Phoenix Area Child Protection Team

Chair - LCDR MacArthur Lucio (Phoenix Area IHS)

Co-chair Marjorie Eagleman (BIA Western Regional Office)

Kenneth Poocha - Department of Child Safety
Native American Liaison

Mission Statement:
To support tribal, state and federal goals, objectives and laws in order to promote a continuum of child abuse and neglect services, including a system for detection, reporting, investigation and prosecution, treatment services, and preventive activities e.g. including community education and child advocacy.

Objectives:
COMMUNICATION:
TRAINING:
ADVOCACY:
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT/INTEGRATION/MANAGEMENT:
COVID-19’s Impact on Child Welfare

Objectives

- ICWA updates.
- Share recent reports/impact/adaptation
- Lesson learned
**Historical Context**

Child Welcome System (CWS) typically are based on a three-pronged model of:
- reporting,
- investigation
- removal.

Fed. $- state and tribal programs to provide oversight for child protection.

- 1974-Child Abuse Prevention Act (CAPTA)/CPS
- 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act
- 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act
- 2018 The Family First Prevention Services Act (Title IV-E Prevention Plan)

Priority: Child Protection/ Family preservation.

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**Child Welfare Challenges**

- Historical struggles systemically to address both the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Variation in child protection services program structure, service delivery.
- State/Tribal oversight- variations.
  - CWS is reactionary.
  - Scope of Child Protection Service challenges.
Philosophical Shift
2018 The Family First Prevention Services Act
(Title IV-E Prevention Plan)

• Systemic and philosophical barriers-to existing system. Called for changes.
• Best practices for child welfare agencies.
• Called for more preventive and support less removal and entry into foster home or group homes.

Early Engagements: Prevention Perspective
• States given $ implement preventive plans. Only 8 states have fully implemented.

COVID-19
March 2020

Mitigation Efforts:
• PHYSICAL DISTANCING
• STAY AT HOME ORDER/SHELTER IN PLACE
• SCHOOL CLOSURE
• BUSINESS CLOSURE

Hindered CWS
Challenges during COVID

Experts Predicted: Immeasurable harm.
Initial concerns.

- Isolation of families. Agency’s with limited tools to respond. Called for adaptations.

Barriers to reporting child maltreatment

- Some experts fear that at-risk children won't be seen because stay-at-home orders and would go un-reported.
- Lack of mandated reports (Professional).
- Safe from virus not necessarily from abuse.

- Wisconsin, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Illinois—reports fallen by between 20% and 70% in the month of March
- Mississippi and Tennessee, called the general public to be extra diligent during this time, and report suspected child maltreatment to the CPS hotline.
- Others worry this lack of visibility could trigger an over-reaction from child welfare investigators or exacerbate historical biases
Family Isolation and Economic Uncertainty

- Home environment
  Multiple Roles: parental and work responsibilities.
  Essential vs. Non-essential worker.
- Job loss
  Economic uncertainty.
  Unemployment. 10 million lost job (March).
- DV/IPV calls increased - 7.5%. IPV 1.8 fold higher (Study by Brigham and Women's Hospital).
- Factors put many families at risk for increased violence and aggression.

FAMILY STRESS – increase anxiety about future, anger and loss of hope. Associated with increased risk of CAN.

Navigating the system

- Agencies challenged with how to investigate.
- Pre-caution measures - distance and mandatory isolation.
- Limited home visits to investigate.
- Diminishing their role.

Agency’s Response.

- Scaled back home visit (Kentucky and Michigan)
- Necessary for in-home investigation to take place. Immediate response.
  - Protective measure in-place to protect worker and client.
Adaptations

Title IV-E allowed flexibility for adaptations.

1) Virtual home visits
2) Digital communication (TikTok, Instagram, FaceTime)
3) Multi-agency meeting (Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp etc.)

Limitations:
Skill set. New to technology.
Confidentially.
Family-limited equipment, Laptop etc.
At minimum cell phone.
No cell service. Parking lot. Data plan.

Early Data

- CDC analysis - ED visits related to suspected or confirmed child abuse and neglect in early 2020, visits declined by 53% compared to 2019, although overall ED visits also fell by roughly 70% among children during this period. (CDC)
- The number of visits resulting in hospitalization, indicating more severe abuse, remained stable from 2019 to 2020.
- Social distancing/self-isolation restrictions to mitigate the spread of the disease, fewer reports of child maltreatment have been filed in states like Connecticut, Illinois, Missouri, Oregon, and Washington.
- States such as Wisconsin, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Illinois—reports fall by between 20% and 70% in the month of March.
- Drop in reports to child protection units of 50%–70% (Johnson-Reid et al., 2020).

But whether such a trend is certain fact or educated intuition is still open to question. Complete data won't be available until mid-2021, at the earliest.
Learned lessons

Tested CREATIVITY!!!! Technology/more flexible/less time constraints/. Some examples of courts already equipped to utilize the technology.

1) Courts/hearing (virtual)
2) Visitation-parental (virtual)
3) Cost associated with alternatives

• Revealed into additional shortcomings in the child welfare system.
• Typical reporting system rendered challenges. (professionals).
• Services: home visits, courts, home base parenting programs held at a stand still.

OPPORTUNITY: Re-think and restructure the child welfare system.

Thank You