

Physician and Society 201 LC 1 Advocacy Summary Report

Child neglect and reporting is an important issue affecting many families in Kentucky. We pose the question, “Is there adequate training and continuing education on this topic among mandatory reporters?” Continuing education attempts to address knowing when to report based on the current laws and reporting equitably across diverse backgrounds. This project’s goal is to advocate for the areas of improvement in diversity and reporting standards among first responders, as identified in our previous research project “Cultural Competency and CPS Reporting Trends Among Medical First Responders in Northern Kentucky.”

The social determinant of health we focused on was child neglect and abuse and health outcomes associated with CPS reporting practices. We specifically looked at the role of first responders and EMTs and how their cultural competency and biases impact trust between families and the healthcare system. Research shows that ethnic minority groups tend to be reported for abusive head trauma at a higher rate than non-Hispanic/white groups. In the northern Kentucky region, the NKY Health Department highlighted the importance of cultural competency-based education to improve relationships between first responders and the community (NKY Health).

According to our survey data, all subjects reported that they were “very confident” or “somewhat confident” in their ability to correctly identify cases for reporting. They were significantly less confident that they could describe what happens after they report. Most but not all subjects had received DEI training, and in general they felt that this training was unnecessary and repetitive. Previous work has shown significant racial and ethnic inequality in reporting of abuse, which conflicts with our subjects’ self-assessment (Hymel 2018). More work is needed to determine if negative sentiments towards DEI are underlying this disconnect.

Section 4765.16 | Continuing Education – Development, OH, is part of the Ohio Revised Code detailing continuing education curriculum for first responders and EMTs and content that the curriculum must include. As of April 27, 2023, training on DEI or cultural competency is not a required part of the curriculum. Given the current policy impacts over 14,800 first responders and the much larger and diverse populations they serve, we propose that Section 4765.16 be changed to include DEI/cultural competency training as part of the continuing education requirements for first responders and EMTs.

Over and under reporting to Child Protective Services (CPS) correlates with poorer health outcomes and wellbeing. More specifically, Black children tend to be reported and investigated at higher rates, resulting in children being removed from their families for longer periods of time. This contributes to worse health outcomes, particularly when cases of abuse are missed or when the trauma of being separated from their family causes hesitancy to seek out medical care in the future (Hymel, et al., 2018). Our study with first responders in Kenton and Campbell County found that first responders felt training on DEI was unnecessary and repetitive, which conflicted with their level of confidence with cultural competency in CPS reporting. Additionally, our results suggest first responders may be more likely to integrate CPS reporting, cultural competency, and DEI training if a link to victim safety is clear and compelling.

In the next, year, we encourage local policy makers to work with first responders on DEI training that includes cultural competency and investigation into personal implicit bias. There should also be a clear and compelling link between the DEI and cultural competency training first responders receive and the effects it has on patient safety, which was a primary concern of first responders when reporting abuse and neglect. We are also asking for DEI or cultural

competency training to be included in the continuing education requirements for first responders outlined within the law.

To conclude, DEI initiatives in first responder training are imperative to promote a positive relationship between community members and law enforcement. Child neglect reporting by first responders is subject to many biases including race, income status and ultimately the conflation of poverty and neglect. We found through our research that first responders identify that cultural competency and DEI are important yet lacked understanding about the utility of DEI training in their own organizations. We propose the integration of DEI training into all first responder education about child neglect reporting. After implementation of DEI education in first responder organizations, we propose a continued assessment of community attitudes towards first responders to ensure that the training is adequate.

References

NKY Health. Health data, plans, and reports [Internet]. [cited 2024 Oct 15]. Available from: <https://nkyhealth.org/health-data-plans-reports/>