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## **Department of Human Services' Report on Child Abuse Data Outlines Prevention Recommendations**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller today released the [Pennsylvania Child Abuse Fatality/Near Fatality Trend Analysis Report](#), a study of statewide child abuse fatality and near fatality data from calendar years 2015 and 2016. The report outlines and analyzes data from these years and establishes recommendations to prevent child abuse fatalities and near fatalities so children can grow up in safe, nurturing homes.

“Every child deserves to live and grow up in a safe, nurturing home, and we firmly believe that one life lost as a result of child abuse is one too many,” said Secretary Miller. “We must learn from past child fatalities and near-fatalities that resulted from abuse so we are best prepared to understand child abuse and protect children around Pennsylvania. We will not accept the notion that there is nothing we could do prevent abuse and protect children around Pennsylvania, and the recommendations in this report will help us create stronger, safer systems moving forward.”

In order to review and learn from past instances of child abuse fatalities and near fatalities, the department convened a trend analysis team comprised of staff across multiple state agencies, partners in the General Assembly and local government, and child welfare advocates. The report approaches child abuse as a public health issue that requires collaborative, multidisciplinary partnerships, strengthened prevention efforts and improved ways to identify signs and cases of abuse before a fatality or near-fatality occurs.

The trend analysis team's recommendations focus on improvements to the fatality and near-fatality review process, strengthened intervention programs, and legislative and policy changes. Recommendations included:

- Establishing regional review teams and technical assistance networks to provide greater support that strengthens county fatality and near-fatality review teams;
- Creating best practice guidelines and tools and enhancing trainings for county review teams;
- Expanding education on fatality and near-fatality reviews to include the education system, health care providers, law enforcement, and behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment providers;
- Researching effectiveness of existing supports like crisis hotlines, text-lines, and social media resources to evaluate if such resources should be expanded around Pennsylvania;
- Exploring an alert system between health care providers and managed care organizations to monitor parent engagement, identify potential cases of abuse, and recognize when a referral is necessary;

- Increasing availability of resources that educate on the signs of abuse and the importance of timely referrals to appropriate services;
- Providing more resources for parents on healthy parenting at all stages of a child's life;
- Evaluating and enhancing policies pertaining to child abuse and neglect investigations, when to consult with a medical professional, and screening guidelines for county children and youth agencies;
- Amending Child Protective Services Law to allow for enhanced case management to identify potential future abuse and a streamlined review process that creates a more comprehensive assessment.

Implementation of these recommendations will be considered and coordinated between other state agencies, the General Assembly, and partners in local government and law enforcement with assistance from advocates and stakeholders in child welfare, health care, education, and behavioral health fields. Recommendations will be monitored and evaluated as they are implemented for effectiveness in reducing future fatalities and near fatalities.

"This report is an important step towards better understanding and preventing child abuse," said Secretary Miller. "I am very thankful for the trend analysis team's work thus far, and we will continue to work closely with our state and local partners and advocates to keep children safe, healthy, and happy."

"The recommendations announced today are just the beginning. We are committed to working with our partners in federal, state, and local governments as well as the stakeholders and advocates in the child welfare system and continuing to provide updates as recommendations are implemented and evaluated," said Secretary Miller. "We will continue to work every day to protect children around the commonwealth so that all children can grow and thrive in safe, loving homes."

For more information on how to identify and report child abuse, visit [www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov](http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov).

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Ali Fogarty, 717-425-7606

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