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Many States Lack Information To Monitor Maltreatment in Residential Facilities for Children in Foster Care

Why OIG Did This Study

States oversee residential facilities, and [ACF](#) provides funding and oversight to States for children in foster care who meet certain eligibility requirements. Policymakers, news media, and advocacy groups have raised concerns about the effectiveness of oversight efforts to protect children in these settings. To assess how States monitor child maltreatment that occurs in residential facilities, we surveyed each State child welfare agency.

What OIG Found

Many States reported missing or incomplete information in key areas that could support enhanced oversight of residential facilities for children, although collecting and sharing this information is not required by Federal law.



Nearly one-third of States could not identify patterns of maltreatment in residential facilities within their State.



States had limited awareness of maltreatment that occurred across chains of residential facilities operating in multiple States.



States reported challenges monitoring the safety of children placed in out-of-State residential facilities.



Thirteen States did not consistently report to the national maltreatment database whether children who experienced maltreatment were living in a residential facility.

What OIG Recommends

1. ACF should provide guidance and technical assistance to States to build data collection and monitoring capabilities that are foundational to effective oversight of maltreatment in residential facilities.
2. ACF should help States to improve their abilities to monitor patterns of maltreatment and performance across chains of residential facilities operating in multiple States.
3. ACF should take steps to improve inter-State communication when children are placed in out-of-State residential facilities.
4. ACF should work with States to improve reporting of placement data in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System.

ACF did not concur with the first recommendation, as initially drafted, and concurred with the other three recommendations. OIG has revised the first recommendation.