CHILD WELFARE WORKER’S EXPERIENCES WITH MALTREATMENT FATALITIES

9th Annual Mississippi Child Welfare Institute
Jackson, MS | February 17, 2011

Emily M. Douglas, Ph.D.
Bridgewater State University
PURPOSE OF STUDY

1. Describe the characteristics of children who are known to the system and who die

2. To learn new information about family, parent-child characteristics, and services received

3. Explore the experiences of child welfare workers (CWW) in the aftermath of a CMF
STUDY METHODS

- Online survey
- Conducted through advertising
  - Child Welfare League of America
  - NASW Facebook pages
- Child Maltreatment Research Listserv
  - Administrators and CWS staff passed along recruitment to workers
- Direct appeals to child welfare agency directors
  - All 51 (+DC) states
  - Appropriate administrator most easily identified, with email, on agency website
- Conducted data mid-September, 2010 – late January, 2011
PARTICIPANTS

- 451 Participants, either child welfare workers or supervisors
- 90% female, 10% male

Education Level
- 51% - Master’s degree
- 48% - BA/BS
- 1% - Assoc degree

Field of Education
- 58% - Social Work
- 4% - Human Services
- 32% - Other Social Science Field (Psyc, Soc, FS)
- 7% - None of the above
PARTICIPANTS

- Age – 42 years old (average)
- Race
  - American Indian – 2%
  - Asian – 3%
  - African American/Black – 16%
  - Latina/Hispanic – 6%
  - Pacific Islander – 1%
  - White – 76%
PARTICIPANTS

Alaska
California
Colorado
Connecticut
DC
Georgia
Illinois
Indiana
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
New Jersey
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Texas
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

Preliminary Results | Do Not Cite Without Author Permission | 2011
EXPERIENCED CMF ON CASELOAD?

156 CWW experienced a fatality.

Yes 65%
No 35%
INFORMATION ABOUT CMF: YEAR OF DEATH

1970s, 1.4
1980s, 4.9
2010s, 10.6
1990s, 17.6
2000s, 65.6
CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

**Age of Victims**

- Infant: 50
- 1 Year: 7
- 2 Years: 15
- 3 Years: 8
- 5 Years: 2
- 6 Years: 0
- 7 Years: 2
- 8 Years: 2
- 9 Years: 1
- 10 Years+: 9

**Gender**

- Male: 65%
- Female: 35%
CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH

**Cause of Death**

- Physical abuse: 39.7
- Physical neglect: 12.5
- Medical neglect: 10.9
- Psychological abuse: 4.5
- Sexual abuse: 1.3
- Other: 25.6
- Other: 25.6

**Rel. of Perp to Victim**

- Mother: 29.5
- Unknown: 16
- Father: 15.4
- Step-father: 14.1
- Foster mother: 4.5
- Daycare provider: 1.9
- G-mother: 1.9
- G-father: 1.3
- Brother: 1.3
- Foster father: 0.6
- Step-mother: 0.6
- Sister: 0
**Approach Used Before CMF**

- Felt confident handling case: 84.1%
- Rec'd appro guidance on case: 75.2%
- Closely monitoring family: 66.3%
- Worried about family; sup disagreed: 11.7%
- Wanted pursue diff plan-State not allow: 9.9%
- Wanted pursue diff plan-Agency not allow: 8.9%

*Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree*

*Only includes families known to CPS prior to death.*

*Preliminary Results | Do Not Cite Without Author Permission | 2011*
SERVICES RECEIVED BEFORE CMF

- Conducted full risk ass't: 81.2%
- Parents ref, not using social serv: 42.2%
- Parents rec'ing counseling: 39.8%
- Parents attended/compl parent edu: 39.1%
- Parents had psych eval: 28.8%
- Parents rec'ing homemaking serv: 14.7%

*Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree*

Only includes families known to CPS prior to death.

Preliminary Results | Do Not Cite Without Author Permission | 2011
**Parent Characteristics**

- Parental mental illness maj prob: 55.4%
- DV maj prob: 41.2%
- Parental drug use maj prob: 36.1%
- Parental alc use maj prob: 23.5%

Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree
FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Family-freq unemployment: 63.6%
Recently experienced maj life event: 51.3%
Family socially isolated: 44.5%
Family moved a lot: 34.7%
Nonfamily members living in house: 30%
Geographically isolated: 11.4%

Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Had avg/reasonable attachment to child: 67.5%
Had inappropriate age expectations: 65.6%
Had reasonable knowledge of child dev: 51.3%
Saw child as "difficult": 35.9%

Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree

Preliminary Results | Do Not Cite Without Author Permission | 2011
Experiences in the Aftermath of the Death

Do you still work for the same agency?

Yes 85%
No 15%

Are you still a child welfare worker?

Yes 79%
No 21%
Experiences in the Aftermath of the Death: Dept-Provided Therapy

My agency offered me therapy after death

Yes 42%
No 58%

Therapeutic Support

I used the therapy

Therapy was useful

Felt like had to use—Did not want to

Preliminary Results | Do Not Cite Without Author Permission | 2011
## Experiences in the Aftermath of the Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percent Agree or Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers provided emotional support</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red tape source of stress</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor provided emotional support</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously considered leaving job</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about losing my job</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was placed on admin leave</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost job</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked for leave of absence</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preliminary Results | Do Not Cite Without Author Permission | 2011
SUMMARY

- Study provides info on some important aspects of CMFs
  - Potentially important risk factors
    - DV, SA, Alc, MH
    - Parent-child relationship
  - Services being used prior to CMF
- Experiences of CWW
  - The approach before the CMF
  - Supports received/used
- *Need to continue to broaden our knowledge about CMFs*
CONTACT INFO

Emily M. Douglas, Ph.D.
School of Social Work, Bridgewater State U.
Emily.Douglas@bridgew.edu
508-531-2012