



Children's Monitor

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April 25, 2016

[APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH](#)

CWLA Holds Successful Advocacy Summit

For three days CWLA members engaged in active discussions, met with their congressional representatives and participated in forums that dealt with the serious issues of child fatalities, the role of substance use in child welfare and engaged in policy debates over key issues in Congress.

The agenda spread out over three days brought in nearly twenty speakers, included a Capitol Hill briefing, member visits to congressional offices and a morning long focus on substance use.

Social Media Hashtags included: #VirtualHillDay16, #VHD16, and #CWLASummit16

Key discussions included:

CWLA Members Discuss Commission On Child Fatalities Findings

On Monday, April 18, CWLA members focused on the National Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. Dr. David Sanders Ph.D., Chairman of the Commission, Executive Vice President, Casey Family Programs, presented some of the key findings and recommendations of the recently-released commission report. After Dr Sanders' [power-point presentation](#), discussion began with panel comments by Linda Spears, Commissioner, Children and Family Services, Massachusetts and Donna Pressma, President and CEO, The Children's Home Society of New Jersey.

Dr Sanders pointed out that in 2014, 72.3% of child maltreatment fatalities were attributable to neglect or in combination with other forms of maltreatment. If you add in medical neglect (8.9%) the total would be over 80%. 41.3% of fatalities for 2014 were attributed to physical abuse or in combination with other forms of maltreatment. The youngest children are at the most risk:

- Nearly three-quarters (73.9%) of the children who died due to child abuse and neglect were younger than 3 years old.
- Nearly half (46.5%) were under age 1 year.

HHS=Department of Health and Human Services, CAPTA= Child Abuse Prevention and treatment Act, JJDPA= Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, Senate HELP= Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, SSBG= Social Services Block Grant, TANF=Temporary Assistance for Needy Families,

- Infants under 1 -- for every 10 cases of nonfatal hospitalization due to abuse, there was 1 fatal hospitalization.

Deaths among American Indian/Alaska Native and African-American children are overrepresented in child maltreatment fatalities as compared to their proportion in the nation's child population.

Some of the key lessons learned included:

- Infants and toddlers are at high risk of an abuse or neglect fatality compared to other age groups. They require special attention.
- A call to child protection hotline, regardless of the disposition is the best predictor of a later child abuse or neglect fatality. This points to the importance of the initial decision to "screen out" certain calls. Screening out leaves children unseen who may be at a high risk for later fatality.
- Involvement of health care and public health agencies and professionals is vital to safety for children. Well-coordinated interagency efforts are essential.
- The importance of child protection workers' access to real-time information about families cannot be over-estimated.
- It is critical to have an accurate national count of child protection fatalities. Better data allow us to begin to understand what works and what doesn't.
- The Nurse-Family Partnership program has been demonstrated to save lives.

The recommendations included some immediate recommendations as well as some long-term actions. To find out more go to the Commission [final report](#). CWLA will be engaging its [CWLA members](#) in very near future deliberations.

The Child Welfare Workforce

During the Capitol Hill Day, while CWLA members handed out [Hot Topics](#) on key policy issues, members could also break to attend a briefing that focused on the significance of the child welfare workforce.

CWLA was focusing Capitol Hill attention on the significance of the workforce in advancing the many outcomes within child welfare and its impact on enhancing child and family well-being. \$20 million in funding to support caseworker visits and workforce improvements must be reauthorized under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program this year. In addition, the Administration has proposed a significant and important child welfare workforce proposal that CWLA supports that would simplify access to Title IV-E funding for public and private agency staff.

As part of the briefing CWLA featured an innovative program that seeks to promote a Children's Corp through the efforts of the nonprofit, [Fostering Change for Children](#) based in New York

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City. Chief Executive Officer Barry Chaffkin presented information on how that agency's [Children's Corp](#) program works, the progress and the research so far and how they look to advance this impressive initiative.

Chris Walker, Reporter, *Westword*, Denver Colorado, recipient of the CWLA Anna Quindlen Award for journalism provided insight on what he has learned from his in-depth reporting on the challenges of a being a part of the child welfare workforce. In January, Walker authored an in-depth story about what is [Colorado Child-Welfare Caseworkers Are Often Overwhelmed, Misunderstood](#). At the briefing he was able to describe his insight into the challenges, difficulties and personal costs for child protection workers.

Later that evening at a CWLA dinner event, he followed comments by Commissioner Rafael Lopez, Administration on Children Youth and Families, with additional comments on the role of the news media in child welfare stories.

Mr. Walker was able to recount what the Capitol Hill visit is like for CWLA members and others advocating for children with [A Westword Reporter Learns How Lobbying Works in Washington D.C.](#)

CWLA Members Discuss Substance Use With Hill, States and Programs

After the Tuesday evening dinner with Commissioner Lopez and reporter Christopher Walker, on Wednesday, April 20, CWLA members wrapped-up with a morning session focused on the substance use issue.

With Congress continuing its focus on the prescription drug and opioids addiction issue (see following story) and a number of bills introduced in various committees including Senate Finance, HELP and Appropriations Committees and with the increasing evidence that it is having an impact on child welfare agencies across the country, CWLA heard from several panelists on the topic.

Presentations including comments and a power point presentation by Robert Morrison, Executive Director, National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, [providing an overview](#) from the state directors viewpoint on substance use disorders and prevalence data demonstrating the rise in use of opioids, including prescription drugs and heroin, and the overall challenge of addiction including alcohol.

Nancy Young, Ph.D., Executive Director, Children and Family Futures, focused attention on the impact of substance use disorders, including the increase in use of opioids, on infants, children and families. Dr. Young [highlighted](#) both the national impact of substance abuse and the federal investments over the past decade that have tested strategies to improve outcomes for families in child welfare affected by substance use disorders. These investments, such as the Regional Partnership Grants (RPGs) and Children Affected by Methamphetamine grants, have generated a

knowledge base of what works and point to a set of common ingredients for improved family outcomes.

The two more global perspectives on what is happening across the fifty states was followed up with a more local and personal viewpoint.

Jocelyn Gainers, Executive Director, [*Family Recovery Program, Inc, Baltimore, Maryland*](#) highlighted the Baltimore program. It is a family drug court program that connects families with timely access to substance abuse treatment and supportive services for parents and families who have lost custody of their children do to substance use disorders. Ms. Gainers discussed the program's use of recovery support specialists to engage parents into treatment and other services.

After a comprehensive description and discussion of how that Baltimore program works, she was followed by one of her employees, Lukenia Lisa Carroll. Lisa is a Case Manager for the Family Recovery Program but she also used her presentation to reflect on her personal experience. Her three children were removed from her care in 2008 due to substance abuse. Ms. Carroll graduated from the Family Recovery Program in 2009 and she reunified with her three children. She shared her story and offer a parent's perspective on what works in serving families affected by substance use disorders.

Those presentations were wrapped up by a closing discussion that involved Capitol Hill reactions by a cross-section of Hill staffers including comments from Allie Kimmel, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)-Senate HELP Committee, Ryan Martin, Republican Majority Staff-House Subcommittee on Ways and Means, Jill Hunter-Williams, Congressman Danny Davis, (D-IL)-Human Resources Subcommittee, Alex Payne, Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA)-House Education and the Workforce.

CWLA members and panelists engaged in an extensive discussion of the issues, the problems and the possible next steps.

Senate Foster Youth Caucus Continues Discussion On Substance Use

The Senate Foster Youth Caucus sponsored what was the second part of their three-part briefing on *“Preventing the Need for Foster Care: What is Working to Effectively Address Substance Abuse and Behavioral Health Challenges?”*

The second briefing highlighted strategies that have worked for families and that promoted family-well-being for children and parents affected by substance abuse and mental health disorders. The event continued to highlight what has been the one policy area that has dominated Congress's attention beyond the budget and political fights.

Speakers included Dr. Nancy K. Young, Ph.D., Judge William Owens, Wapello County Family Drug Court Judge, Iowa, Alexis Baska, Foster Club, and Tina Willauer, the Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START), Kentucky.

Some of the issues raised at the CWLA conference were raised in the Capitol Hill gathering with Dr. Young focusing some attention on past initiatives that the Federal government has funded dating back to the Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) nearly two decades ago. She also discussed the results and effectiveness from those investments, including program strategies and outcomes from the Regional Partnership Grants of 2007 (due for reauthorization this year) and the SAMHSA Children Affected by Methamphetamine grants.

Judge Owens, discussed the Wapello County Family Drug Court. The Judge has been involved since 2007 initially through the Iowa Regional Partnership Grant. Funding has also been drawn from the U.S. Department of Justice grants. He highlighted the impact that this Family Drug Court has had in improving outcomes for child welfare families affected by substance abuse disorders. The program, and other such court programs, redesign how judges and the legal system interact with families in treatment. Judge Owens went on to describe some of the many families that have been helped and highlighted how professionals working with child welfare-involved families have changed their practice and policies in his county leading to improved outcomes for families.

Tina Willauer, discussed [the effectiveness of the Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams \(START\)](#) program which was originally implemented in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. It has been implemented through an original RPG grant in 2007. The START model pairs a child welfare worker with a person in recovery from a substance abuse disorder to conduct active outreach and engagement of parents in treatment and services. Primarily focused on mothers who have given birth to an infant with prenatal substance exposure, outreach begins at the hospital. Ms. Willauer shared her experiences and the impact of the program and highlighted its effectiveness in saving dollars through reduced foster care placements.

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UPCOMING CAPITOL HILL BRIEFINGS/EVENTS

- ***The Senate Caucus on Foster Youth, (part three of three parts) Promising Solutions For The Future TBA Time and Location, Third Briefing, May 5,***
- ***Preventing harm to children through predictive analytics, AEI, Twelfth Floor | 1150 Seventeenth Street, NW | Washington, DC, Tuesday, May 17, 2016 | 9:00 AM — 12:00 PM, [RSVP and Watch Live](#)***
- ***What Works for Families Affected by Substance Use, August 1 through 3, Hyatt Regency, Orange County, California, [REGISTER HERE](#)***
