

The Early Detection to Stop Infant Abuse and Prevent Fatalities Act

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The Problem

According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, an estimated 1,720 children died from abuse or neglect in the United States in fiscal year 2017. Seventy-two percent of child fatalities involved children younger than three, and 50 percent involved infants younger than a year old. Multiple studies have found that relatively minor, visible injuries in young infants, including bruising and intraoral injuries, are often indicators of abuse. Unlike in older children, such injuries in infants under 7 months of age, who are generally not mobile, are unlikely to be the result of normal activity. However, such injuries in infants are commonly overlooked by medical providers, caregivers, and child welfare professionals because they seem trivial. Without early intervention, physical abuse can escalate, resulting in severe injuries or even fatalities.

The Solution

The Early Detection to Stop Infant Abuse and Prevent Fatalities Act amends the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to help support the proper identification of, and response to, such suspicious injuries and prevent many cases of abuse and related fatalities.

The Act requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a demonstration program to award grants to eligible entities to support efforts to:

- develop, implement or expand training and best practices to assist medical professionals in identifying, assessing, and responding to injuries indicative of potential abuse in infants
- develop protocols and policies that improve communication and coordination between mandatory reporters and child protective services; and
- raise awareness regarding the significance and identification of such injuries among health professionals, professionals caring for children, child protective services staff and the public.

The Act includes requirements that all applicants evaluate and assess their projects for efficacy, and that HHS report to Congress on the strengths and opportunities of funded programs. It authorizes \$10,000,000 over three years for the program.

Support

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