

Speaking of Children

Collaborative Efforts in the Metro

The Prevalence of Child Abuse

- Alarming national statistics
 - More than 3 million cases of serious child abuse reported each year
 - It is estimated that for every case reported, there are three that are not.
 - An average of more than 4 children die each day as a result of child abuse
 - 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys have experienced an inappropriate sexual encounter with an adult

Child Abuse & Neglect Statistics

- State of Nebraska Child Abuse Reports
 - 24,173 child abuse/neglect reports in 2006 (managed by DHHS at Project Harmony)
 - 10,622 from Douglas and Sarpy County
 - More than 4500 children in out-of-home care from Douglas and Sarpy County
- Currently more than 90 children each month being removed from their homes in the Metro area as a result of suspected child abuse

What Are the Costs of Child Abuse?

- 80% of convicted murderers report being abused
- 73% of prostitutes report sexual abuse as a child
- 78% of teens in the youth corrections system report child abuse
- Child abuse costs our country over \$90 billion each year

Purpose of Child Advocacy Centers

- Established to improve the quality of child abuse investigations, prosecutions & treatment
 - Reduce trauma to children
 - Increase the quality of interviews and medical exams of children
 - Minimize the number of interviews and medical exams
 - Increase the consistency of exams
 - Improve the documentation
 - Improve safety
 - Improve accuracy of prosecutions and filings

Nebraska CAC's

- Bridge of Hope (North Platte)
- Capstone (Scottsbluff)
- Central NE CAC (Grand Island)
- Child Advocacy Center (Lincoln)
- Family Advocacy Network (Kearney)
- Heart City CAC (Valentine)
- Northeast NE CAC (Norfolk)
- Project Harmony (Omaha)

Project Harmony



To protect children by providing community based, comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated child abuse assessments and investigations in a centralized location.

"One child, one place, one time."

Overview of Project Harmony

- Established in 1996
 - Serve Douglas, Sarpy, parts of Cass and Washington Counties in Nebraska
 - Serve 16 Southwest Iowa Counties
- Over 8000 children, ages 0-18, served since 1996 (2000 in 2007)
- Co-located with Child Protective Services, Omaha Police Department and 4 partner agencies (YWCA, CSI, LFS, and HFS)

Project Harmony Services

- Referrals and Advocacy
- Forensic Interviews
- Medical Exams
- Case Coordination
- Triage Center
- Training and Education



Referrals and Advocacy Services

- Referrals must come from
 - CPS
 - Law Enforcement
 - Can transport children without parental consent
 - Physicians
- Family Advocate
 - Greets family
 - Explains the interview and medical processes
 - Provides support/resources



Forensic Interviews

- Trained in child development and court-approved questioning techniques
- Environment is important
 - Safe
 - Comfortable
 - Free of distractions
- Camera and video-tape provide evidence
- Observers watch on TV monitor in next room
- Interviewer and observers consult before, during and after



NE Revised Statute 28-728


LB 1184 protocol includes arranging for a:

"Videotaped forensic interview at a CAC for children 16 years or younger who are alleging sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, or neglect, witnessed a violent crime, been removed from a clandestine drug lab, or been recovered from a kidnapping."




Medical Services at Project Harmony

- Scheduled with the forensic interview because
 - Timing is important
 - Prevents having to come back later
 - Child may disclose to medical staff
- Medical/Colposcope exam
- Foster Care exams



Colposcope

- Camera that is used in a sexual abuse exam to magnify the genital area
- Facilitates documentation of normal and abnormal findings through video and/or photographs



Case Coordination (1184 Teams)

LB 1184 created Child Abuse and Neglect Investigative and Treatment Teams

- Investigative Team
 - Primarily review cases under investigation for child abuse/neglect
- Treatment Team
 - Review treatment of youth in care
 - Permanency planning of youth in care

Criteria for Case Reviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Investigative Team cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Suspicious child deaths □ Serious injury □ Life-threatening neglect □ First degree sexual assaults □ Joint investigation □ Communication barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tx Team cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Prioritized by protocol in each county □ Youth with high risk behaviors □ Multiple systems involved □ Court ordered □ As requested for assistance with Treatment and Permanency Planning
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Triage Center

- Short-term emergency center
 - "Pauses" the investigation long enough to develop best safety plan
- Food and clothing available
- Washer/dryer available
- Toys/games/TV
- Kid-friendly



Collaborative Efforts

- Hair Testing
- Child Pornography
- Safe Haven Law
- Chem-L Protocol
- Child Death Prevention Efforts
- Training

Drug Testing at Project Harmony

- Hair Testing
 - 50 children tested in last 6 months (Oct '07-Apr '08)
 - 15 positive for methamphetamine
 - 10 positive for cocaine
 - 1 positive for marijuana
 - 29 were found negative
- Some were positive for both cocaine and meth; the marijuana case also was positive for cocaine.

Utilization of Hair Testing for Juv Ct Filings & Prosecution Purposes

- Case Examples
 - ❖ Amended Petition
 - ❖ Termination of Parental Rights Trial
- 1184 Team Review and Tracking

Drug Testing Protocols

- Chem-L Protocol
 - <http://www.nebraskadec.org/protocols.html>
- Project Harmony Guidelines: Supplemental to Chem-L Protocol (contact croth@projectharmony.com for a copy)

Investigating Child Pornography

- Project Harmony Assistance:
 - Training for detectives so they can obtain certification
 - Tour of forensic laboratory in Kansas City
 - Conference planner and presenter at Protect our Children Conference in Omaha on September 10-12
 - Contact Deb Anderson, PH Training Director, for further information at #402-595-1326 or danderson@projectharmony.com

Safe Haven Law

- LB 157 provides that “No person shall be prosecuted for any crime based solely upon the act of leaving a child in the custody of an employee on duty at a hospital licensed by the State of NE. The hospital shall promptly contact appropriate authorities to take custody of the child.”
- Effective July 18, 2008

Intent of the Law

- Protection of minor child (no age specified)
- Protect parent from prosecution
- Any person (parent, babysitter, etc.) can leave the child with a hospital employee and not be cited for leaving the child (See statute 71-419 for definition of hospital)
- Child support can be collected
- Fault petition can be filed

Safe Haven Law Collaboration

- Meeting held with Douglas and Sarpy County Attorneys, Metro Area Hospital Representatives, DHHS, NE Children and Family Foundations, Law Enforcement, NE Hospital Association, and Project Harmony CAC on 5-08-08 to discuss a collaborative approach to child under the age of majority (0-18 yrs) left at a hospital

Areas of Agreement

- Law enforcement should be notified when a child is left as they are the only legal entity in NE with the authority to place a child in immediate protective custody
- 48 hour hold will allow DHHS time to conduct an assessment and report to the CA's Office
- Protocol needs to be developed and added to existing 1184 Team Protocol

Unanswered Questions

- How can hospital employee get family information before the person leaves the facility? (i.e. standard list of questions, information form that can be completed and returned, etc.)
- Should hospital examine each child?
- How will these cases be tracked - by whom?
- Can hospital allow person to contact an alternative person to surrender the child to or offer community services in lieu of surrender?

Child Death Prevention Efforts

- Douglas County had six infant deaths associated with bed-sharing in five weeks this year
- Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie Counties working on Child Death Scene Protocol
- Douglas County Health Department and 40+ Community Agency Partners promoting Safe Sleep initiatives (radio and TV public service announcements, billboards, training/education events, etc.) See www.douglascountyhealth.com

Project Harmony Trainings

Upcoming Conferences

- Environmental Health Consequences of Clandestine Meth Labs, May 23, UNMC
- Project Safe Childhood's Protect Our Children Regional Conference, Sept. 10-12, Omaha
- Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska, Sept. 23-25, Kearney

Ongoing Trainings

- Child Abuse and Neglect 101: Reporting and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect
- Child Abuse and Neglect 201: Collaboration in Investigating Child Abuse and Neglect (Teachers, counselors, ministers, new CPS workers, law enforcement, etc.)
- First Responders (Coordinated Investigations, Minimal Facts, etc.)
- Testifying in Court (Case managers, therapists, etc.)

Project Harmony's First Annual Training Event: *Speaking of Children*

- Featured John Walsh, Host of America's Most Wanted
- Ken Lanning (Former FBI) trained on Sexual Victimization of Children
- Over 1100 attendees--Nearly 500 trained
- Stay tuned for more annual training events at www.projectharmony.com

What Can You Do

For information regarding your local collaboration efforts, contact:

- Your local Child Advocacy Center

We are also available for information and assistance at:

- Nicole Brundo Goaley, Deputy County Attorney for Douglas Co Juvenile Division at #402-444-7051 or nicole.goaley@douglascounty-ne.gov
- Colleen Roth, Director of Service Coordination at #402-595-1356 or croth@projectharmony.com