



Family and Child Advocacy

Best Practices

Subject:

State statute directing the collection of military affiliation as part of child abuse and neglect response process and sharing pertinent case file information with the appropriate military authorities can provide consistency and complement the statutory responsibility of the Department of Defense. This is a win-win for the state and military child welfare systems, and military families we serve.

Principles:

States can adopt legislation to increase collaboration between the Department of Defense and state and local governments to fulfill the DoD statutory obligation to address child abuse and neglect. Best practice protections include these substantive points.

- Establishing state statute requiring the following facilitates a more consistent and authoritative approach to collaborative oversight:
 - Having child protective service caseworkers ask clients if they are associated with the military
 - Providing caseworkers the authority to share this information with the appropriate military authorities
- Statutory authority would support development of more consistent Memoranda of Understanding, allowing better coordination of local child welfare and military protective and rehabilitative services in support of military children and families.

Best practices examples

The following state statutes address the state's responsibility to address child abuse and neglect regarding all children, including those of military service members. It requires caseworkers to ask clients if they are associated with the military, and if so, it provides them the authority to share the information with the appropriate military authorities.

- State of Washington RCW 26.44.030 reads:
 - *(4) The department, upon receiving a report of an incident of alleged abuse or neglect pursuant to this chapter, involving a child who has died or has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him or her other than by accidental means or who has been subjected to alleged sexual abuse, shall report such incident to the proper law enforcement agency, including military law enforcement, if appropriate.*
 - *(21) The department shall make efforts as soon as practicable to determine the military status of parents whose children are subject to abuse or neglect allegations. If the department determines that a parent or guardian is in the military, the department shall notify a department of defense family advocacy program that there is an allegation of abuse and neglect that is screened in and open for investigation that relates to that military parent or guardian.*