Disclosure

There are no relevant financial disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.
Dr. Deutsch provides testimony in civil and criminal proceedings regarding suspected child abuse.
Artwork included in this presentation was obtained from publicly available, Internet-based sources.
Kids use art to tell the story of the coronavirus outbreak

Objectives

Review the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, including children at risk for abuse and neglect
Discuss how pandemic circumstances have impacted pediatric medical care-seeking, functioning of child welfare agencies, foster care and safety investigations
Evaluate use of data for advocacy – how have lessons learned altered the future trajectory of supportive service provision for at-risk families
Describe the anticipated effects of COVID-19 on child health and safety across generations
What have we learned from the pandemic, and how does it change us and what we do, moving forward?
SARS-CoV-2: A Novel, Controversial Threat

Social Distancing/Infection Control
Personal Protective Equipment, Masks
Testing Availability, Efficacy
Quarantine Policies
Vaccine Engineering
Treatment Availability/Utility
MIS-C
Asymptomatic Spread
School/Business Re-opening

Vulnerability: High Risk Populations
Elderly – highest direct risk of severe disease, at risk for social isolation
Individuals with mental health or substance use disorders – relapse, barriers to treatment
Homeless – unable to isolate, affected by disrupted support services
Individuals with disabilities, institutionalized (foster care) – disrupted support services, infectious hubs
Those involved with criminal justice system – infectious hubs, delayed proceedings
Children – target for violence, at risk for social isolation, school disruption, poor supervision

Community Stressors
Propensity Towards Violence

Domestic violence
Gun violence
Violence directed towards children


The Impact on Child Health and Safety

Changed injury patterns — similar to prior work on natural disasters

Epidemiology of pediatric fractures
Dog bites, burns, bruises, ingestions
The role of supervisory neglect

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
The Impact on Child Health and Safety

Parental Burn-Out: Risk Factors for Abuse and Neglect

COVID-19: The Newest Adverse Childhood Experience


Parental burnout – Balances Between Risks and Resources Theory (Mikolajczak and Roskam 2018), mismatch between resources and demands

Factors predictive of parental burnout – unemployment, financial insecurity, low levels of social support, lack of leisure time

Increased association with child abuse and neglect, controlling for confounding factors (Mikolajczak 2019)

Any parent can become abusive under the “right” circumstances (Curtis et al. 2000)


The COVID-19 crisis has already left too many children hungry in America


Panchal, N. et al. The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020)

What's Actually Happening: The Gray Zone

For the first time ever, minors make up half of visitors to national sexual assault hotline. www.rainn.org/news (2020)


Calls to national hotlines up; significance unclear

Impact on Child Welfare System

Variable program structure, service delivery and overall approach across states
Barriers to reporting – need to educate general public
Funding and technology
Navigating investigations

What COVID19 means for America’s child welfare system: Welch M, Haskins R.
https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-covid-19-means-for-americas-child-welfare-system/#:~:text=COVID%2D19%20has%20created%20a%20stress%20of%20job%20loss

Operational Protocols

Hotline level – reports down (some online reports), differing responses to investigations (triaging?)
Ongoing family involvement: virtual sessions
Who really needs a medical? Who really needs an in-person/in-home assessment?
CAC level – emergent interviews only, online/virtual interviews, triaging?
Impact on criminal prosecution? Trauma?
Law Enforcement/ Investigative level – reduced scene assessments/re-enactments, preserving resources for COVID response
Impact on Foster Care

- Delayed reunification – delayed court proceedings, limited ability to access intervention services
- Virtual visits with biological families
- Placement disruptions – non-kinship care (health of elderly relatives), ill foster parents, children/foster parents with pre-existing conditions
- Infection risk for children/teens in residential facilities
- Foster teens in college, dorms shut, no homes


Harnessing Data for Advocacy

Predictive Analytics – hundreds of historical factors utilized to build a model ("long arc historical risk" to give a "long arc future risk" score)

When hotline reports fell, the children not being referred were lower risk – the risk score for the referred children significantly increased

Average risk score higher

*True* child protection reports during pandemic, versus other reports that could be amenable to community agencies

https://youtu.be/0oDHok7Jd8s
Where Do We Go From Here?
Paradigm shift – towards prevention
Restructuring our current systems, enhancing collaborative capacity
Upstream resource provision, active Outreach/linkage to Services
Better-equip the system (technology, PPE)

Resiliency and Emotional Connection – Hoping for the Best
Providing supports to reduce stress for caregivers and protect children from threats to their safety
Economic supports
Psychosocial supports

Resources
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus (COVID-19):
Coalition for the Homeless, COVID-19 Update: www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/covid-19
Mental Health America, Mental Health and COVID-19—Information and Resources: https://mhanational.org/covid19
Resources
National Domestic Violence Hotline: www.thehotline.org/help
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence: www.nrddv.org
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Helpline: www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

Thank You
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