

Child Abuse and Neglect National Registry Check

Business Case

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Child Abuse and Neglect National Registry

DESCRIPTION

According to the Center for Disease Control, maltreatment of children is a significant public health problem in the United States. Child abuse is defined as any kind of abuse and neglect of a child under 18 years of age by a parent or caregiver that results in direct or potential harm.¹ Each state, plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories, are required by law to maintain investigations records of child abuse and neglect.² This information is maintained by “central registries” in each state. These registries are mainly used by foster care and adoption agencies to check the backgrounds of potential adoption and foster care parents. Currently, to obtain a background check for child abuse and neglect, an inquiry is made to each state where a person has resided. A Child Abuse and Neglect National Registry (CANNR) would provide a single database for obtaining background checks for child abuse and neglect, eliminating the need to check the central registries of each state.

The major stakeholder will be the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As the largest stakeholder, it will inform the state agencies of the urgency to enhance the current process in order to further the mission to prevent child abuse and neglect. It will oversee the transition and development of the national registry with major input from state agencies and the national registry will build-up upon the data maintained in the central registries which will be gathered through the national registry. Because of this, HHS will need to govern and set national standards and guidelines for states to ensure uniformity in the reporting and maintaining of records of child neglect and abuse.

HHS will employ or create an Information Technology support group that will be responsible for informatics, web development (design, programming, and testing), and technical support for the national registry. IT will also set the security standards to ensure that the data can be shared safely and securely, and provide technical support to HHS and all state agencies following implementation.

The goal is to have the national registry in place by January 1, 2016.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

One of the objectives of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is to stop child abuse and neglect before it starts and to decrease the number of reoccurrences. According to the CDC, “In 2012, child protective service agencies reported that over 686,000 children were victims of maltreatment, and an estimated 1,640 children died of abuse and neglect...”³ This data is collected by state child protective services agencies and reported to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). As mandated by law, each state has a centralized registry which systematically records reports of child abuse and neglect, with the purpose of assisting in the identification and protection of abused and neglected children. This data is then analyzed by

The Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of its mission to prevent child abuse and neglect.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: To transition from state centralized registries to a single national database registry.

States currently maintain separate registries for obtaining child abuse and neglect background checks. (See table below) Access to this information is mainly to assist social services agencies in the investigation, treatment, and prevention of child abuse. The creation of a national registry would provide a single sourced database for obtaining access to this information.

The chart below is a partial list of central registries by state which shows various processes required to obtain a background check for child abuse and neglect.

Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry³

STATES	Contact Information	Forms To Obtain Child Abuse and Neglect Checks - Follow any instructions on the form.
Alabama	Call the following number and request a central registry check: (334) 242-9500	
Alaska	Call either of these numbers to request a check for the county that you lived in: (907) 4651650 or 1 888 622-1650	
Arizona	Using letterhead or stationery, create a written request regarding the information you are seeking, including purpose of request, person's names, DOB, SS#, and known addresses in state and fax it to 602-530-1833 attn: Sandy Schultz	
Arkansas	Toll-Free: (800) 482-5964	Arkansas form
California	Phone: (916) 227-3287 Website	California form PDF
Colorado	Local (toll): (303) 866-5932	

Also, the process for obtaining a report can differ from state to state. Some states provide a toll free number for backgrounds while others require a written request or fax. These reports can take up to 15 business days to process.

Objective 2: To expedite child abuse and neglect background check.

The average time to clear a background is usually 14 days from that the date the request is received. To check the background of someone who has multiple states requires an inquiry to each state. A national registry would eliminate multiple inquires for obtaining a background check and ultimately expedite process.

Objective 3: To standardize data collected and maintained by states to ensure uniformity in reporting investigations and incidence of child maltreatment.

Most states recognize four major types of child abuse: neglect, physical abuse, psychological mal-treatment, and sexual abuse. However, the data on child neglect and abuse is based each

states own definitions of child abuse and neglect that is based on standards set by The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), (42 U.S.C. §5101), as amended by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, which defines child abuse and neglect. Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act, which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.”⁴ Therefore, some states maintain all investigated reports of abuse and neglect, while others only maintain the substantiated reports.

Objective 4: To expand access to authorized agencies or organizations that will be entrusted with the care of children.

Some states allow background checks for individuals applying to be childcare providers, child care workers, schools, and the healthcare industry, while others only allow access for foster and adoptive parent applicants. The CANNR will allow access to include person(s) who will be entrusted with the care of children based on authorization.

Objective 5: To prevent potential fraud by applicants for non-disclosure on release forms.

Many state applications rely on the honesty of applicants to disclose the addresses where they lived. The national registry would use the personal identification of the applicant to check all state, District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories records.

DELIVERABLES:

Deliverable 1: A national registry vs. multiple registries for child abuse and neglect background checks.

A national registry will provide a single point of entry for obtaining background checks.

Deliverable 2: Expanded access to authorized agencies or organizations employing those entrusted with the care of children.

To prevent initial and reoccurrences of child abuse and neglect, access to records from all states will include authorized access to agencies and organization that employs anyone who will be entrusted with the care of children.

Deliverable 3: Standardized reporting by states of child abuse and neglect.

Reports of child abuse and neglect will be collected and maintained in a uniform manner and the retention of records will be the same for all states.

Deliverable 4: Reduced clearance time for obtaining background checks.

The turnaround time for receiving background checks will be decreased from 14 days to less than 24 hours. This could expedite the adoption or prevent a child from being placed in the wrong care.

Deliverable 5: HHS funding to support state agencies with the transition to the national registry.

To encourage participation, state agencies can apply for grant support to make changes to their database reporting systems in order to align the new goal of a national registry to be the single source for child abuse and neglect background checks.

¹ Website: Center for Disease Control – “Understanding Child Maltreatment Fact Sheet” - <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cm-factsheet--2013.pdf>

²Website: Child Welfare Information Gateway – “*Establishment and Maintenance of Central Registries for Child Abuse Reports*” https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/centreg.pdf

³Website: Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry Check https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/other_child_care_information/abuse

⁴*Child Maltreatment 2012*, pg. 111, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>