



COMMISSION TO ELIMINATE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FATALITIES

TELECONFERENCE MINUTES

September 24, 2015, 1:00-3:00 p.m. EDT

Commissioners Attending via Telephone: Chairman David Sanders, Dr. Cassie Statuto Bevan, the Hon. Bud Cramer, Dr. Wade Horn, the Hon. Patricia Martin, Michael Petit, Dr. David Rubin

Commissioners Absent: Amy Ayoub, Theresa Covington, Susan Dreyfus, Jennifer Rodriguez, and Marilyn Bruguier Zimmerman

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 September 24, 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:

- Address the revised National Strategy and graphic (<https://eliminatechildabusefatalities.sites.usa.gov/files/2015/08/Draft-National-Strategy-for-9.24.2015.pdf>)
- Review the detailed outline of the final report developed by staff (<https://eliminatechildabusefatalities.sites.usa.gov/files/2015/08/Draft-Final-Report-Outline-for-9.24.20152.pdf>)

Opening Remarks

Chairman Sanders referred to the meeting agenda (<https://eliminatechildabusefatalities.sites.usa.gov/files/2015/08/Meeting-Agenda-for-9.24.20151.pdf>) and provided some context on the National Strategy. The Commission has identified a disparate collection of proposed recommendations, and the National Strategy is meant to provide a unifying framework for those recommendations. The components in the graphic should reflect the changes that the Commission is recommending in order to save children's lives. The components of the National Strategy will be major headings for the report. The central theme is that, while we do know some things, there is still more to learn about how to save children's lives.

Discussion of the National Strategy and Graphic

During the ensuing discussion of the revised National Strategy and graphic, Commissioners made a number of points:

- Many of the children who die are too young to be known to the child welfare system.
- Although safety is paramount, the goal is not to bring more children into foster care.
- The graphic should not say that we can protect all children.
- This graphic does not include a statement of the problem.
- The graphic and language do not convey the sense of urgency or crisis that is necessary.
- The public health issue should be secondary to the public safety issue.
- The graphic does not clearly relate back to saving children.
- The report should also emphasize prevention of deaths due to neglect. We know more about those kinds of deaths and more about how to prevent them.
- The public health approach is not just for the future but could be used now.
- There is an intergenerational issue that needs to be addressed, and beefing up child protective services (CPS) will never be the whole answer to the problem of child maltreatment fatalities.

Chairman Sanders summarized the changes needed for the National Strategy graphic:

- Prioritize safety.
- Separate foster care placement (a tool) from safety (a goal).
- Add wording that says we don't know everything.

Discussion of the Outline for the Report's Introduction

During the ensuing discussion, one or more Commissioners expressed the following points:

- It is not possible to agree to headings in the report until the content that will go under each heading is known.
- A public health approach focuses on the whole population, but the Commission is charged specifically with focusing on children at risk for abuse and neglect fatalities.
- The report is lacking recommendations directed at the federal, state, and local levels; it also lacks benchmarks.
- A public health approach involves services such as home visiting, which is a public health response that has been proven to reduce neglect. "Public health" refers to using predictive analytics to identify families at highest risk and provide services as early as possible.
- The story of a specific community should not come at the beginning of the report but should appear later.

- An alternative beginning to the report would be to describe how an ideal community could be structured to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Some Commissioners questioned the link between prevention of child maltreatment fatalities and the lessons learned from aviation safety.
- The Commission cannot hold programs to an evidentiary standard that is impossible to meet.
- The report should embrace the uncertainty of solving this problem. That is why funding is needed for innovation.
- The “Letter from the Chairman” section should be more of an executive summary.

Discussion of the Outline for Chapter 1: Why We Need a Strategy for the 21st Century

During the ensuing discussion, one or more Commissioners made the following points:

- The introduction for Chapter 1 needs to talk about the fact that this crisis is not the fault of child welfare agencies. Child welfare workers cannot be expected to be experts in everything.
- Chapter 1 should say that “beefing up the system” doesn’t just refer to hiring more CPS workers; it also means hiring more people who are therapists, substance abuse coaches, and others with expertise in serving families.
- Headings should be expressed in declarative sentences.
- One of the overarching themes needs to be the disparity among states when it comes to child abuse fatalities.
- There is a lot of redundancy in this chapter as it stands, and it needs to have a narrower, more focused message.

Discussion of the Outline for Chapter 2: Collective Responsibility for Safety

During the ensuing discussion, one or more Commissioners made the following points:

- The language around collective responsibility needs to be carefully worded. When you say everyone is responsible, then no one takes responsibility.
- One way to express responsibility might be to say that children’s freedom from abuse and neglect is the responsibility of CPS, while judiciary and law enforcement have legal responsibilities, and neighbors have moral responsibilities—all to protect children.
- Child welfare agencies need to be given the authority and the resources to be in charge of child protection and to be accountable.
- Both public and political support are necessary to make this happen.
- There should be a call to reform federal legislation.

Discussion of the Outline for Chapter 3: Leadership and Accountability

During the ensuing discussion, one or more Commissioners made the following points:

- One of the things missing from this section is the idea of elevating child safety to the federal cabinet level.
- A cabinet-level post for children's safety could refer to the Children's Bureau or some other agency.
- A callout box on the history of the Children's Bureau would be interesting to the reader. It could mention that when President Carter wanted to elevate education, he made it its own agency.

Discussion of the Outline for Chapter 4: Measurement and Classification

During the ensuing discussion, one or more Commissioners made the following points:

- This chapter should emphasize how we can use the data, not just the collection of data for data's sake.
- This chapter should include the fact that no data on American Indian child abuse deaths are currently collected.
- Recommendation #20 (which refers to mandating states' submissions of data to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System or NCANDS) doesn't refer to the changes in policy and practice that are needed. Reflecting one of the lessons learned from the Mitre presentation, it should connect the collection of data to how it can be used to save children's lives. If states get value from contributing data, then they will be more likely to collect and contribute it.
- There needs to be more specificity about ensuring that research results get back to agencies, courts, and all of the people who could benefit from them.
- Child welfare agencies should not be in charge of counting the number of child abuse and neglect deaths.
- Federal goals and standards need to be spelled out clearly in this report, because that is what leads to accountability.
- This chapter should be the chapter that shows the great disparities among states in child abuse fatalities.

Chairman Sanders concluded the meeting by describing what would happen next: During the next four weeks, staff will write text for the first four chapters and distribute them for review before the October call.

The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Sanders" clearly distinguishable.

David Sanders, Chairman, Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities
3/14/2016