Legal Issues Regarding Suicidality of Young Children in Foster Care

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Recent figures indicate that youth in foster care die by suicide at a rate much higher than usual when compared to the general population. When children in child welfare commit suicide, it can lead to legal issues related to wrongful death or negligent supervision. Lessons can be learned from these cases and we should prioritize prevention for more reasons than simply avoiding legal culpability. This article recommends several strategies that could be implemented to assist in identifying youth at risk for suicide or suicidal ideation:

- Implementing a universal suicide screening to assess for suicide risk (Brown, 2020).
- Assessing the utility of utilizing foster parents to screen for suicidal behaviors (Brown, 2020) and when possible, involving them in the treatment process.
- Mandating suicide risk training for those working in the child welfare system. This could come in the form of professional gatekeeper training (Osteen, et al., 2018) or mandating continuing education training for mental health and child welfare professionals in the area of suicide prevention.

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