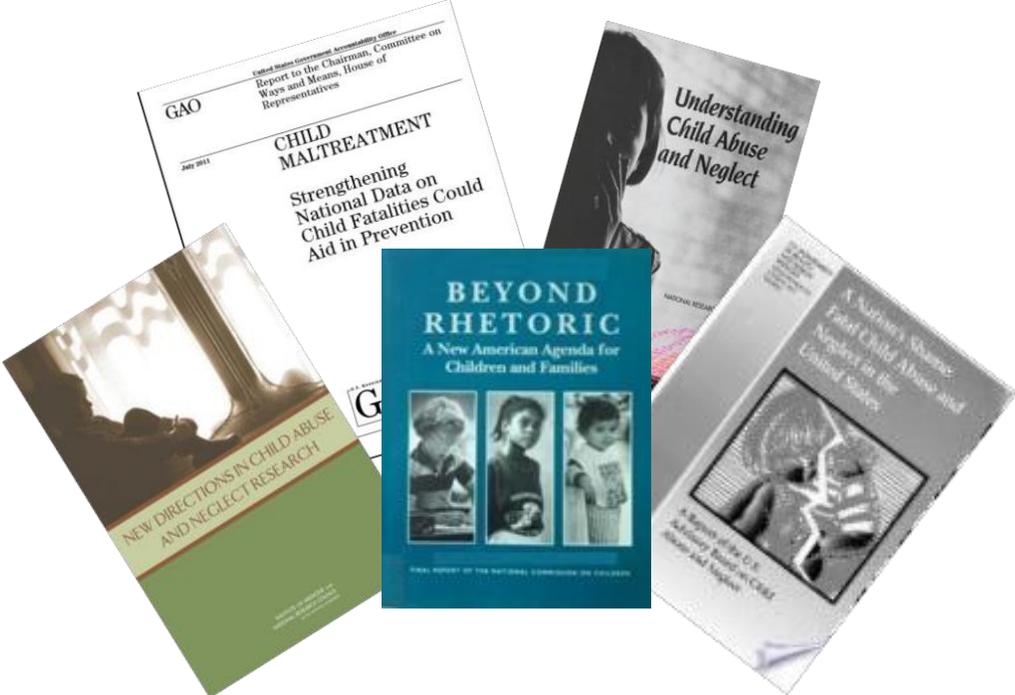


# Moving the Marker Forward



A Compendium of the Top 25  
Child Welfare Recommendations  
in the last 25 years

The Dalton Daley Group

JANUARY 2015

# Moving the Marker Forward

## A Compendium of the Top 25 Child Welfare Recommendations in the last 25 years

### Introduction

Since 1990, the federal government has utilized its authority to focus attention on the issues of child welfare including maltreatment, poverty, disparities, and fatalities. Much progress has been made to provide our children with better outcomes in health and overall economic success. Still there remains much to be done. Nevertheless, this exposition is international in scope and considers the perspective of the global community.

Currently there is a push for child welfare finance reform which we believe is necessary. However, we also believe that it is necessary to first evaluate and to reform child welfare functionality. We must know what works, what does not, what needs to be tweaked and what needs to be thrown away before deciding where and how the funding streams should be managed. It would be pointless to throw money (new or redirected) at efforts which yield no fruit and have no evidence of ever yielding fruit.

There is no shortage of expertise in the child welfare arena. To that end, several commissions and/or federal advisory committees have been formed to study child welfare matters over the past 25 years. These bodies were tasked with developing recommendations to the President and Congress. These recommendations were then to be utilized to craft the infrastructure for prevention, intervention and resolution of the crises facing our children. The hope was and remains that such bodies' recommendations will be used to produce action in both the governmental and private sectors to ensure that America's children not only survive, but thrive. For in our children thriving, America thrives.

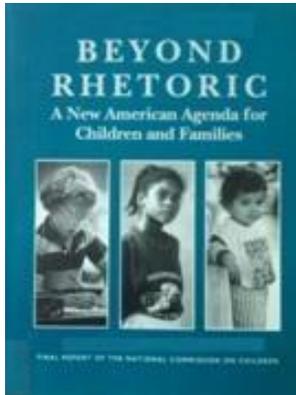
### Methodology

While the included compendium includes only five reports, over 25 reports and documents were considered and analyzed. Their overarching themes were considered as we culled the reports for the most notable, implementable, and recurring recommendations. It is an analysis of recommendations from the five most significant reports created over the last 25 years on child welfare and/or child maltreatment. Those five reports are presented in a cross-referenced matrix to form a compendium of recommendations. What is readily observable is that, although many of the recommendations may appear redundant to some current efforts (perhaps suggesting the need to invest further or to reduce effort on their execution), several of the recommendations have yet to be implemented.

Our assessment of the reports identified a total of 139 recommendations concerning child welfare which merited further examination. All of the recommendations easily can be understood to impact the state of child well-being, child welfare policy development and implementation, child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention, and child maltreatment and fatality prevention in our country. Of the 139

reviewed recommendations, 25 overlap in their purpose(s) and/or are encountered in at least 2 of the evaluated reports which were selected for cross-referencing. Thus, these reports became the subjects of the compendium. Analyzing these historically offered recommendations may hold the key to moving the marker forward on several fronts in the child welfare arena.

### **Compendium Reports' Overviews**



#### **Rockefeller Commission Report – Beyond Rhetoric (1991)**

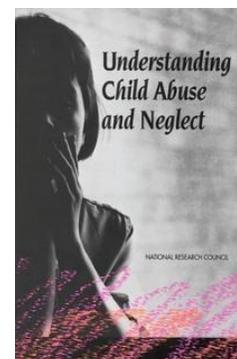
The Rockefeller Commission Report is easily the most comprehensive report on child welfare matters in the past 25 years. It represents a successful attempt at bi-partisanship. However, its many recommendations are in most cases broad. Moreover, it has no specific recommendations to child fatality prevention.

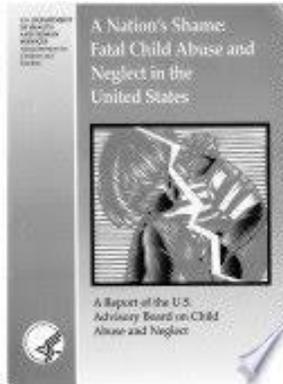
Nonetheless, it can be truly said that the report, is well organized for readability and promotes dialogue. Despite its enormous size, it is an effective tool for framing discussion in various areas. In addition to its recommendations, the report suggests and/or urges certain actions congruent with the recommendations. Thus, the report lends itself to philosophical approaches on the child welfare front that allow for legislative dialogue necessary for action. What is most commendable about the report is that a historical analysis of it will show that most of, if not all, the recommendations have been legislatively addressed in some form – even if those recommendations proved ineffective, misapplied, and/or need to be redressed.

Compelling evidence of the Commission’s commitment to including the input from the public and creating a report that was reflective of all Americans was its conducting of two surveys summarized in the report entitled *Speaking Of Kids: A National Survey of Children and Parents*. These surveys were utilized as a backdrop to Commission’s work.

#### **National Research Council Report (1993) – Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect**

One of the greatest aspects of this report is that it emphasizes the setting of research priorities. Its impact as a guide for establishing research priorities in the child welfare and child maltreatment disciplines has been potent for the past 20 years. In fact, the recent joint study by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council entitled *New Directions in Child Abuse and Neglect Research (2014)* utilized this study as the framework for conducting its activities.



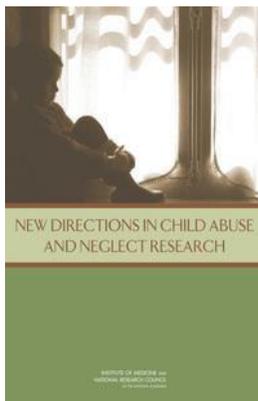
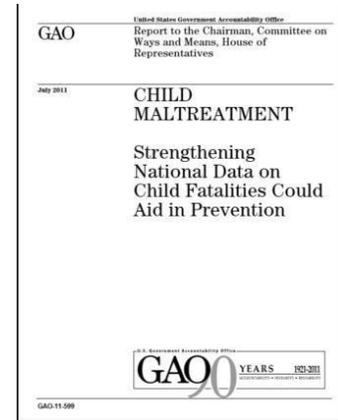


*A Nation's Shame ( 1995)*

With recommendations specific to child fatalities, this report continues to be regarded as the benchmark for preventing child deaths due to child abuse and neglect. Compiled by the work of the Federal Advisory Committee anticipated under CAPTA, this report lays out specific recommendations in the battle to reduce child fatalities. Still, some of these recommendations remain unused regardless of their accord with similar recommendations in other preceding and proceeding federally commissioned reports regarding child welfare and maltreatment. Arguably, The Protect Our Kids Act of 2012 has statutorily directed the Federal Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) established by the Act to refer to this work as a guiding resource.

*GAO Study (2011)*

When questions were raised as to whether the federal National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), which is based on voluntary state reports to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), fully captures the number or circumstances of child fatalities from maltreatment. GAO was asked to examine (1) the extent to which HHS collects and reports comprehensive information on child fatalities from maltreatment, (2) the challenges states face in collecting and reporting this information to HHS, and (3) the assistance HHS provides to states in collecting and reporting data on child maltreatment fatalities. GAO analyzed 2009 NCANDS data—the latest data available—conducted a nationwide Web-based survey of state child welfare administrators, visited three states, interviewed HHS and other officials, and reviewed research and relevant federal laws and regulations.<sup>1</sup> Along with Nation's Shame, this report serves as a guide within the constructs of The Protect Our Kids Act of 2012.



*New Directions in Child Abuse and Neglect Research IOM/NRC (2014)*

This study was done as an update to the 1993 NRC report entitled *Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect*. The underlying goal of the report is to examine the child abuse and neglect issues with a modern eye and in light of scientific advances made related to the field.

ACYF asked that the updated report “provide recommendations for allocating existing research funds and also suggest funding mechanisms and topic areas to which new resources could be allocated or enhanced resources could be redirected.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> GAO-11-599 (2011), page 2

<sup>2</sup> New Directions in Child Abuse and Neglect Research, page 1

**Table 1 – Compendium of Recommendations**

Recommendations	Beyond Rhetoric	NRC 1993	A Nation's Shame	GAO 2011	IOM/NRC 2014
1. The creation of a corps of research practitioners familiar with studies of child maltreatment, especially in the fields of law, medicine, psychology, social work, sociology, criminal justice, and public health, should be an explicit goal of federal, state, and private agencies that operate programs in areas of child welfare, child protection, maternal and child health, and family violence.	Y	Y			Y
2. Research Recommendation: Recognizing that the absence of consistent research definitions seriously impedes the development of an integrated research base in child abuse and neglect, a series of expert multidisciplinary panels should be convened to review existing work and to develop a consensus on research definitions of each form of abuse and neglect.		Y			Y
3. State data systems should be improved so that high-quality research on service systems can be conducted.		Y			Y
4. Research on home visiting programs focused on the prenatal, postnatal, and toddler periods has great potential for enhancing family functioning and parental skills and reducing the prevalence of child maltreatment.  The panel recommends that home visiting programs continue to be developed provided that they incorporate appropriate evaluation components. Such evaluations should include rigorous scientific measurements, appropriate measures of child abuse and neglect, and clarification of the theoretical assumptions that shaped the home visitation efforts.		Y	Y		
5. The panel recommends that home visiting programs consider varying the time of onset and length of such programs. Programs could offer two or more different sets of service and evaluate the effectiveness of programs of varying lengths, following the scientific practices established in clinical trials.		Y	Y		

Recommendations	Beyond Rhetoric	NRC 1993	A Nation's Shame	GAO 2011	IOM/NRC 2014
<p>6. The panel recommends that research on multiple models of home visiting and other early intervention services be funded, since no single model of home visiting has yet been shown to be the most effective. Similarly, no single time period, length of programming, or intensity of program has been identified as the most effective (although the literature suggests that the prenatal and postnatal periods are central, few programs have started home visiting service later; other research suggests that home visiting has to occur somewhat regularly to be effective).</p>		Y	Y		
<p>7. Studies of similarities and differences in the etiologies of various forms of maltreatment across various social class, cultural, and ethnic populations should be supported.</p> <p>8. Several multidisciplinary centers should be to encourage the study of child maltreatment and to integrate research in the training of service providers. The purpose of these centers should be to assemble a corps of faculty and practitioners focused on selected aspects of child abuse and neglect, and to provide a critical mass in developing long-term research studies, evaluating major demonstration projects to build on and expand the existing base of empirical knowledge, and building a research-based curriculum for the law, medical, and social service schools.</p>	Y	Y	Y		Y
<p>9. Research agencies should give priority attention to the development and dissemination of research instruments that have been shown to be effective in improving the quality of data collected in child maltreatment studies. Particular attention should be given in the near term to instruments that improve the identification of child maltreatment in order to lessen research dependence on reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Attention should be given to the development of instruments that are sensitive to ethnic and cultural differences and that can improve the quality of etiology and consequences studies in selected subgroups.</p>		Y	Y		Y

Recommendations	Beyond Rhetoric	NRC 1993	A Nation's Shame	GAO 2011	IOM/NRC 2014
10. The cultural and ethnic diversity of the corps of research investigators concerned with child maltreatment studies is not broad enough to explore the importance of culture and ethnicity in theories, instrumentation, and other aspects of research on child abuse and neglect. Special efforts are needed at this time to provide educational and research support for researchers from ethnic and cultural minorities to strengthen the diversity of human resources dedicated to this topic.		Y	Y		Y
11. Our Nation must establish a national commitment at the highest levels to understand the scope and nature of fatal child abuse and neglect.			Y	Y	
12. States, military branches, and Indian Nations should implement joint criminal investigation teams in cases of fatal child abuse and neglect.			Y	Y	
13. States and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations should adopt requirements to assure that all hospitals with pediatric services have Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) teams.			Y	Y	
14. The Secretary of Health and Human Services and the U. S. Attorney General should work together to assure there is an ongoing national focus on fatal child abuse and neglect and to oversee an ongoing process to support the national system of local, State, and Federal child abuse and neglect fatality review efforts.			Y	Y	
15. A national-level effort should ensure that services and training materials on fatal child abuse and neglect are made available to all states.			Y	Y	
16. All States should have State-level Child Death Review Teams. Such teams should also be established within the military branches, Indian Nations and territories,			Y	Y	
17. States and communities should assure that the religious community is included in efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect fatalities.			Y	Y	
18. An array of primary prevention services and supports, including home visiting, must be made available to all families.	Y	Y	Y		Y
19. A broad public prevention campaign should be developed to address serious and fatal child abuse and neglect.			Y	Y	

Recommendations	Beyond Rhetoric	NRC 1993	A Nation's Shame	GAO 2011	IOM/NRC 2014
20. Identify ways to help states strengthen the completeness and reliability of data they report to NCANDS. These efforts could include identifying and sharing states' best practices, particularly those that foster cross-agency coordination and help address differences in State definitions and interpretation of maltreatment and/or privacy and confidentiality concerns		Y		Y	Y
21. Estimate the costs and benefits of collecting national data on near fatalities and take appropriate follow-up actions.		Y		Y	Y
22. Federal agencies, in partnership with private foundations and academic institutions, should implement a research agenda designed to advance knowledge and understanding of the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect, as well as the identification and implementation of effective services for its treatment and prevention.		Y		Y	Y
23. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with the Federal Interagency Work Group on Child Abuse and Neglect, should develop and sustain a national surveillance system for child abuse and neglect that links data across multiple systems and sources.		Y			Y
24. Federal agencies, in partnership with private foundations and academic institutions, should invest in developing and sustaining a cadre of researchers who can examine issues of child abuse and neglect across multiple disciplines.		Y			Y
25. Federal agencies, in partnership with private foundations and academic institutions, should provide funding for new multidisciplinary education and research centers on child abuse and neglect in geographically diverse locations across the United States.		Y			Y

**Table 2. - Ranking of Recommendations by Recurrence**

Recommendation Number (s)	Number of Recurrences
18	4
1, 7, 9, 10, 20, 21, 22	3
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25	2

## **Reports and Documents for Consideration**



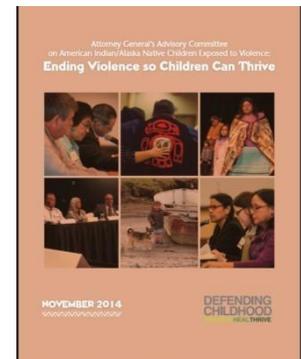
*The World Health Organization (WHO)*, through its regional office for Europe, compiled this report on preventing child maltreatment in 2013. This report is far reaching and moves the discussion of child welfare from solely existing in the criminal justice and social services paradigms to the public health arena.

With an approach that understands child abuse and neglect as a product of social, cultural, biological and economic factors, this comprehensive report documents these evidence-informed approaches, which take a broad interdisciplinary approach that cuts across sectors. The report encourages its consumers to gain a global perspective in combating the challenges in child welfare. Accordingly, its value to U.S. consumers is particularly reflected in the WHO's careful documentation and suggested endorsement of Nurse Family Partnerships' model of home visiting. In addition, the document carefully assesses fiscal impact.

The WHO report is brilliantly compiled to address the areas of poverty, trafficking, substance abuse, media relations, educational interventions, and other community driven factors in child maltreatment. The WHO report is well organized and makes clear recommendations that can be universally appreciated and applied.

*Ending Violence so Children Can Thrive* (2014) was the final product of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence.

While this document is primarily developed from a criminal justice perspective, it is clearly relevant to the child welfare discussion insofar as the nexus between preventing maltreatment and criminal law is clear. The recommendations included in the report directly address the child maltreatment concerns of data collection, funding for child maltreatment prevention and child protection efforts is especially, and eligibility for funding under Title XX of the Social Services Block Grant and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.



## **Other Noteworthy Reports and Documents Reviewed**

1. *Child Abuse and Neglect: Critical First Steps in Response to a National Emergency*, The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1990
2. *Creating Caring Communities: A Blueprint for an Effective Federal Policy on Child Abuse and Neglect* - The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, September 1991
3. *Neighbors Helping Neighbors: A New Strategy for the Protection of Children*, The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, September 1993
4. *The Continuing Child Protection Emergency -A Challenge to the Nation* - The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, April 1993

5. *Don't Call It Child Abuse If It's Really Poverty* – Journal of Children and Poverty, 1994
6. *The National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths*, Letter to Chairman Geoff Davis, House Ways and Means, 2011
7. *Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare: Analysis of the Research* - The Annie E. Casey Foundation and its direct services arm, Casey Family Services; Casey Family Programs; the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative; the Marguerite Casey Foundation; Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.; the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; birth parents and alumni of the foster care system; and the Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2011
8. *Child Maltreatment 2012* - Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
9. *State Secrecy and Child Deaths in the U.S.* – Children's Advocacy Institute and First Star, 2012
10. *Neglect Subtypes, Race, and Poverty: Individual, Family, and Service Characteristics* - US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health - NCBI 2013
11. *Vermont Citizen's Advisory Board Child Death Review Report* , November 7, 2014

## **Conclusion**

That the task of developing and implementing a stellar child welfare program in the United States has been gruelingly incremental is no reflection on our ability. The enormity of the task is a reflection of the complexities found therein. No lasting system can be properly built on the whimsical sands of solitary opinions. Consensus is absolutely necessary to build a system that is both effective and enduring. It is then that future capital investments can enhance functionality through strengthening that which works and fostering innovation and research.

The Child Welfare system has been evolving in this country since 1874. The “case of Mary Ellen” sparked the first true efforts to protect children in this country. Perhaps her case and others like it can once again spur our country into the seriousness necessary to fix a system that continues to languish by putting the cart before the horse. When President Theodore Roosevelt convened the White House Conference on Child Dependency, the emphasis was simple – using public funds to delineate the proper way to care for children. Appropriately, America first focused on women and children together, and established the Children's Bureau in 1912. By 1930, those standards were implemented to combat abuse in neglect through the Social Security Act. Even then, the point was to intervene for children in jeopardy due to neglect.

Since those early days, more laws have been passed and more research has been conducted to ensure that the nuances of protecting our children are addressed. Yet, there still are huge gaps for the least of those among us. Disparity plagues the implementation of child welfare services and poverty continues to generate circumstances counter to parents' ability to provide neglect-free environments for children to thrive and to secure our nation's future.

The number of reports that have been submitted to various Presidents, Congresses, and state governments is overwhelming to say the least. The recommendations have been countless. The five

reports extrapolated for their recommendations in this writing held 139 combined recommendations. Twenty-five (25) of those recommendations have either never been implemented or half-heartedly implemented. Consensus as to their appropriateness has been achieved. Yet, changed laws, implementation and evaluation have not occurred and our children suffer. Our country suffers. Proof of efficacy is not automatic – practice must occur. We can ill-afford to squabble over funding when the opportunity to implement some simple structures is possible. Agreement has occurred.

We, through Congresses and Presidents, past and present, ordered committees, commissions, and research to produce expert-developed recommendations to move the marker forward in providing optimum child welfare in our country. The recommendations have been made in consensus. Now is the time to act. ©2015 *The Dalton Daley Group*