Plan proposed for improvement

By The Advertiser
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BATON ROUGE — Child abuse cannot be prevented but the continuation of such acts can be stopped if steps are taken, says a committee appointed to probe inefficiency in the way cases are handled.

The following is a list of suggestions to improve child abuse investigations as proposed by that panel.

Gov. Edwin Edwards says some of the following suggestions can be done administratively but others will require legislative action and funding.

1. Develop and implement procedures which will insure prompt investigation; assure accurate risk assessment, validation, follow-up and removal of children in need of protection; and develop standard performance expectations for case workers and supervisors.

2. Establish a separate Division of Child Protection in the Department of Health and Human Resources.

3. Provide personnel and funding to investigate the 25,000 reports of child abuse each year on a 24-hour basis.

4. Set up a 24-hour hotline for fielding complaints.

5. Fully fund the State Central Registry to provide monitoring and tracking of all child abuse reports and investigations in the state.

6. Charge the Division of Child Protection and the State Police with joint investigations of all suspicious child fatalities and keep accurate records of all child deaths, regardless of the cause. All coroners, physicians and hospitals are to report all child deaths to the state police.

7. Require that child protection and state police officials be immediately notified of suspicious child deaths.

8. Recommend funding of multi-disciplinary teams for each parish with more than 30 new reports of abuse each month and a team to check other parishes.

9. Establish within civil service a Special Investigation category for child protection workers.

10. Create inter-agency agreements between the child protection staff and coroners, law enforcement, district attorneys, judges and public health officials.

11. Set a standard caseload that is not to be exceeded.

12. Create a standard recording procedure.

13. Charge the Office of Human Development with providing adequate foster care and family services to children and families in crisis situations.

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