>
IDENTIFICATION OF CHRONIC NEGLECT
Identifying Neglect

“The vagueness and ambiguities that surround the definition of this particular social problem touch every aspect of the field – reporting system, treatment program, research, and policy planning.”

Identifying Chronic Neglect: 
CNVS** Responses

**CNVS = Chronic Neglect Virtual Series

- Frequency
- Duration
- Pattern
- Generational
- Failure to meet safety, health, developmental needs
Identifying Chronic Neglect: CNVS Responses cont’d.

- Caretaker’s inability, failure, refusal or willful disregard?
- Caretaker “simply can’t do it” – neglect?
- “For reasons other than poverty”
Identifying Chronic Neglect

American Humane’s conceptual definition...

Chronic neglect occurs when:
• One or more needs basic to a child’s healthy development is not met
• By a parent or caregiver
• On a recurring or enduring basis.

Result:
• Actual harm or serious risk of harm to the child’s safety, health or well-being.
Identifying Chronic Neglect

One untested operational definition...

3 reports within one year?
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BARRIERS TO INTERVENTION
Barriers – CNVS Responses

Family

- Lack of financial resources
- Inability to access resources
- Poverty’s emotional toil → tension, depression, frustration, aggression, isolation → sense of hopelessness
- Multiple issues
Barriers — CNVS Responses

CPS Agency

• Lack of CPS staff or resources to respond
• Case closure when services in place, but family not yet stable
• Current allegation(s) do not meet neglect definition
• Difficult to demonstrate harm
  – e.g., where statute requires physical evidence of injury or illness
Barriers – CNVS Responses

Community

• Lack of understanding or awareness about accumulation of harm
• Lack of awareness or communication among community agencies
Barriers – Additional Thoughts

Effects on CPS workers and partners

• Vicarious trauma
• Frustration, Burnout
• Compassion Fatigue
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SUCCESES AND SOLUTIONS
Success Stories & Solutions

• Use of differential response
  – Allows different interventions based on level of risk
    • Holistic rather than incident-based view of family’s strengths and needs

• Involvement of kin
  – Family group conferencing/family group decision-making

• Collaboration among agencies
Success Stories & Solutions

CNVS Participant Programs

• Building Healthy Families pilot (MO)
• Strengthening Families (TX)
  – $250 Family Enhancement Fund
  – $3000 Family Empowerment Fund
• Engage, Assess, Serve & Empower (EASE) (CA)
Critical Elements of Success

• Early recognition (risk of harm vs. immediate safety)
• Differential and longer-term intervention
• Concrete services
• Viewing family as partner
  – Recognize strengths
  – Build hope, self-sufficiency
Critical Elements of Success

- Reducing isolation and building supports
- Flexible funding
- Community collaboration
- Team/Partnering approach
  - Shared caseloads/smaller caseloads
  - Specialized unit for larger agencies/areas
SPOTLIGHT ON: BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES
QUESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS