



Best Practices: Child Abuse and Neglect Identification and Reporting

Key Message

The Department of Defense relies on working in collaboration with state and local governments to fulfill its statutory obligation to address child abuse and neglect.

Principles:

State statute directing the collection of military affiliation as part of the 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 the military child welfare systems and military families we serve.

States can adopt legislation to increase collaboration between the DOD and state/local governments to fulfill the DOD's statutory obligation to address child abuse and neglect. "Best practice" protections include these substantive points: School districts may offer electronic registration, if available; however, establishment of new online systems to accomplish the objective of this issue is not necessary.

- Establishing state statute that (1) requires child protective service case workers to ask clients if they are associated with the military and (2) provides them the authority to share this information with the appropriate military authorities to facilitate a more consistent and authoritative approach to collaborative oversight.
- The statutory authority would support development of more consistent memoranda of understanding, allowing better coordination of local child welfare and military protective/rehabilitative services in support of military children and families.

Examples of Best Practices:

Washington State — Revised Code of Washington 26.44.030

(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 an 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 DOD Family Advocacy



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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.

South Carolina — Section 63-7-320, Code of Laws of South Carolina

Section 1. Section 63-7-320 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding Subsection (C) at the end to read:

(C) In the event the alleged abused or neglected child is a member of an active-duty military family, concurrent with the transfer of the report, the county department of social services shall notify the designated authorities at the military installation where the active-duty military sponsor is assigned, pursuant to the memorandum of understanding or agreement with the military installation's command authority.

Section 2. Section 63-7-920 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding Subsection (F) at the end to read:

(F) The department or law enforcement, or both, may collect information concerning the military affiliation of the person having custody or control of the child subject to an investigation and may share this information with the appropriate military authorities pursuant to Section 63-11.80.