Reviewer's report

Title: Reliability of Routinely Collected Hospital Data for Child Maltreatment Surveillance

Version: 1 Date: 21 October 2010

Reviewer: Barbara Fallon

Reviewer's report:

The research question is clearly articulated. The article is well written, and the discussion relates directly to the results. The authors succinctly position the study within their work and the work of several other disciplines.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Depending on the audience for the article, the description of the possible maltreatment codes (under patient sample) could be expanded to include definitions or at least two to three word descriptions of the codes. As a reader without any knowledge of the codes' meaning, it left me without important information. Perhaps an addition of a table with the descriptors. The authors make a strong case for the importance of identifying children at risk, and position their work as important for many professions who may not be familiar with codes.

Minor Essential Revisions

The description of the sample is confusing. After reading the first paragraph of the hospital sample I assumed there were 21 hospitals in the sample (although it also says approximately 20 could be sample?).

The next paragraph describing the QISU and the number of hospitals associated with that reporting and how they supplemented the hospitals previously described is not clear. Perhaps start with the final sample and work backwards in the process.

Other

A very interesting and important piece of work.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.