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\*\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\*

## **Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities Holds Public Meeting in Tampa, Florida; Hears from Local, State and Federal Leaders**

**Tampa, Fla.** - The Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) held a public meeting yesterday at the Children's Board of Hillsborough County in Tampa, Florida to hear from local, state, and federal stakeholders on issues related to identifying, preventing, and reducing child abuse fatalities. CECANF was established by Public Law 112-275 (112th Congress), the Protect Our Kids Act of 2012, to develop a national strategy and recommendations for reducing fatalities across the country resulting from child abuse and neglect.

The meeting in Tampa marked the second public state meeting (the first was held in San Antonio, Texas) for Commission members to gather detailed information and insight related to federal policy, research, and practice associated with child abuse and neglect fatalities, with a practice focus on Florida. More than 25 representatives from policy, legislative, advocacy, law enforcement, judicial, tribal, health and academic organizations spoke at the meeting.

"We heard about the potential of predictive analytics and greater collaboration among local, state and federal agencies as important steps to addressing systemic challenges," noted CECANF Chairman Dr. David Sanders. "We continued our focus on programs that address the problem to see what's working and what's ineffective, as well as looking closer at the issue of confidentiality and the impact of current confidentiality, transparency and accountability laws on being able to accurately report on child abuse deaths. Thanks to our many distinguished speakers, we are developing a clearer understanding of the complexity of these issues and some promising efforts underway in some parts of the country to meet these challenges."

Emily Putnam-Hornstein, M.S.S.W., Ph.D., provided a clearer view of the scope of the problem, risk factors associated with death and maltreatment that could lead to more preventive efforts, and the challenges agencies face in getting an accurate accounting of how many child fatalities occur and which are attributable to neglect. She highlighted recent efforts focused on data analytics and more strategic coordination as potential steps to reducing fatalities, noting: "While there are no simple answers, by making better and smarter use of existing data - we can do more to monitor risk, develop thoughtful policies, ensure strategic preventive efforts, evaluate program effectiveness, and protect children."

Howard Davidson, J.D., opened a panel discussion on confidentiality by providing background on how the original Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA) requirements, which were focused on keeping records private, should be amended to require more disclosure. “To prevent child deaths, CAPTA must evolve from a ‘you must keep confidential’ focus to a ‘you must disclose’ focus,” he noted. “While an amendment was passed in 2003 to promote mandatory disclosure, older regulations requiring states to criminalize disclosures, and lack of guidance to states on permissible and mandated disclosures may actually be working to inhibit full implementation of CAPTA’s disclosure provisions.”

The commission is composed of 12 members, six appointed by the president and six appointed by Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate. Members will take a broad, multidisciplinary approach to studying and making recommendations about the following key issues:

- The use and effectiveness of federally funded child protective and child welfare services
- Best practices for and barriers to preventing child abuse and neglect fatalities
- The effectiveness of federal, state, and local data collection systems, and how to improve them
- Risk factors for child maltreatment
- How to prioritize prevention services for families with the greatest needs

The legislation mandates that the commission submit a report to the president and Congress on these issues within two years (with the potential to extend the deadline by an additional year). The report will detail specific recommendations for strategies to better track and eliminate child abuse and neglect fatalities.

The next two public meetings will be held in Detroit, MI on August 28, 2014 and Denver, CO on September 22-23, 2014. Members of the general public and the media are invited to attend the meetings, either in person or via teleconference. For more information on CECANF and upcoming meetings, visit our website at <http://eliminatechildabusefatalities.sites.usa.gov>.

### ***About The Commission***

The Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities is a federal agency established by legislation to study and make recommendations on eliminating child abuse and neglect fatalities. The Commission was formed as a result of the “Protect Our Kids Act” and is made up of six Presidential appointees and six Congressional appointees.

*Media Notes: To request an interview with Commission Chairman Dr. David Sanders or request more information about the Commission, please contact Jennifer Devlin at 703-876-1714 or [Jennifer.devlin@cox.net](mailto:Jennifer.devlin@cox.net).*