COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:
IMPACT WV **Juvenile Abuse and Neglect Cases 101**

The Community of Practice (CoP) series was developed through a partnership with IMPACT WV and the WV Home Visiting Program to help participants exchange technical information and share experiences about serving clients currently experiencing or who have past experiences with substance use and neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).

The information in this IMPACT WV product was taken from a Community of Practice (CoP) presentation by Susan Harrison, MSW, MPA, LGSW, Executive Director CASA for Children, Inc, Serving Ohio, Marshall, Wetzel and Tyler Counties of WV.

Aim

To educate providers, coworkers and families about the West Virginia child abuse and neglect system. How, and who, can we reach to reduce the incidence? The court systems in the state aim to support the best interest for the children, such as ensuring provisions for a safe and permanent home in a timely manner to have a positive impact. The multidisciplinary team (MDT) are responsible to assess, plan, implement and monitor a comprehensive, individualized service plan for children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect.

General Information

Risk factors

Child related risk factors that lead to abuse and neglect in children can include the child having physical and cognitive disabilities, attachment problems, premature birth and being an unwanted child. There are also **parent/caregiver related risk factors** which may lead to child abuse and neglect such as the parent having low self-esteem, depression, life stressors, impulsiveness, substance use, mental illness, and lack of knowledge about child development norms. **Family Risk Factors** can involve families with domestic violence, and families with stepparents, single parents and adolescent parents are at increased risk.

The **minimum sufficient level of care** must be reached by parents to avoid removing a child from their home; this level differs between community standards.

Minimum Sufficient Level of Care (MSL) standards are used to:

- Maintain the rights for both the child and the parents
- Maintain the required law by the ‘Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act’
- Help in decision making regarding protection and decrease the biases and judgmental thoughts
- Decrease the removal and the displacements from family homes
- Identify the minimum standards needed for the child

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General Information

We want children to:

- Be protected
- Feel safe in their homes
- Be permanent and stable in their life
- Feel the continuity and attachment to family
- Be able to provide for the needs of their children
- Receive appropriate developmental supports
- Receive appropriate mental and physical health services

Anyone can report child abuse and neglect including laws enforcement, schoolteachers and staff, medical, dental, and mental health professionals, clubs that provide activities to children such as book clubs, coaches, or volunteer organization, etc. Those who report child abuse and neglect are protected against civil and criminal liability; however, those who fail to report are liable to jail and fines.

Rights of parents and children during judicial proceedings

Right to:

- Family integrity and responsible efforts
- Proper notice of the proceeding
- Contested fact-finding hearing
- Counsel, guardian ad litem and court-appointed special advocates (where available)
- Confrontation and cross-examination

There are time frames and opportunities for the parents to improve their environment for their children. This is called the improvement period (pre, post adjudicatory and post dispositional).

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Resources:

- Trainings available in the state of West Virginia (WV) to help in reducing child abuse and neglect:
  - West Virginia Handle with Care Mandated Reporter (**handlewithcarewv.org**)
  - Mandated Reporter Training Information guided by TEAM for West Virginia Children (**teamwv.org**).
- Laws and codes can be used as a resource to reduce the child abuse and neglect such as the West Virginia Code 49-2-803 and 9-6-9 (**wvlegislature.gov**).
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is program that uses volunteers to advocate for child victims of abuse and neglect (**www.wvcasa.org**).

Tips:

- How can you help?
  - Be aware of triggering situations
  - Refer at risk families to resources in your communities
  - Report any suspected child abuse and neglect within 24 hours to the WV Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-352-6513 24 hours a day - 7 days a week. You will need to have the following information:

    ☑ Demographic information of the victim(s) and household members
    ◯ Description of the suspected abuse or neglect
    ◯ Current location of the victim and caregivers
    ◯ Information about the presence of protective caregivers
    ◯ Information about the perpetrators access to the victim
    ◯ Description of general functioning of victim and caregivers
    ◯ Potential safety threats in the home/family to first responders such as domestic violence, weapons, vicious animals, dangerous people, etc.

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