



Missed Opportunities

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Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:



- Give examples of cases involving clear indications of child abuse or neglect in which the maltreatment was undetected and/or unreported.
- Recognize the various opportunities for discipline-specific intervention when there is a suspicion of child abuse.
- Describe child abuse prevention strategies that can be used in various settings.

Social Autopsy 1



- 1992: A little boy is born with cocaine in his blood
 - "Bad and sweet," his mother once called him
- 7 reports to Fulton Co. DFCS b/w 1991 & 1995
- 11 caseworkers, overseen by 10 supervisors, handled the complaints

1993 - 1996

5/1993: Mother on drugs while pregnant, using food stamps & welfare checks to buy crack

8/1993: Children locked in the bedroom on weekends, no food & water

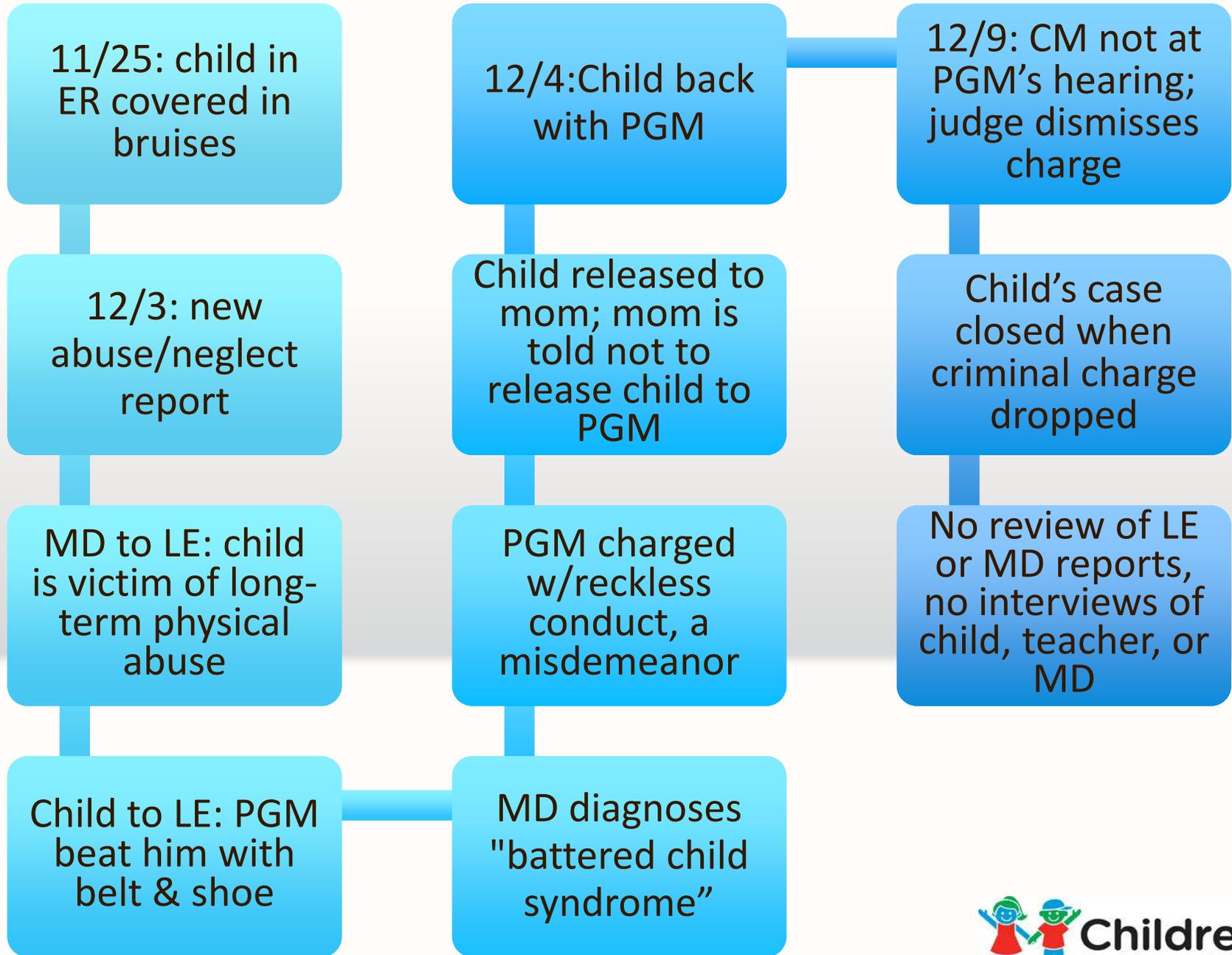
2/1994: Mother is on drugs, children unsupervised

6/1996: After pressure from DFCS, mom gives PGM custody

11/1995: Mother addicted to crack, leaves children with sickly MGM

1/1995: Children begging neighbors for food, mother using cocaine daily

1996



1996 - 1998

12/28: child in ER
w/ infected 3rd
degree burn to
foot

PGM to MD: child
burned foot
standing on heater
grate

Child has skin
graft; no report to
DFCS is made

Aunt says child
stopped breathing
~9 pm

Child pronounced
dead at 10:55 p.m.

1/15/98: child
arrives at ER in
cardiac arrest

No explanation for
abrasions, bruises,
fresh blood

1/16/98: autopsy
shows child died
from LT abuse

The child was 5 yrs
old & 29 pounds

Social Autopsy 1



Does anyone know the name of the child in this case?



Social Autopsy 1

Group Discussion



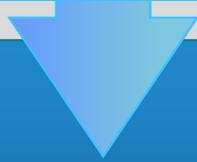
- Break in to small groups with those closest to you
 - Discuss for 5 minutes: **where were some “missed opportunities” in this case?**
 - Consider the different disciplines involved
 - Consider the timeline and the nature of the incidences mentioned

**Missed Opportunities during
Case Investigation**

Parents never tested for drugs



Never checked parents' criminal histories



Some caseworkers never saw or interviewed the child (or siblings)



Often failed to get pertinent medical records



Failure to check with other potential witnesses



Many CMs violated internal guidelines for investigating abuse & neglect reports

What Went Wrong?



- **Courts**
 - Dropped case against PGM
- **Law Enforcement**
 - Released child to mother w/extensive CPS & criminal history
- **Hospital/Medical Staff**
 - Failed to report
- **DFCS**
 - High turnover (11 CM, 10 supervisors)
 - Lacked thorough investigation in multiple cases
 - Encouraged mother to give custody to PGM
- **Privacy/Confidentiality Laws**

Social Autopsy 2



A baby girl is born:
April 26, 1984

Date	Nature of Complaint	Agency	Action Taken
2/9/90	Abuse complaint	DCS	Counseling
11/17/90	Neglect complaint	DCS	Counseling
10/22/92	Absence from school	School/DCS	Counseling
11/15/92	Truancy	School/DCS	Counseling
4/16/93	Child Health	School/DCS	Action Deferred
8/26/93	Maltreatment	Police/DCS	Counseling
9/14/93	Truancy	School/DCS	Counseling
2/9/94	Truancy	School/DCS	Counseling
3/27/94	Neglect complaint	Police/DCS	Counseling
8/14/94	Neglect complaint	Police/DCS	Custody Transfer

Date	Nature of Complaint	Agency	Action Taken
10/27/94	Abuse complaint	DCS	Counseling
719/96	Neglect complaint	DCS	Counseling
10/27/96	Truancy	School/DCS	Deferred
11/16/96	Fighting in school	School	Counseling
11/24/96	Shoplifting	Police	1 day detention
12/11/96	Truancy	School	Counseling
1/5/97	Fighting in school	School	Juv. Court-Prob
1/26/97	Truancy	School	Counseling
2/23/97	Neglect complaint	DCS/Juv. Crt	Parental Counseling
3/16/97	Abuse complaint	DCS	Foster Care

Date	Nature of Complaint	Agency	Action Taken
5/10/97	Shoplifting	Police	Probation
5/18/97	Fighting in school	School	ISS
5/22/97	Truancy	School	Probation
6/23/97	Assaulted by an adult	Police	Therapy
7/3/97	Shoplifting	Police	Probation
7/14/97	Contributing to delinquency of a minor (victim)	Police	Counseling
7/24/97	Neglect complaint	DCS	Counseling
8/29/97	Neglect complaint	DCS	Unfounded
10/21/97	Fighting-assault	Police	Probation

Date	Nature of Complaint	Agency	Action Taken
10/23/97	Truancy	School	Counseling
11/9/97	Runaway	DCS/Police	Shelter
1/16/98	Runaway	DCS/Police	Foster Care
4/22/98	Abuse complaint	DCS	Foster Care
10/11/99	Truancy	School	Counseling
10/23/99	Runaway	DSC/Police	Detention
11/23/99	Shoplifting	Police	Juv. Court-Prob
12/12/99	Loitering	Police	Probation
12/17/99	Loitering	Police	Dismissed
12/23/99	Public Intoxication	Police	Juv. Detention

Date	Nature of Complaint	Agency	Action Taken
1/14/00	Truancy	School	Suspension
1/16/00	Runaway	Police	Returned home
1/19/00	Runaway	Police	Returned home
1/22/00	Loitering	Police	Juv. Detention
1/28/00	Fighting and assault	Police	Juv. D- 30 days
3/26/00	Theft of property	Police	Probation
4/17/00	Drug possession	Police	Det. 5 days
4/28/00	Runaway	Police	Deferred
5/16/00	Prostitution	Police	Deferred
7/20/00	Arrested w/adult for robbery	Police	Detention

Date	Nature of Complaint	Agency	Action Taken
10/28/00	Prostitution & drugs	Police	Deferred
11/14/00	Drug possession	Police	Released to parent
11/16/00	Physical abuse	Police	Released to state
12/24/00	Prostitution	Police	Released post bond hearing
1/28/01	Assault	Police	Juv. detention
3/14/01	Motor vehicle theft	Police	Juv. detention
6/11/01	Aggravated assault	Police	Juv. detention
9/21/01	Murder	Police	Remanded to adult court
3/12/02	Suicide	Police	

Social Autopsy 2

Case Snap Shot



- Baby girl born April 26, 1984
- First report made 2 months before 6th birthday
 - 12 total abuse/neglect complaints
- First ‘offense’: *fighting*- 12 years old
- First ‘offense’ involving police: *shoplifting*- 13 years old
- First ‘serious offenses’: *public intoxication, assault, theft of property, drug possession*- 15 years old
- First ‘prostitution’ charge- 16 years old
- **Total:** 57 complaints prior to her suicide at age 18

Social Autopsy 2

Group Discussion



- What stood out to you about this case?
- What were some of the “missed opportunities”?
- Was this case very different from Terrell Peterson’s?
 - If so, how?

Social Autopsies

Case Connections



- First reports when children were very young
- Both children removed from parents
 - Terrell: kinship care only
 - Female child: “foster care” (kinship or not?)
- Multiple agencies worked aspects of case
 - Medical, LE, CPS, courts, school
- Both cases ended in death

Social Autopsies

What can we learn?



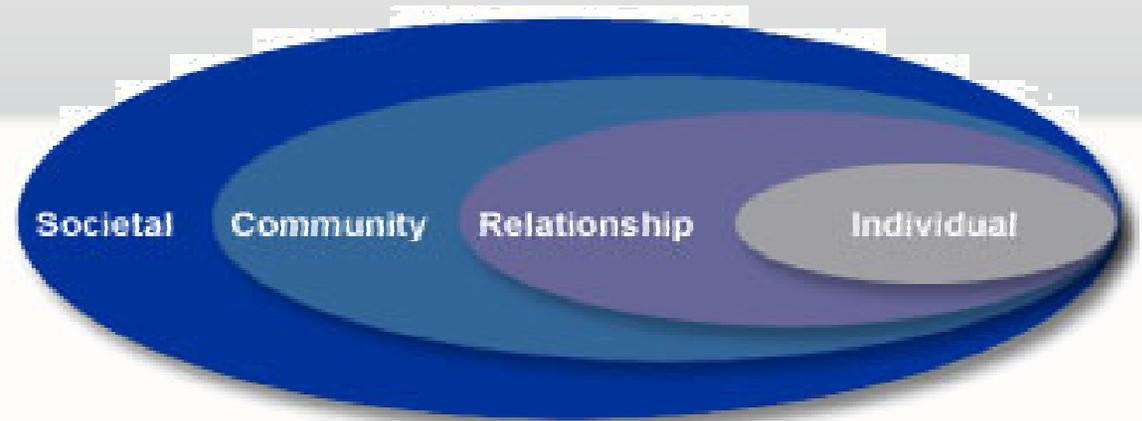
- Often a connection between maltreatment and ‘juvenile delinquency’ or acting out
- Importance of collaboration among disciplines
- Importance of considering a child’s full medical, legal, and CPS history
- Significance of personal responsibility
 - Investigation process
 - Looking deeper than the “problem child” (esp. with “juvenile prostitution”)
 - Consider *compassion fatigue*

Child Abuse Prevention

The Social-Ecological Model



- **Individual:** biological and personal history factors
- **Relationship:** factors that increase risk because of relationships with peers, intimate partners, and family members. A person's closest social circle.
- **Community:** settings such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods
- **Society:** factors that help create a climate in which violence is inhibited



The Continuum of Prevention



Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

Prevention Strategies



- Prevention strategies should target the different levels of the model
 - Developmentally appropriate
 - Conducted across the lifespan



Prevention Strategies

Examples at all levels



- Home visiting (relationship & community level)
- Stewards of Children (individual, relationship & community levels)
www.d2l.org, www.choa.org/cptraining
- Parenting classes (individual & relationship)
- Period of Purple Crying (individual, relationship & community)
- Child protection laws (societal)
- Programs that help families access healthcare, formal education, family planning, safe housing (all levels, esp. societal)



Physical Abuse/Neglect Prevention

Specific Tools



- Teach and advocate for: Effective Discipline
 - Geared towards child's developmental age
 - Positive reinforcement
 - Smiles, hugs, praise, thanks
 - Never hit or shake
 - Talk and listen to children; respect their POV
 - When setting limits be clear and consistent
 - *Practice* good behavior, don't just talk about it

Physical Abuse/Neglect Prevention

Specific Tools



- Promote: Use of Community Resources
 - Substance & alcohol abuse assistance
 - Battered women support services
 - DFCS
 - Family & individual counseling
 - Parenting classes
 - Economic resources
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Childcare



Physical Abuse/Neglect Prevention

Specific Tools



- Teach and advocate for: Positive Relationships
 - Parent - parent (partners)
 - Time alone together
 - Positive for intimate relationship
 - Positive for parenting abilities
 - Parent – child
 - Individual time with each child
 - Family meals
 - DV/IPV
 - Form of child maltreatment



Sexual Abuse Prevention

Specific Tools



- Teach children:
 - Correct names for body parts
 - Vagina, penis, breast, etc.
 - No “flower”, “pocketbook”, etc.
 - About sex, sexuality, and sexual abuse
 - Early
 - Continue conversations
 - Answer questions honestly
 - If you don’t know exactly what to say or how, it’s ok!

Sexual Abuse Prevention

Specific Tools



- Teach children:
 - The value of their own body
 - Share affection only when ready/want to
 - Respect others' space and wishes
 - All “touching” rules apply to friends, family, and anyone else
 - You are there to protect them
 - Sexual abuse is *NEVER* their fault



Sexual Abuse Prevention

Specific Tools



- Insist on:
 - Organizational policies
 - Hiring
 - *Thorough* criminal background checks
 - Extensive interviews
 - References
 - Reduce or eliminate one-adult/one-child situations
 - Child abuse reporting, recognizing, and prevention training
 - Continuous monitoring
 - Protocol to address suspicions

THANK YOU!
Questions?

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