



COMMISSION TO ELIMINATE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FATALITIES

TELECONFERENCE MINUTES

AUGUST 26, 2015, 1:00-3:00 p.m. EDT

Commissioners Attending via Telephone: Chairman David Sanders, Amy Ayoub, Dr. Cassie Statuto Bevan, Theresa Covington, the Hon. Bud Cramer, Susan Dreyfus, the Hon. Patricia Martin, Michael Petit, Jennifer Rodriguez, and Marilyn Bruguier Zimmerman

Commissioners Absent: Dr. Wade Horn and Dr. David Rubin

Designated Federal Officer: Amy Templeman, acting executive director, attended the meeting.

Conduct of the Meeting: In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities held a teleconference meeting that was open to the public on August 26, 2015, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The purposes of the meeting focused on developing the Commission's final report and included the following:

- Reaching consensus on the national strategy document (see <https://eliminatechildabusefatalities.sites.usa.gov/files/2015/08/Draft-National-Strategy-for-8.26.2015.pdf>).
- Setting a process for moving forward with the final report.

Opening Remarks

Chairman Sanders opened the meeting by discussing the agenda (see https://eliminatechildabusefatalities.sites.usa.gov/files/2015/08/CECANF-Mtg-Agenda_8.26.15.pdf).

Chairman Sanders then noted that there had been general agreement about the 10 themes but no framework that tied the themes together. The national strategy document and graphic were an attempt to provide the framework for those themes. All of the recommendations should be understood through the framework of the national strategy, and it should also capture what the Commission learned through hearings on what it will take to eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities.

Discussion

Commissioners expressed a number of concerns with the national strategy document:

- The document focuses too much on child protective services (CPS) agencies and not enough on the collective responsibility of everyone, such as the courts, law enforcement, and health care, to eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities.
- The document needs to talk about safety, including mobilizing leadership and accountability. The Commission is not advocating just bringing more children into foster care. That message about safety needs to be in a heading.
- The document lacks emotional punch. The problem should be called a national crisis in child protection.
- Also missing from this document are (1) a statement of the problem that includes how many children are killed, injured, and removed from families, and (2) the current status of child welfare services, including resources, legal framework, staffing, and more.
- The graphic needs to be more relational, like a Venn diagram.
- There is too much distinction between children known and not known to CPS.
- The report should not approach the problem from a deficit model that focuses on prevention and risk; rather, it should talk about strengthening families and building communities and strengths. For instance, the graphic's wording "intervening earlier" should be changed to "building healthy families."
- As written, the outline implies that the Commission is just going to recommend doing what other industries have been doing to improve safety.
- The document needs to talk more about CPS and what it needs to function properly.
- The document should include safety lessons from other industries that are transferable to child welfare.
- The report needs to include the family voice.
- The wording of "using what we know" is not quite correct. The report should state that there are data and processes that can show us how to fix the problem.
- The message should be "We can fix it so that children don't have to die" or "We know what to do to save lives. We must use what we know." Or it could be more carefully worded as "If we applied what we know, then fewer children would die."
- The report needs to point out the differences in child safety among the states.
- There are certain numbers of children in families experiencing crises, and these children do need to be removed.
- The report should stress the need for broader collaboration and support among agencies.
- The report should talk about predictive analytics in a way that is understandable by the public in order to increase public confidence.

Staff commented that this graphic was an attempt to outline a national strategy, not an attempt to lay out the problem.

In response to the comments from the other Commissioners, Chairman Sanders proposed the following changes:

- Combine the two circles at the top, with text to say something like “Redefine and strengthen the system with the goal of ensuring that kids don’t fall through the cracks. We need a broader system than traditional CPS.”
- For the middle circle, change the text to reflect the belief that “We do know what to do in more circumstances than we are actually using today. Public will is part of what is needed for a change.”
- For the bottom two circles, stress that these are not the traditional child welfare systems. Also, the circles in general need to be more relational.

Further comments from the Commissioners included the following:

- While the Commission knows what the problem is, the public doesn’t know because the press does not publicize child abuse fatalities. The problem and strategies are inseparable and need to be linked. The system is under stress, and the Commission should be calling for immediate federal intervention.
- The report should not just say “do more of the same thing.” Any investment needs to go toward different strategies than what we’ve been doing.
- We should learn from states that have lower rates of child abuse and neglect fatalities.
- The report’s theme needs to have something positive, too, such as the phrase “solution within our grasp.”
- There is not currently evidence to show that strengthening families will eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities.
- There needs to be a report title or headline that speaks to the public and the press. There are also need to be photos.
- There needs to be a headline message that balances the hope and crisis elements.

Chairman Sanders noted that, before the September 24 call, staff would supply a revised document, and he would seek consensus on it. By the end of the September meeting, there should also chapter headings, as well as some outlining of chapter content to discuss. Staff will develop drafts for each chapter, and the Commissioners will review chapter by chapter. Everything in the report should tie back to testimony or comments or findings from the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



David Sanders, Chairman, Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities
12/1/2015