

General Terms

A

Abandonment – The act of a parent or caretaker leaving a child without adequate supervision or provision for the child’s needs for an excessive period of time. State laws vary in defining adequacy of supervision and the length of time a child may be left alone or in the care of another before abandonment is determined. The age of the child is also an important factor in determining whether the child has been abandoned

Abnormal – Deviating from the standard; not average; typical or usual

Accidental death – A mode of death indicating non-intentional trauma (see mode of death and intentional and non-intentional injury)

Accused – See defendant

Accountability – The measurable extent to which an organization, individual, or the general public keeps the promises made to the people being served. Most often the involves providing assurance to someone or somebody that expected action occurred

Addiction – Over-dependence on the intake of certain substances (such as alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs) or performing certain acts, such as smoking. Inability to overcome a habit or behavior pattern

Adjudication (Adjudicatory Hearing) – In a child welfare case, the hearing in which the court determines whether a child has been maltreated or whether there is some other basis for the court to take jurisdiction (or authority) over the case. The grounds upon which the court may take jurisdiction vary from state to state.

If the court finds that there is a basis for jurisdiction, the next stage of the process is the disposition hearing

Adoption – A legal process that vests all legal rights and responsibilities of the parenthood in persons other than the child’s biological or adoptive parents

Appeal – In law, resort to a superior (appellate) court or administrative agency to review the decision of an inferior court (trial or lower appellate) or administrative agency

Arraignment – One of the first steps in the criminal process in which a defendant is formally charged with an offense and informed of his/her constitutional rights

Asphyxia – Death caused by deprived of oxygen. Can be caused by strangulation, suffocation, choking, or smothering

Assault – The attempt to inflict bodily injury on another person, with unlawful force and the apparent ability to inflict the bodily injury unless stopped. Assault is both a crime and a tort (private/civil wrong)

B

Board Certified – A physician who has completed residency training and has passed an official examination to be listed as an official specialist

Battered Child Syndrome – A term describing a combination of physical and other indicators that a child’s internal and external injuries result from acts committed by a parent or caretaker. In some states Battered Child Syndrome has been judicially recognized as an acceptable medical diagnosis

Best Interest of the Child – A standard frequently used by child welfare agencies and child welfare courts in determining whether to undertake specific acts regarding a child

Birth Parent – A parent to whom a child is born. Also called “biological” or “natural” parent

C

CAPTA – See Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Caretaker – In child welfare, a person responsible for a child’s health or welfare. This may be the child’s parent or guardian, another person within the child’s own home, or a person responsible for a child’s health or relative in a relative’s home, foster care home, or residential institution.

Case – In child welfare, refers to both to the process of a child and family through the child welfare agency and to the process of the child and family through court.

Case Management – A systemic approach to social work in which an emphasis is placed on the system in which a client must function rather than on inner thought process. Case management requires identification and coordination of the multiple services required by the client.

Case Plan – In child welfare, a written document which contains at least: (1) a description of the home or institution in which the child is placed; (2) a plan for assuring that the child receives proper care and that services are provided which will reduce risk, promote healthy family functioning or facilitate the child’s return home or to another permanent placement; and (3) the child’s health and education records.

Case Planning – The continuous process engaged in by a child welfare agency in developing and modifying a child or family’s case plan.

Case Worker– The staff member of a child welfare agency who is responsible for working with a child or family.

Cause of Death – The effect or condition that brought about the cessation of life (e.g. trauma, asphyxia, and cancer)

Central Registry – In child welfare, generally, a listing of names of persons found by a CPS agency to be perpetrators of child abuse or neglect. The existence and use of Central Registries varies from state to state

Child – Person under 18 years of age. Synonymous with minor.

Child Abuse – (Common, legal) Intentional injury to a child. Each state has enacted its own definition of child abuse, generally based on the definition found in the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. According to the **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (See CAPTA)**:

Child Abuse – Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

Sexual Abuse – The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.

Note: Each State is responsible for providing its own definition of child abuse and neglect

Child Abuse Central Index – A state central index of reports of child abuse/neglect; it generally includes acts or omissions by caretakers that are held to be true and of significance after an investigation by law enforcement or child protective services (CPS)

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) – An act introduced and promoted in Congress by the US Senator Walter Mondale and signed into law on January 31, 1974. The Act emphasized multidisciplinary approaches to child abuse and neglect. Codified at 42 USC § 101 *et seq.*

Child Abuse Protocol Committee – County level representatives from the office of the sheriff, county department of family and child Services, office of the district attorney, juvenile court, magistrate court, county board of education, office of the chief of police of the largest municipality in the county, and the office of the coroner or medical examiner. The committee is charged with developing local protocol to investigate and prosecute alleged cases of child abuse. See Local Child Death Review Team

Child Death Review Report – A standardized form required for collecting data on child fatalities meeting the criteria for the review by the Child Death Review Teams

Child Death Review Team (CDRT) – County level representatives from the office of the coroner or medical examiner, county department of family and children services, public health department, juvenile court, office of the district attorney, and law enforcement. Formed at both a county and state level

Child Development – Pattern of sequential stages or interrelated physical, psychological, and social development in the process of maturation from infancy and total dependence to adulthood and relative independence

Child Maltreatment – See child abuse

Child Neglect – (Common, legal) An injury to a child caused by the omission of necessary acts including failure to provide food, healthcare, shelter or safety. See child abuse

Child Protective Services (CPS) – (Common) The welfare department/social service system designed to protect children. In most states, the entity that receives and investigates reports of suspected child maltreatment and provides services to children and families to ameliorate past maltreatment and prevent future maltreatment

Child Welfare Agency – In most states, the public agency responsible for the provision of services such as Child Protective Services (CPS) and foster care

Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act (Public Law 96-272) – A federal law passed in 1980 intended to prevent foster care drift and increase effective permanency planning for children in foster care. Case plans, findings of reasonable effort, periodic reviews, and dispositional reviews are among its requirements for states wanting a share of money appropriated under the Act

Child Welfare Court – The court that hears child welfare cases (emergency removal, adjudication, disposition, review, termination or parental rights). States have different names for this court, including family court, juvenile court, and dependency court

Citizen's Review Board – See Foster Care Review Board

Civil Court – Courts established for the adjudication or controversies between individual parties, or the ascertainment, enforcement, and redress of private rights. The court which hears child welfare cases is a civil court

Coining – A Southeast Asian folk remedy in which the edge of a coin is repeatedly rubbed over the body, generally the upper torso, windpipe and inner arm. The result is a series of reddish to purple vertical bruises resembling strap marks, which vary in depth and severity. The bruises are believed to be an indicator for the evil spirits of a disease to exit the body

Colposcope – Optical instrument for low power magnification of the external genitalia as well as the vagina and cervix. Used for detection of sexual injuries. Also used for detection of ano-rectal injuries

Commissioner – See Master

Common Law– In the law, the system of jurisprudence (the form of law) which developed in England and came to American colonies during colonization. Common law is derived and developed from the decisions of judges

Completed Review – Data has been entered and verified into the Child Death**** Review Data System

Competent Intent – The desire to cause an event to happen by someone with the ability to form that intent (some say a child under the age of 8 does not have the ability to form competent intent)

Concussion – An injury to the brain caused by a violent jarring or shaking, or a blow to the brain. After a mild concussion there may be a brief loss of consciousness with a headache on awakening. A severe concussion may cause

lengthy unconsciousness and disruption of breathing or other vital functions of the brainstem

Confidentiality Statement – A standardized form, approved by the State Team, which must be signed by all review process participants

Congenital – When referring to certain mental or physical traits, malformations, disease, etc., those that are present at birth. May be hereditary or due to some influence during gestation

Consultants – Non-statutory members of a Child Death Review Team (State or Local), who have been chosen to serve on a review team for their expertise, experience, and/or community involvement

Coroner – An official whose duty it is to investigate sudden, suspicious, or violent death to determine the cause. Also referred to as medical examiner.

Coroner's Investigator – An official investigator for the coroner (note these investigators may have varied backgrounds and levels of education)

Corporal Punishment – Physical punishment inflicted directly upon the body

Crime Scene – The physical site where a crime may have occurred (see death scene)

Criminal Court – A court designated to hear matters relating to criminal law. The court that hears cases involving the crime of child abuse are criminal courts

Crisis Intervention – In social work, the purposeful activities and involvement of a helping a person at the point that another person or family is caught in acute, disabling distress due to situational events. The intervention includes rapid

response to move the client from emotional disorganization to rational problem solving through time-limited counseling and other services

Cupping – A folk remedy in which an alcohol-soaked material is ignited in a small cup or jar. After the flame is extinguished, the cup is placed over the skin and the resulting suction forces the tissue into the mouth of the cup. The cup is left in place for approximately twenty minutes. Cupping results in a 2-inch circular, unraised, ecchymotic burn. Wounds usually are produced in symmetrical, vertical rows, in clusters of two and four on the right and left side of the chest, abdomen, and back, or in smaller groupings on the forehead

Custody – In law, the right to care and control of a child and the duty to provide that child's food, clothing, shelter, ordinary medical care, education, and discipline. Parents are the natural custodians of their child. However a court may grant temporary custody to someone other than a parent, pending further action or review by the court

D

Death – Loss of life (see fatality)

Death Certificate – Official document noting the cause and mode of death (see cause, mode, and fetal death certificate)

Death Scene Investigation – An attempt by a person functioning in an official capacity to gather information at the site where a fatal illness, injury, or event occurred, for the purpose of determining the cause and circumstance of a death

Defendant – In civil proceedings, the party responding to the complaint brought by the plaintiff. In criminal proceedings, the person accused for a crime.
Synonymous with accused

Dependency Court – Specialized civil court designated to hear matters pertaining to child abuse/neglect (see criminal court, see family court). See Child Welfare Court

Depression – In psychology, a mood disorder in which there are extreme feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, inadequacy, or sadness

Differential Diagnosis – The determination of which two or more diseases with similar symptoms is the one from which the patient is suffering. For example, osteogenesis is a differential diagnosis for child abuse

Discipline – Behavior that educates and corrects or punishes

Disposition – In Child Protective Services, the finding of the validity of a report of child maltreatment which is made by the caseworker after investigation. Disposition categories vary from state to state

Disposition Hearing – In child welfare court cases, a court hearing which determines whether a child needs or requires the court’s assistance, guidance, treatment, or rehabilitation and, if so, the nature of the assistance, guidance, treatment, or rehabilitation

Disposition Review – In a child welfare court case, a hearing in which the court reviews the child’s case to ensure that a permanency plan is being implemented in the child’s best interest

Dissociation – In psychology, the separation of thought or feeling from consciousness, e.g. when a sexual abuse victim “pulls away” from the cognitive and emotional experience of the abuse. “Multiple Personality Disorder” is a severe and rare outcome of dissociation

Due Process of Law– The right of persons under the 5th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution to procedural and substantive fairness in situations in which the government would deprive the person of life, liberty, or property

E

Eligible Death – Death meeting the criteria for review including death resulting from SIDS, unintentional injuries, intentional injuries, medical conditions when unattended by a physician, or any manner that is suspicious or unusual

Emergency Medical Services – The complete chain of human physical resources that provide patient care in cases of sudden illness or injury

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) – A professional provider of emergency care. An EMT receives formal training and certification. There are three levels of emergency medical technicians

EMT Basic – Can administer oxygen and initiate defibrillation but is not allowed to perform any type of invasive care

EMT Intermediate – Has passed specific training programs in order to provide some level of advanced life support, for example, the initiation of intravenous lines and administration of some medications. In some states this level is currently being phased out

EMT Paramedic – Has successfully complete paramedic training and has received appropriate certification. EMT paramedics can generally perform relatively invasive field care including insertion of endotracheal tubes, initiation of intravenous lines, administration of medications, interpretation of electrocardiograms, and cardiac defibrillation

Emergency Removal Hearing – An immediate hearing held by the child welfare court which determines whether to continue emergency out-of-home placement

for an allegedly maltreated child. State laws vary on the time by which the hearing must be held after the child has been removed from the home in an emergency. Synonymous with shelter hearing

Emotional Maltreatment – Passive or active patterned, nonnurturing behavior by a parent or caretaker that negatively affects or handicaps a child emotionally, psychologically, physically, intellectually, socially, or developmentally. The definition can vary by state

Environmental – Pertaining to all of the many factors that affect the life of a person, including physical and psychological.

Epidemiology – The study of the spread, prevention, and control of disease in a community or a group of persons

Evidence – In law, something that makes another thing evident or tends to prove that a fact at issue is true

Circumstantial – Evidence of a fact from which another fact can reasonably be inferred.

Direct – Evidence which is presented in the testimony of a witness who has direct knowledge of the fact being proved

Hearsay – An out of court statement intended to prove the truth of the matter being asserted. Hearsay evidence is usually excluded from court proceedings because it is considered unreliable and because the person making the original statement cannot be cross-examined

Opinion – Witnesses are ordinarily not permitted to testify as to their personal beliefs or opinions, being restricted instead to reporting what they actually saw or heard. However, a witness can give an opinion if qualified as an expert. See expert witness

Physical – Any tangible piece of proof. Physical evidence usually must be authenticated by a witness who testifies to the connection of the evidence (called an exhibit) with other facts of the case

Prima Facie – Evidence that will suffice as proof of the fact in issue until its effect is overcome by other evidence

Examination – In law, the questioning of a witness

Expert Witness – Someone the court determines to have expertise on a subject (does not necessarily require any graduate degree). The witness may qualify as an expert through experience, training, or education. Only an expert witness may testify in the form of opinion

Expungement – Destruction of records. In law, expungement may be ordered by a court after a specified number of years or when the juvenile, parent, or defendant applies for expungement and shows that his/her conduct has improved. In child welfare, expungement also means the removal from the Central Registry or certain reports of abuse or neglect

F

Failure to Thrive – A medical condition seen in young children where a child does not gain weight. It may be associated with a decrease in the rate of growth or in a growth rate that is significantly below norm. The cause may be organic (natural) or non-organic, such as poor nutrition, inadequate food intake, or inappropriate formula preparation

Family Court – Court designated to hear matters pertaining to family law (e.g., divorce and child custody). See Child Welfare Court

Family Dynamics – Interrelationships between and among individual family members. The evaluation of family dynamics is an important factor in the identification, diagnosis, and treatment of child abuse and neglect

Family Dysfunction – Ineffective functioning of the family as a unit or of individual family members in their family roles because of the physical, mental, or situational problems of one or more family members

Family Preservation Services – Services provided which support the principle that a child should be maintained in the family if the child’s safety can be ensured

Family Reunification Services – Services which support the principle that the preferred permanency plan for a child in foster care is the return to the family if the child’s safety can be ensured

Fatality - Loss of life (see death)

Felony – Generally, any criminal offence for which the penalty is imprisonment for more than one year. Murder, rape, and armed robbery are crimes usually considered felonies

Felony Murder – See Homicide

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome – A congenital syndrome caused by intrauterine exposure to alcohol. Characteristics include intra and extrauterine growth retardation, microcephaly (small head), and mental retardation

Fetal Death - (Common) Death of pregnancy after approximately 20 weeks

Fetal Death Certificate - Official document noting the death of a fetus (note - does not include a space for mode of death, see mode of death)

Fetal Homicide – (law) The death of a viable fetus caused by competent intent (see viable fetus)

Fingering – See Spooning

Fontanelle (Fontanel) – The two soft areas (“soft spots”) on the head of an infant where the bones are not yet joined. One soft spot disappears at about two months and the other at about eighteen months of age. A “bulging fontanelle” may indicate increased pressure in the skull.

Forensic – Having to do with the study of criminal acts

Forensic Pathologist – A pathologist with training in criminal pathology (see board certified)

Form 1 – A standardized form required for collecting data on *all* child fatalities by coroners or medical examiners

Foster Care – Placement for children under dependency court jurisdiction (note- this includes single family homes, group homes with no more than six children, or institutions with many children). Includes continuous 24- hour care and supportive services provided for a child while the child needs substitute care outside of the child’s family

Foster Care Review Board (Citizen’s Review Board) – A volunteer panel of citizens that reviews the cases of children who have been in foster care under public agency for at least six months. Boards generally seek to determine the efforts that have been made to achieve permanent and stable placements for foster children and to encourage and facilitate the implementation of permanency plans in their best interest

Foster Care Services – In most states, the entity that provides services to children and families when a child is in foster care

Foster Family Home – A type of foster care that is provided in a family setting

G

Good Cause Removal – A cause which bears a reasonable relationship to an individual's unfitness to discharge the duties assigned or is in a reasonable sense detrimental to the interest or purpose to the Child Death Review Team

Gross Examination – In medicine, a physical examination without the aid of radiologic instruments or surgical entry

Group Home – A type of foster care in which care is provided in a small group setting

Guardian – An adult who is legally responsible for a child. A guardian has almost all the rights and powers of a parent, but the legal relationship is subject to termination and change. A guardian may also have physical custody of the child

Guardian *ad litem* – A lawyer or non-lawyer who represents the best interest of a child in a child welfare court proceeding

H

Homicide (official) – Death caused by another with the intent to kill or severely injure

Murder – The unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought. Malice aforethought requires premeditated intent plus an element of hatred

Felony Murder – The unintentional killing of a human being during the commission of a felony

Manslaughter – An unlawful killing of a human being without malice aforethought

Voluntary Manslaughter – An intentional killing committed under circumstances which, although they do not justify the homicide, mitigate it

Involuntary Manslaughter – Criminally negligent homicide, such as a death resulting from the negligent operation of a motor vehicle

Homicide (common but not official) – Death at the hands of another (without reference to intent)

Homicide Detective (Investigator) – A police department or sheriff department investigator with an expertise in homicide investigations

Hospital Shopping – The use by a person or family of different medical facilities so that each individual medical facility's sole contact with the person or family is a single presenting injury

Hyperactive – More active than normal. The term becomes synonymous with Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADDH or ADHD or ADD), that is characterized by inattention, impulsively, and hyperactivity

Hypoactive – Less active than normal

I

Idealization – In psychology, attributing exaggerated positive qualities to self or other, e.g. a child may idealize an absent or abusive parent

Identification – In psychology, increasing feelings of worth by identifying oneself with a person or institution of illustrious standing

Identification with the Aggressor – In psychology, a defense mechanism consisting of imitation of the aggressor

Impassivity – A state of not feeling or showing emotion

Incest – Sexual intercourse between persons who are closely related by blood. While incest between parent and child or siblings is almost universally forbidden, various cultures may extend the boundaries to prohibit intercourse with other relatives. In the U.S., the prohibition against incest is specified by state laws as well as by cultural tradition. States usually define incest as marriage or sexual relationships between relatives who are closer than second, or sometimes even more distant, cousins. While incest and sexual abuse are often thought to be synonymous, incest is only one type of sexual abuse.

Incidence – In epidemiology, the extent to which a problem occurs in a given population

Independent Living – A possible permanency plan for a child in foster care in which the goal is self-sufficiency after discharge from foster care

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) – A federal law which specifies the manner in which child welfare agencies and child welfare courts must handle cases involving Native American and Alaska Native Children

Infant – Child under one year of age (see neonate)

Infanticide – The killing of an infant or of many infants

Injury – Refers to any force whether it be physical, chemical, thermal, or electrical that results in harm or death

Intentional Injury Death – Public health term used to define death caused by another with the intent to cause harm (see competent intent)

Intern – Post student trainee (e.g., a physician’s first year of work after medical school)

Intent – Desire to cause to happen (see competent intent)

J

Judgement – The court’s final decision

Jurisdiction – A court’s authority over the subject matter, the person, and the rendering of a particular order or judgement.

Juvenile Court – See Child Welfare Court

K

Kinship Care (Relative Placement) – Residential caregiving provided to children by nonparental relatives. Kinship care may be full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent, and may be initiated by private family agreement or under the custodial supervision of a child welfare agency

L

Language Delay – A situation in which a child’s language abilities are considerably poorer than the abilities of most children of the same age

Lethargy – A state marked by loss of energy, inactivity, sluggishness, or excessive drowsiness.

ListServ – Computerized one-to-many email system that allows individuals to share information with a group

Local Child Death Review Team – A Child Death Review Team authorized by the State Child Death Review Team to operate within a specific area, i.e. county, reservation, or other geographical area. See Multidisciplinary Team

M

Malnutrition – A condition caused by inadequate nourishment

Maltreatment – See Child Abuse and Neglect

Mandated Agency – The agency designated by state law to receive and investigate reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. The specific agency varies from state to state

Mandated Reporters – Persons designated by state law who are legally responsible for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to the mandated agency within their state. Mandated reporters vary according to state law, but are primarily professionals, such as doctors, nurses, school personnel, and social workers who have frequent contact with children and families

Manner of Death – The legal classification, whether natural suicide, homicide, accidental, or undetermined

Manslaughter – See Homicide

Master – A person appointed by a court in certain cases to hear testimony and make reports that, if approved by the court, become the decision of the court. In some states, masters may hear child welfare court cases. Also referred to as referee or commissioner

Mechanism of Death – The physical reason for a death (e.g. head trauma caused brain swelling which caused decreased brain function which caused the heart and/or lungs to stop functioning)

Medical Cause – Refers to the death resulting from a natural cause other than SIDS

Medical Examiner– An official whose duty it is to investigate sudden, suspicious, or violent death to determine the cause. See coroner

Medical Neglect – Generally, the repeated failure of parents or caretakers to comply with recommendations from medical professionals for the treatment of a child's condition. Individual states may define the term differently

Minor – See child

Misdemeanor – Criminal offenses that are less severe than felonies and generally punished by lesser fines or by jail terms which do not exceed a year

Mode or Manner of Death – Official category for a death certificate (homicide, suicide, undetermined, accidental, natural)

Multidisciplinary Team – In child welfare, a group of professionals representing various disciplines who meet to coordinate their efforts in diagnosing and treating specific cases of child abuse and neglect. A multidisciplinary team may also

address the general problem of child abuse and neglect in their community. See Local Child Death Review Team

Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy – A pattern of abuse in which the perpetrator, usually parent, will fabricate medical histories, inflict physical findings, alter laboratory specimens and induce disorders in a child to give the appearance that the child is ill

Murder – See Homicide

N

National Crime Information Center (NCIC) – Criminal justice information systems operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D.C.

Natural Cause – Death resulting from inherent, existing conditions. Natural causes include congenital anomalies, disease, other medical causes, and SIDS

Neglect – See Child Neglect

Negligence – In the law, doing something that a person of ordinary prudence would not do, or the failure to do something that a person of ordinary prudence would do, under given circumstances

Neonate – Infant under one month of age

Non-Intentional Injury Death – Public health term to replace accidental death

P

Parens Patriae – “Parent of the country.” Refers to the role of the state as sovereign and the guardian of persons under legal disability. It is through *parens patriae* that the state investigates possible child abuse and neglect, and places a child in foster care

Passive – In psychology, not reacting visibly to something that might be expected to produce manifestations of an emotion or feeling

Periodic Review – In Child welfare, the six-month review of cases of child in out-of-home care required by Public Law 96-272 and state law

Perjury – Knowingly and willfully giving false testimony under oath

Permanency Plan – In child welfare, a plan for implementing the most permanent long-term living situation possible for a child, consistent with the child’s best interest. This plan specifies where and with whom a foster care child shall live, and the proposed legal relationship between the child and the permanent caretaker or caretakers

Permanency Planning – The process by which a welfare agency with responsibility for the child in foster care develops a permanency plan for a child

Perpetrator – In child welfare, a person(s) who committed an act that resulted in the death of a child

Petition – In the law, a formal, written request to the court that it do something. The petition is a pleading that begins a court case. It contains the facts and circumstances upon which a court is asked to provide certain relief as well as the relief being sought

Physical Abuse – See Child Abuse

Plaintiff – In a civil case, the person who files a lawsuit

Pleadings – In the law, formal allegations of the claim and defenses raised by the parties to the court case

Premature Infant – An infant born after thirty-seven weeks gestation by before full term and, arbitrarily, an infant weighing 2.2- 2.5 pounds at birth. This definition varies

Prenatal – Occurring before birth

Preventable Death – A child's death is considered to be preventable if the community (through legislation, education, etc.) or an individual (through reasonable precaution, supervision, or action) could have done that which could have changed the circumstances that led to the death

Prevention – In public health, the keeping of something (such as an illness) from happening. There are three general levels of care designed for prevention:

Primary – The first level of health care, designed to prevent the occurrence of disease and promote health

Secondary – The second level of care, based on the earliest possible identification of disease so that it can be more readily treated or managed and adverse sequelae can be prevented

Tertiary – The third level of care, concerned with promotion of independent function and prevention of further disease-related deterioration

Probable Cause – In the law, a requisite element of a valid search and seizure or of an arrest, which consists of the existence of facts and circumstances within one's knowledge that are sufficient to warrant the belief that a crime has been committed (in the context of an arrest) or that property subject to seizure is at a

designated location (in the context of a search and seizure). Whether probable cause exists depends of the independent judgement of a “detached magistrate”

Prosecution– The act of pursuing a lawsuit or criminal trail; also, also the party initiating a criminal suit

Psychosis – In psychology, a mental disorder causing gross impairment of a person’s mental capacity, affecting response and capacity to recognize reality

Public Law 96-272 – see Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act

R

Rationalization – In psychology, attempting to prove that one’s behavior is “rational” and justifiable, and thus worthy of self and social approval

Reaction Formation – In psychology, the substitution of behavior, thoughts, or feelings which are diametrically opposed to the person’s own unacceptable ones. For example, a parent feels guilty about lack of bonding with the child and instead overindulges the child

Reasonable Effort – In child welfare, the ordinary diligence and care by a child welfare agency to identify child protection problems and provide services to solve those problems so as to prevent out-of-home placement or promote family reunification

Reconsideration – In child welfare, the process of periodically reassessing and redeveloping the permanency plan and case plan

Records Request Form – Standardized forms, State Team approved, for requesting records on individual cases

Referee – See Master

Regression – In psychology, retreating to an earlier developmental level involving less mature responses and, usually, a lower level of aspiration

Regulation – For a governmental agency, directions for the operation of the agency, developed by the agency to implement its statutory responsibilities. Regulations have the force and effect of law when issued following notice to the public and an opportunity for the public comment

Relative Placement – See Kinship Care

Repression – In psychology, a defense mechanism in which the person is unable to remember disturbing feelings, thoughts, or experiences

Reviewable Death – Death which has been reported as having met criteria for review by the Child Death Review Team panel, whether or not the review has yet been completed and reported

Reviewed Death – Death which has been reviewed by a local Child Death Review Teams, a report completed, and submitted to the State Child Death Review Team

Risk Assessment – A structures gathering and evaluation of information related to factors in a child’s family, home environment, temperament, and conditions, to determine the presence, level, and type of risk(s) to the child’s current and future safety and welfare. Relevant factors change and risk assessment must therefore be conducted over the life of a case

Risk Factors – Refers to a person, thing, event, etc. that put an individual at an increased likelihood of dying.

S

Search Warrant – An order issued by a judge and directing certain law enforcement officers to conduct a search of specified premises for specified things or persons, and to bring them before the court. Use of a search warrant is required by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Sequelae – The aftereffects of an injury or disease process. In child abuse, this term usually refers to the psychological or physical outcomes which result from being abused or neglected

Sexual Abuse – See Child Abuse-sexual abuse

Shaken Baby Syndrome – Characterization of head injuries to a young child caused by shaking without impact. Injury to an infant or child resulting from violent, repetitive shaking. Pathognomonic findings include intracranial hemorrhaging, retinal hemorrhaging, and no cutaneous manifestations of injury. Survivors are frequently left with profound neurologic sequelae, e.g., blindness, deafness, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and seizures

Shaken Impact Syndrome – Characterization of head injuries to a young child with shaking and impact. Different from Shaken Baby Syndrome which does not include impact

Shelter Hearing – See emergency removal hearing

Social Isolation – The limited interaction and contact of many abusing or neglecting parents with relatives, neighbors, friends, or community resources.

Social isolation can perpetuate a basic lack of trust, which hinders both the identification and the treatment of child abuse and neglect

Somatization – In psychology, a pathology in which a person becomes preoccupied with physical symptoms disproportionate to any actual physical disturbance. May be seen in victims of sexual abuse

Splitting – In psychology, a defense mechanism in which a person views self and others as all good or all bad, failing to integrate the positive and the negative qualities of self and others into cohesive images. Often the person alternately idealizes and devalues the same person

Spooning (Fingering) – A folk remedy from Southeast Asia for pain relief. The middle knuckle of the index finger or a spoon is firmly rubbed along the surface of the skin in any area of an ill person's body, especially along the spine, behind the knees. In the bend of both arms, and on the chest from just above the nipple to mid-clavicle. If a raised line appears, no further treatment is necessary

Standard of Proof – An amount of probability necessary for court to render a decision regarding the evidence presented to it. There are three different standards of proof.

Beyond a reasonable Doubt – The amount of probability required to find a criminal defendant guilty. The proof must be so conclusive and complete that the ordinary person could not reasonably deny it

Clear and Convincing Evidence – An amount of probability less than beyond a reasonable doubt but more than probable cause. It is used in some civil cases, including termination of parental rights cases. The proof must produce a firm belief of truth to the trier of the fact

Preponderance of Evidence – The amount of proof required in most civil cases, including child welfare cases (except for termination of parental rights proceedings). The proof must be more likely than not

State Child Death Review Team – An appointed body of representatives that oversees the local child death review process, reports to the governor annually on the incidence of child fatalities, and recommends prevention measures based on the data. See Child Death Review Teams

Statute – A law passed by a legislative body

Subpoena – In the law, a command to appear at a certain time and place, on a certain date, and to give testimony on a certain matter

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) – Sudden death of an infant which is unexpected by clinical history review, death scene investigation and in which a thorough postmortem examination, including autopsy, fails to demonstrate an adequate cause. A diagnosis of exclusion made when there is no underlying cause of death can be identified. It is not caused by abuse or neglect

Suicide – Death of self caused with intent (see intent)

Summons – In the law, a document used to commence a civil action or special processing. A summons is issued by a court to the sheriff (or other designated official), requiring them to notify the person named that an action has been commenced against the person and that the person is required to appear on a day named and answer the complaint

T

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) – A legal process that severs the legal relationship between parents and the child and vests authority in the child welfare agency. The TPR order places the child in the guardianship of the child welfare

agency and gives the agency the right to consent to adoption or long-term care short of adoption

Testimony – Evidence given by a competent witness under oath or affirmation, as distinguished from evidence derived from written or other sources

Trauma – An injury or wound brought about by an outside force. Trauma may be caused accidentally, or, as in physical abuse, nonaccidentally. Trauma also refers to physiological discomfort or symptoms resulting from an emotional shock or painful experience

Trend – In child death surveillance, refers to the changes occurring in the number and distribution of child deaths

U

Undetermined Death – Death where the mode of death is not clear (see mode of death)

Unsupervised Death – Death which data suggests that the decedent may not have had adequate supervision at the time of the fatal injury or death event. Defining variables include reports that the event was unwitnessed, that the caretaker was asleep at the time (except under normal sleeping hours), or that there was no adult caretaker

Unintentional Death – Refers to the act that resulted in death being one that was not deliberate, willful, or planned.

V

Venue – Related to the locality of the court or courts which possess jurisdiction

Vertical Team Prosecution – A prosecution in which every member of the prosecution team is the same throughout the trial

Victims of Crime Fund – Money available to serve crime victims through a federal and/or state program with local officials having responsibility for distribution of funds

W

Witness – A witness is a person who has first-hand knowledge of the illness/injury/event leading to death. This excludes information obtained from other persons. A person inflicting injury on a child or identified as a perpetrator is not considered a witness. The witness may or may not be in charge or providing immediate care for the child and may or may not have custody of the child. First-hand knowledge usually includes seeing or hearing the fatal illness/injury/event occur

Wound Pattern – Wounds that are close together, similar size and shape, and inflicted in the same area of the body

Medical Terminology

A

Abdominal Distention – Swelling of the abdomen (the area located between the chest and pelvis), which may be caused by internal injury, bowel blockage, or malnutrition

Abrasion – A wound in which either skin or mucous membrane have been scraped off

Acute – In medicine, or short or sharp course (as compared to chronic)

Acute Pancreatitis – An acute inflammation of the pancreas (the organ in the body which produces and secretes the enzymes which aid digestion). Symptoms include severe abdominal pains, nausea and fever. In children, trauma should be considered as a possible cause

Addiction – Over-dependence on the intake of certain substances (such as alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs) or performing certain acts, such as smoking. Inability to overcome a habit or behavior pattern

Anemia – Any condition in which the number of red blood cells (carriers of oxygen throughout the body) is fewer than normal

Anorexia – Lack or loss of appetite for food

Anorexia Nervosa – A personality disorder manifested by an extreme aversion to food. It usually, but not exclusively, occurs in young women. May include bingeing and purging (Bulimia)

Anterior – In human anatomy, the front surface of the body

Apnea – The absence of breathing

Asphyxia – Death caused by deprived of oxygen. Can be caused by strangulation, suffocation, choking, or smothering

Atrophy – Wasting away of flesh, tissue, cell, or organ

Autism – A syndrome appearing in childhood with symptoms of self-absorption, inaccessibility, aloneness, inability to relate to others, highly repetitive play and language disturbances. The cause is unknown

Autopsy – The dissection of a dead body for the purpose of inquiring into the cause of death. Also, port mortem examination to determine the cause or nature of a disease. An autopsy is normally required by statute for violence, unexpected, sudden or unexplained deaths

Avitaminosis – A condition caused by the lack of one or more essential vitamins, which may be caused by lack of vitamins in the diet or by the inability to use the vitamins because of disease

Avulsion – A forcible separation or tearing away of a body part or tissue

B

Baby Gram – (Slang) One or two x-rays taken in order to see all of a baby's body at one or two angles (often inadequate)

Battered Child Syndrome – A term describing a combination of physical and other indicators that a child's internal and external injuries result from acts

committed by a parent or caretaker. In some states Battered Child Syndrome has been judicially recognized as an acceptable medical diagnosis

Blunt Force Trauma – Injury caused by force from a blunt object (such objects may include hands and feet). Includes Abrasions, bruises and contusions, and lacerations

Bone Scan – A nuclear medicine study that can assist in diagnosis of early or minimal fractures, especially in children under two years of age where bones have not ossified

Brain Stem – Portion of the brain connecting the cerebrum and the cerebellum to the spinal cord

Bruise – An injury that does not break the skin but causes ruptures of the small underlying vessels with resultant discoloration of tissues. Organs can also be bruised, e.g., brain, kidneys. Synonymous with contusion and ecchymosis. Also see Hemorrhage

Petechiae – Very small bruises caused by broken capillaries

Purpura – Petechiae occurring in groups or a small bruise up to one centimeter in diameter

Ecchymosis – Bruise larger than one centimeter in diameter

Burn – A wound resulting from the application of heat, cold, electricity, or chemicals to the body. Burns are classified in terms of the degree of damage

First Degree – Injury limited to the epidermis (outer skin layer)

Second Degree – Injury through the epidermis and dermis, typically causing the formation of blisters

Third Degree – Destruction of the entire skin, including nerve fibers

C

Calcification – Process in which organic tissue becomes hardened by the deposition of lime salts in the tissues, e.g., the formation of bone. Seen through x-rays, the amount of calcium deposited indicates the degree of healing of a broken bone or the location of previous healed fractures

Callus – The hard bone-like substance that forms around the site of fractured bones and gradually fuses with underlying bone as the fracture heals. It is visible on x-ray about a week after the injury. See Calcification

Calvaria (Calvarium) – The upper dome-like portion of the skull, composed of the superior portions of the frontal, parietal, and occipital bones

Cartilage – Hard connective tissue that is not bone. In the fetus and growing child, cartilage may be the forerunner of bone before calcium is deposited to form bone

C.A.T. Scan (Computerized Axial Tomography) – a radiological study using x-rays translated by computer to show body cross sections (see M.R.I.)

Cause of Death – The effect or condition that brought about the cessation of life (e.g. trauma, asphyxia, and cancer)

Cellulitis – Inflammation of cellular or connective tissue

Cerebral – Pertaining to the brain

Cerebral Edema – Swelling of the brain due to increased accumulation of watery material

Choking – When the upper airways is blocked by a foreign object

Chronic – In medicine, developing slowly and persisting for a long period of time

Clotting Factor – Material in blood that causes it to coagulate or clot.

Deficiencies in clotting factors can cause profuse internal bleeding and bruising, as in the disease hemophilia. Bruises or bleeding caused by deficiencies in the clotting factor may be mistaken for abuse

Coagulation – The process of clotting. The body's process of healing itself when blood is released from an injured vessel

Coagulation Studies – Blood tests done to diagnose or rule out possible diseases of clotting factors

Colon – The part of the large intestine that connects the small bowel (ileum) with the rectum

Colposcope – Optical instrument for low power magnification of the external genitalia as well as the vagina and cervix. Used for detection of sexual injuries. Also used for detection of ano-rectal injuries

Concussion – An injury to the brain caused by a violent jarring or shaking, or a blow to the brain. After a mild concussion there may be a brief loss of consciousness with a headache on awakening. A severe concussion may cause lengthy unconsciousness and disruption of breathing or other vital functions of the brainstem

Congenital – When referring to certain mental or physical traits, malformations, disease, etc., those that are present at birth. May be hereditary or due to some influence during gestation

Contusion – See bruise

Coroner – An official whose duty it is to investigate sudden, suspicious, or violent death to determine the cause. Also referred to as medical examiner

Cortex – The outer layer of an organ

Cranium – The skull

Costal Cartilage – Cartilage that attaches the ribs to the sternum or to other cartilage

Cutaneous – Pertaining to the skin

Cyanosis – Purplish or bluish discoloration of the skin and mucous membranes, caused by a lack of oxygen in the blood

D

Death – The cessation of life, manifested in people by a loss of heart beat, absence of spontaneous breathing, and the permanent loss of brain function

Death Certificate – Official document noting the cause and mode of death (see cause, mode, and fetal death certificate)

Dehydration – A large loss of fluid from the body tissues. It may occur after any condition in which there is a rapid loss of body fluids, including fever, diarrhea, or vomiting. Dehydration is particularly dangerous in infants and young children

Depression – In psychology, a mood disorder in which there are extreme feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, inadequacy, or sadness

Dermis – Inner layer of skin

Diaper Rash – A skin irritation in the diaper area. Possible causes include yeast infections, bacterial infections, urinary tract infections, parasitic infestations, contact irritation from soaps or diaper wipes, or poor diaper changes

Diaphysis – The shaft (long, thin part) of a long bone which is between two flared ends

Differential Diagnosis – The determination of which two or more diseases with similar symptoms is the one from which the patient is suffering. For example, osteogenesis is a differential diagnosis for child abuse

Distal – The parts of the body, limbs, or organs, that are farthest from the trunk, center point of origin

Dura Mater – The tough fibrous membrane covering the brain and the spinal cord

E

Ecchymosis – See bruise

Edema – Swelling caused by an excess of fluid in the body tissues

Emergency Medical Services – The complete chain of human physical resources that provide patient care in cases of sudden illness or injury

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) – A professional provider of emergency care. An EMT receives formal training and certification. There are three levels of emergency medical technicians

EMT Basic – Can administer oxygen and initiate defibrillation but is not allowed to perform any type of invasive care

EMT Intermediate – Has passed specific training programs in order to provide some level of advanced life support, for example, the initiation of intravenous lines and administration of some medications. In some states this level is currently being phased out

EMT Paramedic – Has successfully complete paramedic training and has received appropriate certification. EMT paramedics can generally perform relatively invasive field care including insertion of endotracheal tubes, initiation of intravenous lines, administration of medications, interpretation of electrocardiograms, and cardiac defibrillation

Encopresis – Uncontrolled or involuntary bowel movements

Enuresis – Uncontrolled or involuntary passage of urine

Epidermis – The outer most skin layer

Epiphysis – The rounded ends of a long bone

Extremity – Portion of the body that is not a part of the trunk (e.g., limbs)

F

Failure to Thrive – A medical condition seen in young children where a child does not gain weight. It may be associated with a decrease in the rate of growth or in a growth rate that is significantly below norm. The cause may be organic

(natural) or non-organic, such as poor nutrition, inadequate food intake, or inappropriate formula preparation

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome – A congenital syndrome caused by intrauterine exposure to alcohol. Characteristics include intra and extrauterine growth retardation, microcephaly (small head), and mental retardation

Fetal Death – (Common) Death of pregnancy after approximately 20 weeks

Fontanelle (fontanel) – The two soft areas (“soft spots”) on the head of an infant where the bones are not yet joined. One soft spot disappears at about two months and the other at about eighteen months of age. A “bulging fontanelle” may indicate increased pressure in the skull

Forensic Pathologist – A pathologist with training in criminal pathology (see board certified)

Fracture – Any break or crack in bone or cartilage

Basilar Skull – A fracture to the base of the skull which will often result in spinal fluid leaking from the nose or ear

Bucket Handle Tears – Total fracture of the metaphysis so that it is floating loose

Chip – A small piece of bone is separated from the main body of the bone; avulsion fracture.

Comminuted – A bone broken into a number of pieces

Compound – A broken bone that protrudes through the skin

Egg Shell – A fracture of the skull that looks like a broken egg on an x-ray

Greenstick – The bone is bent and there is an incomplete fracture if the convex side of the curve. Common among young children

Incomplete – The line of the fracture does not include the entire bone

Occult – A fracture that is not visible on x-ray

Pathologic – A fracture occurring at a site weakened by a preexisting disease, as seen in osteogenesis imperfecta, tumors, or Gaucher’s Disease

Simple – A break in a bone without displacement of the bone pieces

Spiral – A break in a long bone which is spiral shape, resulting from twisting of the extremity

G

Gaucher’s Disease – A rare, familial disease in infants, which may cause fractures. Gaucher’s Disease is a differential diagnosis for child abuse

Gluteal – Referring to the buttock

Gross Examination – In medicine, a physical examination without the aid of radiologic instruments or surgical entry

H

Hematemesis – Vomiting of bright red blood, often resulting from internal injury

Hematoma – Swelling caused by the accumulation of blood in the body tissues

Intramural of the Duodenum – A hematoma occurring in the wall of the duodenum. Occurs only from trauma

Hematuria – Blood in the urine

Hemophilia – An inherited disorder of the blood in which there is a defect in its ability to clot, resulting in a tendency to hemorrhage

Hemorrhage – Bleeding

Intra-abdominal – Bleeding within the abdomen

Intracerebral – Bleeding within the brain

Intracranial – Bleeding within the skull

Intradermal – Bleeding within the skin. See bruise

Retinal – Bleeding into the inner lining of the eye. Hallmark of Whiplash and Shaken Baby Syndrome

Hemostasis Screen – A Laboratory study performed to determine whether or not a child has a bleeding or bruising tendency

Hepatic – Pertaining to the liver

Hydrocephalus – “Water on the Brain.” In infants, an accumulation of fluid in the subarachnoid or subdural spaces of the brain

Hyperactive – More active than normal. The term becomes synonymous with Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADDH or ADHD or ADD), that is characterized by inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity

Hyperemia – An excess of blood in a part of the body causing reddening of the skin; it disappears when pressure is applied

Hyperpigmentation – Increased pigmentation of the skin

Hyperthermia – High body temperature

Hyphema – Hemorrhaging into the anterior chamber of the eye, often appearing as a bloodshot eye. Blows to the head or violent shaking are two possible causes. See Hemorrhage-Retinal

Hypoactive – Less active than normal

Hypothermia – Low body temperature

Hypothalamus – The portion of the brain which controls and integrates functions such as general regulation of water balance, body temperature, sleep, food intake, and the development of secondary sex characteristics

Hypovitaminosis – A condition caused by a deficiency of one or more essential vitamins

I

Injury – Refers to any force whether it be physical, chemical, thermal, or electrical that results in harm or death

Infant – Child under one year of age (see neonate)

Intraocular – Within the eye

Intravenous – Within a vein

L

Laceration – A torn or jagged wound caused causing a splitting or tearing in the external skin surface in addition to the deep tissue

Lateral – Occurring on, or pertaining to, the side

Lesion – Any injury to any part of the body from any cause that results in damage or loss of structure or function of the body tissue involved. A lesion may be caused by poison, infection, dysfunction, or violence, and may be either accidental or intentional

Lethargy – A state marked by loss of energy, inactivity, sluggishness, or excessive drowsiness

Leukemia – A malignant disease of blood forming elements. Children suffering from leukemia may present petechiae or bleeding which should be considered in the differential diagnosis of children who bruise easily

Long Bones – Bones of the arms (ulna, radius, numerous) and legs (femur, tibia, fibula)

M

Malnutrition – A condition caused by inadequate nourishment

Maltreatment – See Child Abuse and Neglect

Mandated Reporters – Persons designated by state law who are legally responsible for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to the mandated agency within their state. Mandated reporters vary according to state law, but are primarily professionals, such as doctors, nurses, school personnel, and social workers who have frequent contact with children and families

Mandible – The bone of the lower jaw

Manner of Death – The legal classification, whether natural suicide, homicide, accidental, or undetermined

Mechanism of Death – The physical reason for a death (e.g. head trauma caused brain swelling which caused decreased brain function which caused the heart and/or lungs to stop functioning)

Medial – Towards the middle or mid-line

Medical Cause – Refers to the death resulting from a natural cause other than SIDS

Medical Examiner – An official whose duty it is to investigate sudden, suspicious, or violent death to determine the cause. See Coroner

Medical Neglect – Generally, the repeated failure of parents or caretakers to comply with recommendations from medical professionals for the treatment of a child's condition. Individual states may define the term differently

Menkes Kinky Hair Syndrome – A rare, genetic disorder which blocks absorption of copper in the gastrointestinal system, causing brittle bones and eventual death. It is a differential diagnosis for child abuse

Mesentery – Membranes which cover abdominal organs and attach the bowel to the abdominal wall. The mesentery may be injured in interabdominal trauma or inflames, as with peritonitis

Metaphysis – The area of bone between the epiphyses (extremities) and diaphysis (shaft) which flares out at the end of long bones. It contains the growth zone of the bone

Mode or Manner of Death – Official category for a death certificate (homicide, suicide, undetermined, accidental, natural)

Mongolian Spot – A type of birthmark that appears most frequently on a child's lower back or buttocks. These dark pigmented areas usually fade by age five. They are sometimes confused with bruises

Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy – A pattern of abuse in which the perpetrator, usually parent, will fabricate medical histories, inflict physical findings, alter laboratory specimens and induce disorders in a child to give the appearance that the child is ill

N

Natural Cause – Death resulting from inherent, existing conditions. Natural causes include congenital anomalies, disease, other medical causes, and SIDS

Neonate – Infant under one month of age

Neurologic Sequelae – A diseased condition of the nervous system resulting from previous disease. In abused children, the condition may result from previous abuse

O

Occipital – Back of the head

Ossification – The process during which immature or new bone or cartilage is converted into bone

Osteogenesis Imperfecta – A genetic condition which causes bone to be brittle and prone to fracture. It is a differential diagnosis for child abuse

Osteomyelitis – Inflammation of bone caused by a bacterial organism

P

Paralysis – Complete or partial loss of functioning, usually involving motor function in a part of the body

Paramedic – See EMT-Paramedic

Pathologist – Physician with residency training in pathology (see forensic pathologist, pediatric pathologist and forensic pediatric pathologist)

Pathognomonic – Specifically distinctive or characteristic of a disease or pathologic condition; a sign or symptom on which a diagnosis can be made

Pediatrician – Physician who has completed residency training in pediatrics

Pediatric Pathologist – Physician with special training in pediatrics and pathology (see board certified)

Perinatal – The period of time from around the twenty-eighth week of gestation through the first seven days after delivery

Perineum – Region of the body between the anus and the genitals

Periosteal Elevation (Hemorrhage) – The tearing away or lifting up of the bone-s covering, from the hemorrhaging that occurs when a bone is broken or there has been bleeding under the periosteum. This is not necessarily indicative of child abuse as it can be due to leukemia or infiltrative disease such as tumors or inflammation. It may be present at birth from a difficult delivery

Periosteum – The outer covering of bones that is essential for bone formation and healing

Peritoneum – The lining of the abdomen

Peritonitis – Inflammation of the membranous lining of the abdominal cavity

Petechiae – See Hemorrhage -Intradermal

Pia Mater – The fine vascular membrane that envelops the brain and spinal cord. It is located below the arachnoid and the dura mater

Posterior – In human anatomy, the back surface of the body

Postpartum Depression – Depression which may occur after child birth

Premature Infant – An infant born after thirty-seven weeks gestation by before full term and, arbitrarily, an infant weighing 2.2- 2.5 pounds at birth. This definition varies

Prenatal – Occurring before birth

Proximal – Those parts of the body, or portions of the bone, that are closest to the trunk or to the point of origin

Psychosis – In psychology, a mental disorder causing gross impairment of a person's mental capacity, affecting response and capacity to recognize reality

Purpura – See Hemorrhage- Intradermal

R

Radiolucent – In medicine, a part of a body or object which permits the passage of x-rays without leaving a shadow on the film. Soft tissue are radiolucent, bones are not

Rarefaction – Loss of density. On an x-ray, an area of bone which appears lighter than normal is in a state of rarefaction indicating a loss of calcium

Recurrent Otitis Media – Repeated inflammation of the middle ear. It is the leading cause of hearing loss in children

Resident – In medicine, a post-intern trainee in an official training program (e.g. pediatrics)

Retinal hemorrhage – Bleeding in the retina of the eye

Rickets – Condition of delaying maturation of the bones caused by a Vitamin D deficiency. May be seen with severe malnutrition, hypoparathyroidism, and renal disease

Rubella – An infectious viral disease with particular effects on fetuses (possibly causing abnormalities) or newborn infants. One of the early manifestations may be petechiae or easy bruising. There also may be associated bone lesions that may be confused with child abuse

Rupture – The break of an organ or other soft part

S

Sacral Area – Lower part of the back

Scapula – The flat, triangular bone in the back of the shoulder; the shoulder blade

Scar – The dense, fibrous tissue that is left behind by the healing of injured tissue

Sclera – The rough white outer layer of the eyeball

Secondary Infection – Infection by a microorganism following an infection by another microorganism

Seizure – Involuntary muscular contraction and relaxation originating from the “short circuit” of the central nervous system. Seizures vary in pattern, length, and intensity. Causes include fever, tumors, injuries, or epilepsy

Sequelae – The aftereffects of an injury or disease process. In child abuse, this term usually refers to the psychological or physical outcomes which result from being abused or neglected

Serology – The study of blood serum for evidence of infection

Sexually Transmitted Disease (Infection) (STD or STI) – Disease transmitted by sexual contact, including chlamydia, trichomonas, gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis B, and HIV. The presence of a STD in a child is an indicator of possible sexual abuse. However some STDs are passed on to the fetus during pregnancy or at birth

Shaken Baby Syndrome – Characterization of head injuries to a young child caused by shaking without impact. Injury to an infant or child resulting from violent, repetitive shaking. Pathognomonic findings include intracranial hemorrhaging, retinal hemorrhaging, and no cutaneous manifestations of injury. Survivors are frequently left with profound neurologic sequelae, e.g., blindness, deafness, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and seizures

Shaken Impact Syndrome – Characterization of head injuries to a young child with shaking and impact. Different from Shaken Baby Syndrome which does not include impact

Skeletal Series of x-rays – Defined series of x-rays designed to find most fractures (see baby gram)

Skeletal Survey – A series of x-rays taken of all the bones of the body

Smothering – Specifically refers to asphyxiation of the nose and mouth usually by a hand or soft object. Mechanical asphyxia resulting from external pressure on the body preventing chest movement and breathing

Somatization – In psychology, a pathology in which a person becomes preoccupied with physical symptoms disproportionate to any actual physical disturbance. May be seen in victims of sexual abuse

Strangulation – Asphyxia caused by external pressure applied to the neck either by the use of hands or a ligature (rope)

Stillborn – Potentially viable fetus born dead

Sternum – The bone that runs down the front part of the chest; the breast bone

Subarachnoid Bleeding – Bleeding that occurs between the pia and the arachnoid membrane of the central nervous system

Subcutaneous – Beneath the skin

Subdural hematoma – Bleeding between the internal lining of the skull and the brain

Subgaleal – The inner lining of the scalp. A site of hemorrhage frequently secondary to hair pulling

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) – Sudden death of an infant which is unexpected by clinical history review, death scene investigation and in which a thorough postmortem examination, including autopsy, fails to demonstrate an adequate cause. A diagnosis of exclusion made when there is no underlying cause of death can be identified. It is not caused by abuse or neglect

Suffocation – Asphyxia caused by a general deprivation of oxygen either from obstruction of external airways or lack of breathable gas in the environment

Suicide – Death of self caused with intent (see intent)

Syndrome – A group of signs and symptoms that occur together and are typical of a particular disorder or disease

T

Thorax – Chest area, encompassing the heart, lungs, and ribs

Torsion – Twisting, as of a limb

Traction – Drawing or pulling, as of setting a bone

Trauma – An injury or wound brought about by an outside force. Trauma may be caused accidentally, or, as in physical abuse, nonaccidentally. Trauma also refers to physiological discomfort or symptoms resulting from an emotional shock or painful experience

U

Undetermined Death – Death where the mode of death is not clear (see mode of death)

Unintentional Death – Refers to the act that resulted in death being one that was not deliberate, willful, or planned.

V

Vascular – Pertaining to or containing blood vessels

Venereal Disease – See Sexually Transmitted Disease

Vesicle – Blisters containing fluid

Viable Fetus – A fetus that would be able to live outside the uterus, if born (as defined by experts)

Victims of Crime Fund – Money available to serve crime victims through a federal and/or state program with local officials having responsibility for distribution of funds

Visceral – Pertaining to the internal organs

Vital Signs – Blood pressure, Heart Rate, Respiratory Rate, and Temperature

Vitreous – The material that encloses the major portion of the eye, which is normally clear. With an eye injury there may be hemorrhaging and the area may turn red

W

Welt – Minor damage to the skin or to the blood vessels directly underneath the skin caused by a blow or a cut. Does not involve bleeding

Whiplash – See Shaken Infant Syndrome

Wound Pattern – Wounds that are close together, similar size and shape, and inflicted in the same area of the body

Departmental and Agency Acronyms

DES – Department of Economic Security

DHS – Department of Health Services

DSS – Department of Social Services

DSW – Department of Social Welfare

CPS – Child Protective Services

CDRT – Child Death Review Team

CR – Central Registry

TPR – Termination of Parental Rights

Laws and Organization Acronyms

CAPTA – Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

CWAAA – Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act (Public Law 96-272)

ICWA – Indian Child Welfare Act

NCIC – National Crime Information Center

VCF – Victims Crime Fund