

## SAFE BEGINNINGS

*An Interagency Collaboration to ensure safe and healthy beginnings for Logan County's Babies.  
(Mary Rutan Hospital, Logan County Health District, WIC, Help Me Grow, Logan County  
Children's Services, Ben-El, and Logan County Board of MRDD)*

Every year 3 million cases of child abuse are reported to child protection agencies in this nation. Slightly more than 4% of our nation's children...every year. In Ohio, more than 100,000 cases of child abuse are reported every year. In Logan County, more than 300 cases of child abuse are reported every year.

Slightly more than 1,300 children die every year in this nation as a direct result of child abuse and neglect (4 children a day). Ohio loses an average of almost 40 children every year as documented child abuse deaths. Logan County children have died as a result of child abuse. The majority of child fatalities involve very young children. Nationally in 2001, 61% of child abuse fatalities were children under age 5. Fully 44%; almost ½, of all children in this nation who perish as a result of child abuse die before their first birthday. 90% of child abuse deaths in Ohio are children under age 5, 42% of all child abuse deaths in Ohio are children who never reach their first birthday.

For every case of fatal child abuse, there are many cases of serious, though non-fatal child abuse. A 1990 review of a state Central Child Abuse Registry found that the single leading cause of child abuse fatalities was head injury (more than 1/3 of all fatalities). For every fatal head injury resulting from child abuse, there were 10 serious, though non-fatal head injuries (skulls fractures, brain damage, subdural hematoma). Infants and very young children may not die as a result of child abuse. They may be condemned to lives of disability and limitations.

Younger children are at much greater risk of serious and fatal child abuse. Younger children typically have more inexperienced caretakers and additionally are helpless to escape enraged caretakers. It is imperative that we focus our supportive services and, when necessary, protective services on cases where very young children are involved.

There are more than 600 births every year in Logan County. Most of these births take place at Mary Rutan Hospital in Bellefontaine. We know from standard, risk assessment studies and tools that approximately 10% to 15% of births involve infant, caretaker, or home environment factors which place an infant at heightened risk of abuse. This does not mean abuse is going to occur in each of these heightened risk cases; only that the chances are greater that it might. This means that 50 to 75 Logan County births each year contain some degree of heightened risk of child abuse or neglect.

These risk factors further tell us that approximately 5% of births have significant risk for child abuse or neglect. Cases where, without support and services, harm is very likely. This means 25 Logan County births each year may mandate our intervention.

How do we ensure that these infants and their families are properly identified and given the help they need? How do we ensure the safety of all of Logan County's children, including our neediest and most at risk births?

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## SAFE BEGINNINGS SERVICES TO NEWBORNS

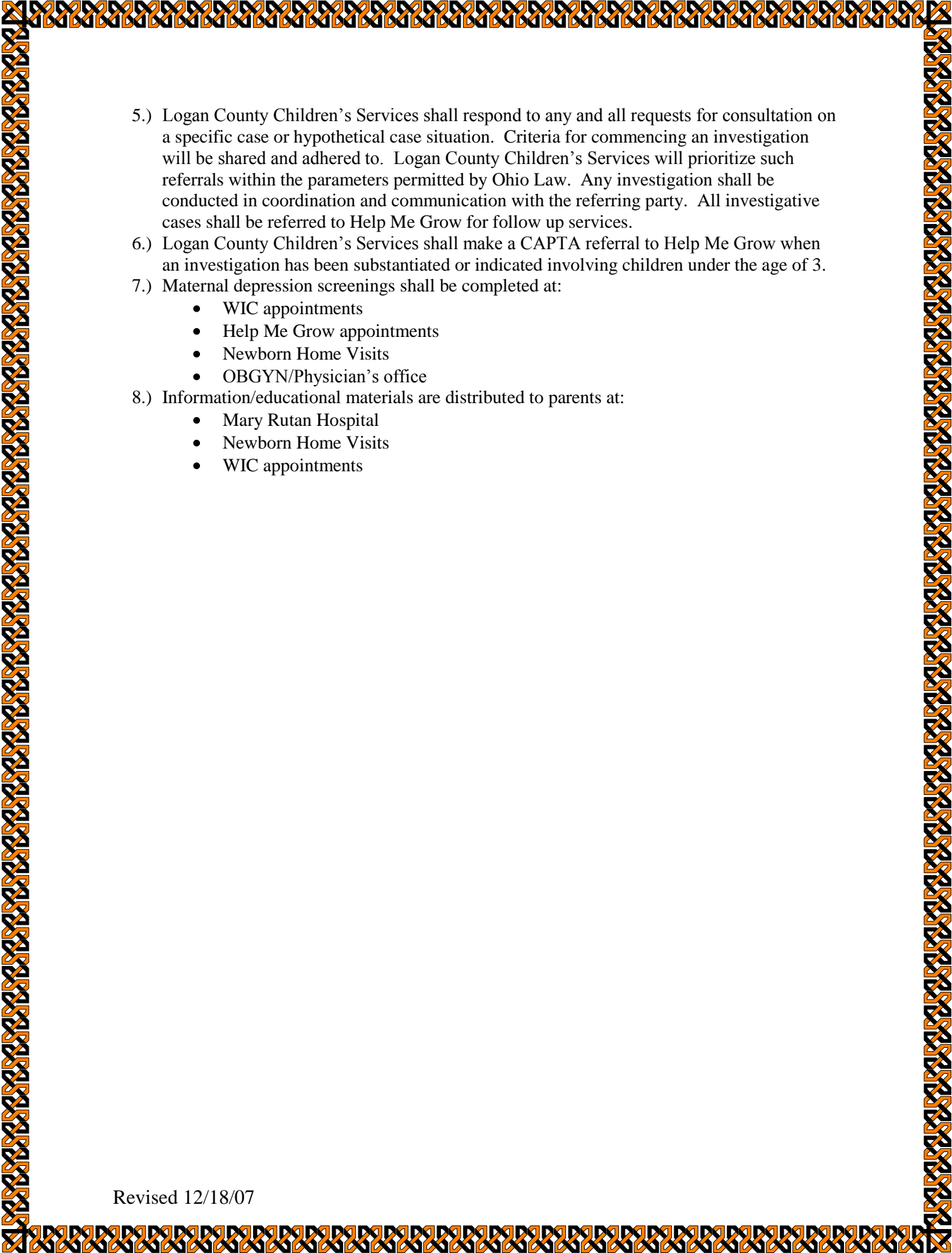
Recognizing that early intervention services are better than late or delayed intervention, that such early intervention services are especially critical with at-risk infants and caretakers, and finally recognizing that very young children, especially infants are at the greatest risk for the most serious effects of child maltreatment. It is agreed that it is necessary to establish a systematic process to offer early intervention services to all newborns and their families and that it is of vital importance to ensure that at-risk newborns and their families receive supportive, remedial, and when necessary protective services.

The goals of this process are:

- 1.) Offer every Logan County Newborn and their family a Newborn Nursing Home Visit through the Logan County Health District.
- 2.) Offer every at-risk Logan County Newborn and their family supportive services including services from Help Me Grow and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- 3.) Ensure community partners (Hospital, Health District and Help Me Grow) are in communication as to family participation in services through properly executed Releases of Information.
- 4.) Ensure high risk infants and families are referred to Logan County Children's Services.

The steps in this process are several and shared:

- 1.) Mary Rutan Hospital shall offer every family of a Newborn infant the opportunity for a Newborn Home Visit by a nurse with the Logan County Health District. A Release of Information shall be executed by the Hospital for this visit to occur. The Hospital will notify the Health District subsequent to the Release of Information being signed in order for the Newborn Home Visit to be arranged.
- 2.) Logan County Health District contacts the family for each known birth in Logan County to schedule a Newborn Home Visit. Mary Rutan Hospital and the Logan County Health District shall each review the information available to them (birth records and other documents, observations of parent-child interaction, discussion with family members, etc.) to determine if additional supportive services are warranted. *The attached listing of Neonatal Risk Factors provides generally accepted indicators of heightened risk of maltreatment. Items in **Bold** are believed to be especially significant.* Infants and families considered to be at risk shall be referred to Help Me Grow services by the Hospital and Health District with the signing of appropriate Releases of Information.
- 3.) The Hospital and the Health District shall notify Help Me Grow of any infant/family they refer to Help Me Grow. Help Me Grow shall alert the Hospital or the Health District (whichever was the original referent) of a family's failure to enroll or to attend or failure to keep appointments.
- 4.) Mary Rutan Hospital, the Logan County Health District, and Help Me Grow shall review internally (or together if circumstances warrant and necessary releases are in place) any case where services are effectively declined as to whether a referral to Children's Services is necessary.

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- 5.) Logan County Children's Services shall respond to any and all requests for consultation on a specific case or hypothetical case situation. Criteria for commencing an investigation will be shared and adhered to. Logan County Children's Services will prioritize such referrals within the parameters permitted by Ohio Law. Any investigation shall be conducted in coordination and communication with the referring party. All investigative cases shall be referred to Help Me Grow for follow up services.
  - 6.) Logan County Children's Services shall make a CAPTA referral to Help Me Grow when an investigation has been substantiated or indicated involving children under the age of 3.
  - 7.) Maternal depression screenings shall be completed at:
    - WIC appointments
    - Help Me Grow appointments
    - Newborn Home Visits
    - OBGYN/Physician's office
  - 8.) Information/educational materials are distributed to parents at:
    - Mary Rutan Hospital
    - Newborn Home Visits
    - WIC appointments

## SAFE BEGINNINGS NEONATAL RISK FACTORS

*Infants constitute almost 1/2 of all child abuse deaths in Ohio and in this nation. There are indicators which can tell us which infants are at a greater risk. This list is a summary of generally accepted risk factors for child abuse or neglect. Items in **Bold** are believed to be of heightened concern. No single item is indicative by itself of abuse or neglect potential. However, the risk is higher with more factors involved, especially if the identified factors cross categories (Infant, Caretaker, Environment).*

### Infant

- **Late or No prenatal care**
- **Abortion or adoption unsuccessfully sought or attempted with this pregnancy**
- Drug/Alcohol/Tobacco exposure in utero
- Significant prenatal or perinatal complications
- Very low birth weight (under 1500 grams)
- Low APGAR scores (under 5) @ 1 and 5 minutes
- Significant health/medical issues

### Caretaker

- **Lack of interest, excess anxiety or hostility toward infant**
- **MR/DD/MI parent(s)**
- **Drug/Alcohol Abuse ongoing** (includes abuse of prescription medications)
- History of assaultive behaviors or being victim of assaults
- Severe, chronic illness of caretaker(s)
- Low educational achievement (<9<sup>th</sup> grade) or special education
- Lack of health care (caretaker)
- Single parenting without significant supports
- Adolescent parent(s)

### Environment

- **Prior infant or child death in family (including SIDS)**
- **Violent or Unstable Paramours**
- **Homelessness (Lacking any residence; i.e. Living in a tent or a vehicle)**
- **History of chronic family/parental violence (child or domestic abuse)**
- Transient, unstable or substandard housing
- Family History of recurring crises, conflict or disruption
- Poverty or severe financial difficulties
- Lack of emergency contacts/inadequate social supports

## SAFE BEGINNINGS CHILD ABUSE CRITERIA

*This is a list of situations which will trigger a child abuse or dependency investigation. Logan County Children's Services will initiate an investigation if any one of these items is present with a Newborn or their family. This does not mean that these are the only situations where a child abuse investigation will occur. A combination of other Risk Factors can also result in an investigation. It is the overall level of risk which is important. The items listed below are believed to be of sufficient risk to individually warrant an investigation.*

- The Newborn test positive for illegal substances or alcohol.
- There is an absence of interaction or a negative reaction to the Newborn or the parents do not respond or do not perceive the Newborn's cries as needing response.
- There is a refusal to feed, change diapers, or bathe the Newborn.
- Parent(s) refuse to accept necessary treatment for a Newborn's serious disability or potentially serious developmental delays (May send letter before doing an investigation).
- There is a failure to give prescribed medications or treatment necessary to the Newborn's life and health.
- Threats to injure the Newborn (i.e. Twisting, pulling, shaking, spanking the Newborn).
- Forcing a Newborn to eat a non-food item or non-formula/breast milk.
- Preventing Newborn from breathing, even for a brief period of time.
- Smearing a diaper in the Newborn's face.
- Parent(s) abandon the Newborn.
  
- Inability or unwillingness to protect a Newborn from a known Abuser.
- Exposing the Newborn to violence by or to the caretaker (Depends on the effect the violence has on the Newborn).
- A Parent with a known or admitted substance abuse problem that is untreated and places the Newborn at risk.
- A Parent is Mentally Retarded or Developmentally Delayed and is unable or unwilling to care for or learn to care for the Newborn which places the Newborn at risk.
- A Parent is so mentally or emotionally unstable they are unable to care for the Newborn.
- A Parent suffers from a physical disability which precludes their being able to care for the Newborn, which places the Newborn at risk, remedial assistance is not possible or is not accepted.
  
- A lack of functional utilities in the Newborn's home which places the Newborn at risk and remedial assistance is not available or is not accepted.
- Homeless

## SAFE BEGINNINGS CHILD ABUSE CRITERIA (CONT.)

Information that can be shared with Children's Services, but cannot be investigated:

- There is a Positive drug screen for Alcohol or illegal substances during pregnancy.
- There are unreasonable delays in seeking care for problems during pregnancy which would endanger the fetus (i.e. Toxemia, falling, spotting, etc.).
- There has been no or late (3<sup>rd</sup> trimester) prenatal care and when the child is born there are no preparations for the Newborn's arrival (Lack of food, clothing, diapers or other items necessary to care for the Newborn).