



A VOICE FOR CHOICE
ADVOCACY

LETTER OF AMENDMENT REQUEST TO AB1098 (McCarty & Arambula)

Child death investigations: review teams

April 17, 2017

Dear Assembly Members McCarty and Arambula,

Although A Voice for Choice Advocacy is not currently taking a position on AB1098, we are watching this bill. We agree that child deaths need to be investigated to understand if neglect or abuse were the cause of death. However, in recent years there have been a number of cases where parents were **wrongly** accused of contributing to their child's death, such as as a result of shaken baby syndrome. They were later found not guilty because the child's medical records were reviewed and a prior medical condition or medication/vaccination side effect was determined to have been the cause of the injury. (e.g. <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-shaken-baby-prosecution-convictions-2015oct15-htmlstory.html>)

There is a comprehensive questionnaire that is recommended by the CDC to be completed with any Sudden Infant Death that is not universally used, but is extremely helpful in bringing additional information to light in the time of a child's death investigation. You can view it here: <https://www.cdc.gov/sids/pdf/suidi-reporting-form.pdf>. Testimony given by Laura Crandall, SUDC Program Director, before Congress regarding HR669 (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/669>), which called for death scene improvement in investigations, outlines how important such reporting is when trying to determine the cause of a child's death. You can view that here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVxzyGY_omE&feature=youtu.be

A Voice for Choice Advocacy asks that you amend AB1098 to include the child's prior medical history as one of the required pieces of data collection, and we specifically ask that the CDC SID Reporting form (linked above), or a comparably detailed reporting form, be completed for each child death. This would not only allow a better understanding of whether the child died due to neglect or abuse, but also allow for a better overall understanding of what is causing the all-to-high number of child deaths that happen each year.

Specifically we would like to suggest the following wording amendments to AB1098:

SECTION 1. Section 11174.32 of the Penal Code

(4) A child death review team shall implement a data collection process that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following information about a deceased child:

(A) Race.

(B) Gender.

(C) Cause of death.

(D) Age.

(E) Full prior medical history, including medications and vaccinations given prior to death, through the completion of the CDC SIDs Reporting form or comparable form (<https://www.cdc.gov/sids/pdf/suidi-reporting-form.pdf>) regardless of whether or not SIDs is suspected.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will be in Sacramento next Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (4/24-26) and would be happy to meet with you or your staff to discuss this further. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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Giving issues a voice, A Voice for Choice Advocacy advocates for people's rights to be fully informed about the composition, quality, and short- and long-term health effects of all products that go into people's bodies, such as food, water, air, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

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