

***Tennessee Citizens
Review Panel
Annual Progress
Report***



2002

**Prepared for
The Tennessee Department of Children's Services**

by



**The University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
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**by
Denise Alexander**



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Introduction

In response to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Tennessee is improving the state's child welfare system by including the community in evaluating its child protective services (CPS) system. The state is utilizing the community involvement to reduce risk and provide protection from abuse and neglect of Tennessee's children. Three Citizens Review Panels (CRPs) have been developed throughout the state. These panels are continually pursuing new ideas for improvement.

Relying on current information from reports, evaluations, and the guided input of professionals and citizens within the community, the hope for a stronger and more reliable CPS system is becoming a reality.

A few of the CPS improvements within the state include a Centralized Intake Program, a grant to develop and strengthen CPS supervisory skills, development of a specialized team to coordinate statewide macro and third party investigations, and various specialized trainings to enhance CPS investigative skills. These and several other CPS improvements are discussed in the Executive Summary of the *Tennessee Child Sexual Abuse State Plan* (see Appendix A).

CRPs will continue to participate in the development and enhancement of current and future improvements to Tennessee's child welfare system.

The Mandate

In 1996, Congress amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). In the amendments to CAPTA, Congress required that states, in order to receive funding for the Child Abuse and Neglect State Grants Program, establish Citizens Review Panels (CRPs).

In general, the review panels are to examine the local and state child protective system. The child protective system is not only defined as the mandated CPS agency, but also other agencies within the child welfare system. These may include the court system, law enforcement, service providers, and all other agencies whose intent is to protect children.

Although the statute provides general guidelines for the operation of the panels, the functions of the CRPs are defined broadly. This allows the CRPs to address local community CPS issues as well as examine broader state issues.

It is believed that CRPs can be an effective tool for improving the CPS system, through examining policies, procedures, and, where appropriate, specific cases handled by state as well as local child protective services agencies.

Statutory Requirements

Scope of Panel Responsibility

Under the federal statute, each Citizens Review Panel (CRP) is required to review the compliance of state and local CPS agencies in the discharge of their responsibilities with respect to the following:

- ◆ The state CAPTA Plan
- ◆ Coordination with Title IV-E foster care and adoption programs
- ◆ Review of child fatalities and near fatalities
- ◆ Other criteria the panel considers important

Mandated Requirements

Federal law requires that a state's Citizens Review system:

- ◆ Include at least three panels
- ◆ Be in operation by July 1999
- ◆ Be composed of volunteer members who are:
 - Broadly representative of the community in which they operate
 - Experienced in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect
- ◆ Meet at least every 3 months
- ◆ Examine policies and procedures and, where appropriate, specific cases of both state and local agencies

- ◆ Maintain confidentiality
- ◆ Prepare an annual report

Location of Citizens Review Panels, Member Selection, and Orientation/Training

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (TDCS) identified three areas of the state in which to develop Citizens Review Panels (CRPs). The three selected areas include Montgomery County, Memphis, and the Northwest Region of Tennessee (including 9 rural counties).

The locations for the three CRPs were determined by specific characteristics or concerns in the particular areas of the state. The Montgomery County CRP is located in Clarksville, Tennessee, a city that has a large military base within the city limits and borders the state of Kentucky. The unique population of military personnel, both active and retired, and the ethnic diversity and transient patterns in the population highlight certain challenges that arise when interacting within this community. In addition, TDCS staff face the challenge of conducting CPS investigations with the assistance of military personnel and/or within the context of the military base.

The CRP in Memphis, Tennessee, the largest urban area in Tennessee, was chosen to reflect issues specific to urban areas. This area of the state suffers from frequent staff turnover and higher than average caseloads.

The Northwest Region of Tennessee was chosen as a CRP because it serves a rural population in a relatively large geographical area. There are very limited resources in this area to offer to families or to assist TDCS in its efforts to reduce risk and provide safety to children and families. The TDCS staff in this region is stable and turnover is minimal.

Each CRP has a TDCS liaison who serves as an advisor to the panel on various policies and procedures of the Department. CRP members were selected for the panel by the local region. Membership was based on the specific guidelines

included in the *Citizens Review Panels for the Child Protective Services System Guidelines and Protocols*. Members are very diverse, both personally and professionally; are representative of their communities, both demographically and geographically; and have committed to a two (2) year term of service on their local CRPs.

Upon being selected, CRP members are given a brief overview regarding the role of the panel and expectations of its members. Ongoing training and education of the panel occurs throughout the year during quarterly meetings. Annually, a statewide meeting is scheduled in which all panel members come together to discuss statewide initiatives, goals, and objectives.

Participation and Collaboration

Aggressive efforts have been made to reduce duplication and enhance collaboration within CPS system specifically and within the child welfare system in general through the work of Tennessee Citizens Review Panels (CRPs).

Examples of this can be seen in the representation of each CRP chairperson on the Children's Justice Task Force and on the Child Sexual Abuse Task Force.

The purpose of each task force is to review and identify issues and concerns within the child welfare system in the state. The recommendations of each task force are incorporated into the state's mandated Child Sexual Abuse State Plan and the Department's Strategic Plan for Child Protective Services.

In addition to these efforts, CRP members continually increase their knowledge of current CPS issues to enhance their ability to make informed recommendations. CRP members have reviewed outcome reports from other studies related to child welfare in Tennessee. The reports include the Child and Family Service Review, The Settlement Agreement of a recent lawsuit regarding children in state custody, Child Fatality Report, Tennessee Supreme Court's Court Improvement Program for Juvenile Dependency Cases, Children's Justice Task Force 3-year recommendations, and Child Welfare League of America's Child Protective Services Review. The reports identify specific trends in Tennessee's Child Protective Services Program.

Each CRP has approached its responsibilities of review differently. Panels have used the following ways to evaluate the CPS system on a local and statewide level:

- ◆ Reviewing reports and evaluations of the CPS system
- ◆ Securing guest speakers (e.g., local agencies, Attorney General)
- ◆ Shadowing case managers

- ◆ Reviewing records (i.e., measuring casework based on a case file review instrument used statewide by supervisors)
- ◆ Attending local court proceedings
- ◆ Interviewing local field staff
- ◆ Attending fatality review board
- ◆ Attending foster care review board
- ◆ Research and data collection

Findings, Recommendations, and Future Work of Citizens Review Panels

In 2002, the Citizens Review Panels (CRPs) identified specific recommendations and concerns related to the CPS system. These recommendations have been provided to the Children's Justice Task Force and have been incorporated into the Child Sexual Abuse State Plan and the Department's Program Improvement Plan. As stated previously, the chairpersons of the CRPS are members of the Children's Justice Task Force, assuring continuity and consistency between these two entities. The Executive Summary of the 2002 task force report is included in *Appendix A*.

At least two of the CRPs will participate in a 3-year Supervisor Development Project initiated through a research grant awarded in October 2002. This is a collaborative project with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services/Child Protective Services and the University of Tennessee College of Social Work. The grant for this project is being sponsored by the University of Kentucky, Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center (SRQIC) and is a research and evaluation training demonstration grant targeting CPS frontline supervisors in the state of Tennessee. The research project will focus on the impact of structured methods of clinical casework supervision on child protective services. A needs assessment of 10 rural southern states, conducted by the SRQIC for Child Protection, identified an overwhelming need for more clinical supervision of CPS workers. The demands upon CPS supervisors have shifted from clinical oversight to administrative duties. This has contributed to an increase in employee turnover rates and worker dissatisfaction and has negatively impacted services to clients.

The focus of the Tennessee project will be to re-introduce basic components of CPS supervision, team building, and mentoring along with the balancing of

administrative duties required of CPS supervisors. The CRPs will be involved in the evaluation component of the project. This will occur in year 3 of the project. Other responsibilities prior to year 3 include an advisory component to be utilized as needed throughout the project.

Tennessee CRPs have taken a somewhat grassroots approach to solving some of the issues identified in their respective communities. The following information identifies the members of each panel and describes some of the needs that they have recognized and some of the projects they are currently pursuing.

Northwest Citizens Review Panel

PANEL MEMBERS

Susan Barker–TDCS Liaison

Brendell Cowen

Susan Davidson

Pam Henson–Chairperson

Frankie McCord

Marilyn Tritt

Martha Smith

Ellarine Moses

The Northwest Citizens Review Panel has identified several items that directly impact the way child protective services are delivered in their area. They have established several areas to pursue in the next year. These include the following:

- ◆ The group acknowledged the need for agencies and different disciplines to work together and become more knowledgeable about child abuse/neglect. The CRP would like to pursue the initiation of a regional conference.
- ◆ Lack of resources for children and families have plagued this area of the state for years. Further pursuit of resource development has also been recognized as essential to the provision of child protective services.
- ◆ Methamphetamine use and production is becoming a major concern in the rural areas of this region. Further education about this topic for all disciplines has been recommended.
- ◆ Development of a Child Advocacy Center in the Northwest region has been recommended.

- ◆ Plans to recruit and retain members for the Citizens Review Panel are being developed with the goal of building a larger board that is able to achieve more fully the goals of the panel. These plans will be developed and pursued over the course of the next year.

Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel

PANEL MEMBERS

Amelia Wallace–DCS Liaison

Maria Carrier

Shirley Bailey

Mary Elaine Horn

Peggy Knight

Marlena Bush

Concerns to pursue include the following:

- ◆ Confidentiality of children is not being protected when the police are called out on a child abuse call. This information is printed in the newspaper with the address of the family, although the names of the children are not included.
- ◆ Possible under-reporting of cases of abuse by professional mandatory reporters.

Shelby County Citizens Review Panel

PANEL MEMBERS

Glenda Taylor–DCS Liaison

Trudy Weatherford–DCS Liaison

Nancy Williams–Chairperson

Katie Stanton

Joree Brownlow

Faye Howard

Yolonda Rooks

Greg Stidham

- ◆ Shelby County was identified as a pilot region for the new CPS Centralized Intake Program. The Shelby County Citizens Review Panel is currently involved in the development of an evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of the centralized intake process. The focus of the evaluation will include the impact of centralized intake on professional reporters and their reporting relationship with the Department.
- ◆ In many abuse and child death cases, the perpetrator is the boyfriend of the mother. The panel has discussed pursuing the development of a campaign that is twofold: 1) getting the word out to young mothers about leaving their children with people they do not know very well and 2) educating young men about child care and anger management.
- ◆ In 2002, the Shelby County Citizens Review Panel completed a research project that began in 2001. Information collected during this project included all child deaths from 1996–2000 and the prosecution rates of all non-accidental deaths. There were several points of interest that resulted in the collection of this data. A summary of this data can be found in *Appendix B*.

Conclusion

Current plans for all three groups include continued recruitment and growth of the panels.

The Citizens Review Panels' (CRPs) involvement in the Supervisor Development Project insures a renewed perspective from community stakeholders. Their involvement also carries with it the hope that any internal improvements in the CPS program can be extended on a broader basis throughout the community through education and good public relations.

Tennessee CRPs continue to demonstrate their commitment to improving child welfare through their involvement in the identification and development of CPS community issues. The upcoming year brings many new opportunities for the panels.

Appendix A: Tennessee Child Sexual Abuse State Plan

Executive Summary

In this new millennium, Tennessee continues to move forward in improving the processes of reporting, investigating and adjudicating child abuse. In spite of many obstacles, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (TDCS) has made improvements in numerous areas of child protection related to child sexual abuse. This is being done by revisiting, revising, and sometimes redesigning policies, procedures and services. The creation of new programs and services has also been initiated.

Recognizing that services unaccompanied by evaluation will not solve the problems of child abuse, Tennessee continues to follow the national trend of implementing measurement tools needed to determine the effectiveness of services provided. These measurements, both qualitative and quantitative have been developed with assistance from TDCS staff, community stakeholders, including task forces, and other contract agencies of the Department.

Tennessee will continue to take steps in developing stronger staff and better services for victims of child sexual abuse. A few of the many accomplishments in the area of child sexual abuse that are noted in the 2001–2003 Child Sexual Abuse State Plan are highlighted below.

Child Advocacy Centers. Responding to recommendations of the Child Sexual Abuse Task Force/Children's Justice Task Force, TDCS has increased the number of neutral sites for child sexual abuse interviews. TDCS is permanently funding 11 established Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) in nine judicial districts. These centers also serve as meeting places for Child Protective Investigative Teams (CPITs). DCS is committed to facilitating the development of CACs in every judicial district in Tennessee. There are some CACs currently in operation that are not funded by TDCS.

Legislation expanded membership of the CPITs to include child advocacy center directors or their designees (meeting certain statutory requirements) who will bear the same responsibilities and restrictions as other CPIT members.

CAC/CPIT Liaison. In the summer of 2000, acting on the recommendation of the Child Sexual Abuse Task Force/Children's Justice Task Force, TDCS created and staffed a new position at the central office. This program specialist is the primary link between TDCS and CACs and between TDCS and CPITs. The specialist assists in the development of protocols for CPITs and CACs and identifies multidisciplinary training needs.

Standardized Data Collection. In 1999, TDCS responded to a law that required they take a leadership role in gathering data on cases that have been brought to the CPITs. A multidisciplinary committee developed the format and process for the data collection with both short-term and long-term plans. The short-term plan is a pilot project being conducted in the 11 areas of the state where TDCS provides funding to CACs. Case data is collected and submitted to the University of Tennessee College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service for processing and analysis. An annual report on the data is submitted to the legislature every January. Information from this report can be obtained by contacting the Child Protective Services program of TDCS. The long-range solution will include statewide data collection through an interface of the data systems of TDCS and the Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts.

Specialization of Staff. As of the fall of 1997, TDCS staff responding to child sexual abuse reports are no longer generalists, but are child protective service (CPS) case managers. These CPS Case Managers receive unique training and develop expertise to intervene appropriately and effectively in response to abuse and neglect reports.

Training on Investigative Interviewing. Since 1998, all existing CPS staff has received specialized training called Investigative Techniques in Child Abuse Interviewing. This is a 28-hour course that focuses on interviewing alleged perpetrators to elicit detailed and accurate information regarding the allegations. This course supplements the 7 week pre-service and specialty training received by each CPS Case Manager. Additionally, TDCS has made this training available to law enforcement and other CPIT members.

Training on Legally Defensible Interviewing. Since 2001, CPS Case Managers have received specialized training called Legally Defensible Interviewing, a 21-hour course that focuses on improving child interviewing skills of the CPS case manager.

Forensic Interviewers. TDCS established seven forensic interviewer positions to be strategically placed at CACs in each grand division of the state. These interviewing specialists work with the CPIT to reduce the possibility of secondary trauma to children associated with sexual abuse investigations.

Case File Review. The Commissioner’s Case File Review fulfills the requirement of the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). This policy provides all indicated perpetrators of child abuse and/or neglect with the ability to appeal the decision. Since the implementation of the policy, data has been collected which suggested that training should be provided for case managers in the disciplines of investigative procedures, risk assessment, and documentation. Training development and delivery for staff is ongoing and is revised as needed. The quality of CPS investigations has improved significantly since implementation of the case file review.

CWLA Review. During 1999 and 2000, TDCS contracted with CWLA to evaluate Tennessee’s child protective services by conducting 45 statewide focus groups, as well as an analysis of intake, screening, and service procedures. TDCS continues work to improve the identified program elements. The major program elements for which Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) made recommendations include

- ◆ intake and screening decisions,
- ◆ timeliness of CPS investigative response,
- ◆ CPS workload analysis,
- ◆ coordination of investigation and service delivery, and

CWLA also identified a need for increased services.

Co-location of Disciplines serving the treatment of Child Sexual Abuse Cases.

The culmination of a three-year project known as Under One Roof resulted the creation of a service unit located at the Memphis CAC composed of CPS staff from DCS, law enforcement personnel, a special prosecutor, and support staff to handle cases of child sexual abuse and other severe maltreatment. Since its inception, the agency has grown from five staff members to 52—including TDCS staff, CAC staff, a special prosecutor, support staff and Memphis Police Department staff. By co-locating service personnel, the department improves the outcomes for children who are alleged to be sexually or severely physically abused. The approach includes the expedition of cases, training of team members, timely treatment planning, vertical prosecution (in which the same law enforcement personnel and prosecutor handle cases from beginning to end), and data collection to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The Under One Roof project has been completed and now serves as a model for other CACs across the state.

Family and Children’s Service Review. The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is a federal review process that assesses the state’s performance during a specified time period in regard to seven child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well being and relating to seven systemic factors. Only two outcomes were directly related to child protection. Outcome number one is identified, as “children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect”;

and outcome number two as “children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.” TDCS ranked higher in safety than other outcomes.

The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is TDCS’s response to the CFSR. The PIP was developed with significant input from service providers and contract agencies from across the state. It incorporated recommendations from CWLA, Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, Children’s Justice Task Force, and Citizen Review Panels. The PIP will enhance the state’s capacity to respond and assess reports of child sexual abuse.

Although the work is not complete, many accomplishments have been made since the last Child Sexual Abuse State Plan. The TDCS and many dedicated Tennesseans continue to work diligently to strengthen efforts in the detection, intervention, prevention, and treatment of those affected by child sexual abuse.

Appendix B: Shelby County Child Death Review Research Project

Child Death Review

Examining Child Deaths Since 1996: 30 Cases Examined

BY

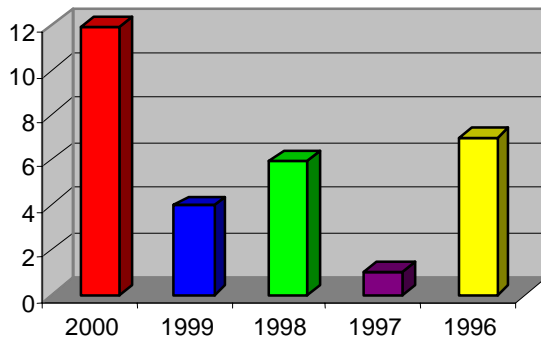
ASHLEY WOLFF

The Citizen Review Panel of Shelby County initiated the Child Death Review Project. This project reviewed child deaths from 1996 through 2000. Information collected includes the following:

- ◆ Death from inflicted injuries
- ◆ Offenders/perpetrators of the crime
- ◆ Results of legal charges and judicial proceedings

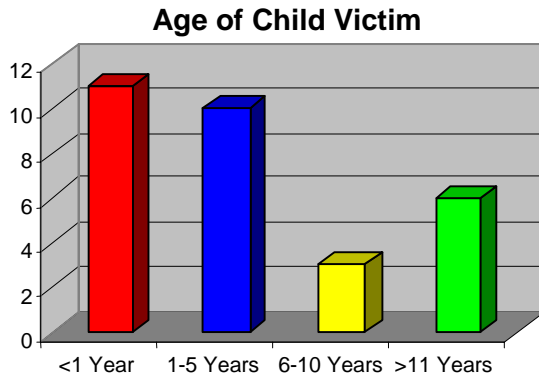
This summary includes demographic information of victims and perpetrators involved in the crimes.

Number of Child Deaths per Year



Note: Child deaths were at a 5-year high in 2000. Cause of the increase is not known. Annual breakdown of deaths from 1996-2000 are as follows:

2000	12
1999	4
1998	6
1997	1
1996	7



<1 Year	11
1-5 Years	10
6-10 Years	3
>11 Years	6

Cause of death correlates to age of child by the following:

1 year and under

- ◆ Head injuries/blunt trauma to head-5
- ◆ Blunt trauma-3
- ◆ Maternal demise-1
- ◆ Shaken baby-2

1-5 years of age

- ◆ Blunt trauma to abdomen 2
- ◆ Multiple injuries-2
- ◆ Blunt impact to head-1
- ◆ Shaken baby-1
- ◆ Blunt trauma-1
- ◆ Skeletal remains-1
- ◆ Child abuse undetermined-1

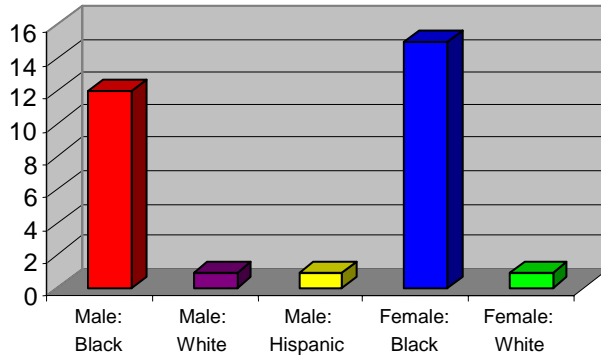
6-10 years of age

- ◆ Intraoral injuries-1
- ◆ Inflicted injuries-1
- ◆ Stab wounds-1

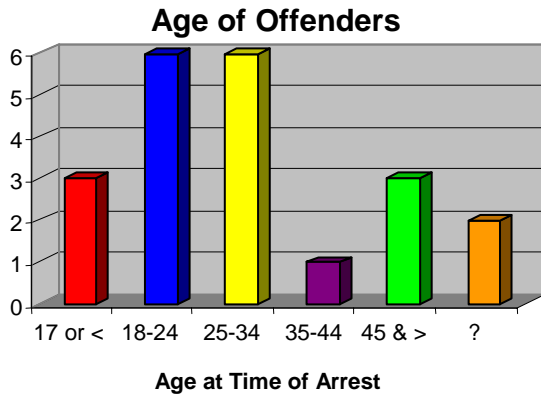
11 years and over

- ◆ Blunt trauma to head-1
- ◆ Stab wounds-4
- ◆ Blunt trauma-1

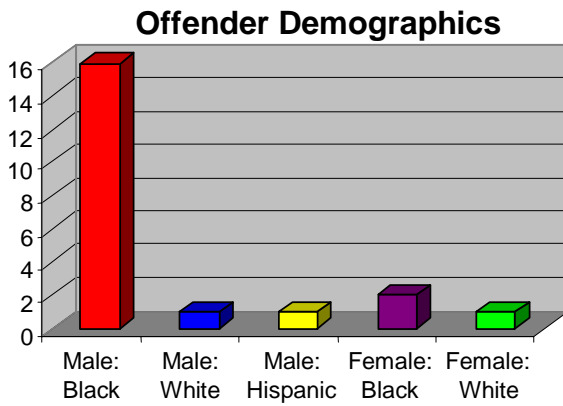
Race of Child Victims



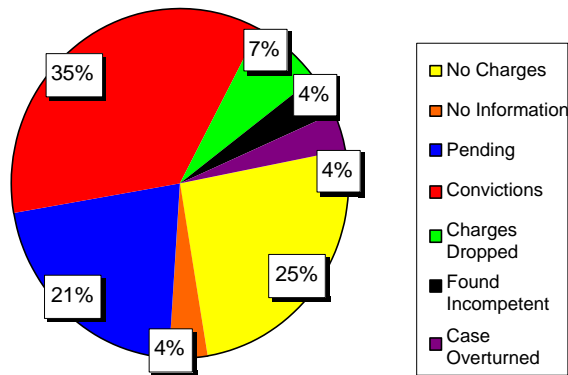
Male: Black	12
Male: White	1
Male: Hispanic	1
Female: Black	15
Female: White	1



Note: This study obtained the ages of 18 of the 21 offenders.



Summary of Case Conclusions



No Charges	7
No Information	1
Pending	6
Convictions	10
Charges Dropped	2
Found Incompetent	1
Case Overturned	1

This study did reveal several points of interest including age of child correlated to cause of death. The study revealed that children age 5 and under were killed by adults most commonly by shaking or blunt trauma. Children age 11 and older were more likely to be victims of stab wounds by perpetrators closer to their own age. There were several questions raised that can only be answered by further research and study.

Other issues for further study include;

- ◆ Incidence of child deaths. This study could determine if the rise in child deaths in 2000 is statistically significant or reflects any trends in relation child deaths.
- ◆ Disproportionate rate of African American victims compared to the general population in Memphis/Shelby County. A comparison of child death rates in similar regions is recommended.
- ◆ Socio-economic status of victim and perpetrator. Such a study would be an area to investigate further.

Though only a cursory analysis of this data has been done, it is significant to note that the process of collecting the data brought together numerous agencies and sources of data.

This in itself was a helpful exercise and a signal of potential success for future collaborative efforts.