



# ***MRS. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON***

**How to use publicly available data  
in advocacy**

Presented at

*Building on Family Strengths: Research and  
Services in Support of Children and Their Families,*

Portland, Oregon,  
May 31, 2007



**Elaine Slaton**  
**Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health**

**&**

**Norín Dollard**  
**Department of Child & Family Studies,**  
**Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health**  
**Institute**  
**University of South Florida**




## Frame:

- What's the story?
- Where's the data?
- Are there ethical concerns or potential unintended consequences?
- How do we best tell the story?






# Where's the publicly available data?

- o Internet
- o Your local public library
- o Your local college or university library (many are also accessible on line)
- o Local and online newspapers
- o Ask other family members what they've found helpful



# Who else is working on this issue?

- You don't always have to start from scratch. Look at advocacy, governmental and other sources to see what their issue priorities are and what information is already available
- 
- 
- 



# How do I find publicly available data?

- Use the search box available on most reputable websites
- Look at 'other resources' or 'links' tabs
- Look at publications links





# One story

A national support group of parents whose children have died by suicide believes, based on their own stories, that institutions do not have adequate "suicide watch" procedures in place. They want to bring this to the attention of the group that oversees their accreditation.





# My search

- Start broad
  - Google 'suicide watch'
  - Google 'suicide watch in residential'
- Look at the websites of organizations that are responsible for or provide accreditation
- Can't find much?
  - Look for similar info about other groups, e.g., prisoners, elders





# Data Sources

- Policy & procedure

- Joint Commission

- [http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea\\_3.htm](http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea_3.htm)




- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)

- [http://ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/Current\\_Reg\\_Files/RTCforChildren&AdolescentsC100.pdf](http://ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/Current_Reg_Files/RTCforChildren&AdolescentsC100.pdf)





# What do we learn from this?

- There are policies and procedures that licensed facilities are expected to observe to prevent suicide (e.g. CARF)
  - There are best practices that exceed accreditation standards (journal article)
  - There are other human service systems that have implemented innovative ways to prevent suicide in residential treatment centers and hospitals (corrections)
- 
- 
- 



# What do we do with this information

- As an individual advocating for your child – review the hospital or RTCs policies on suicide watches, seclusion and restraint at admission with administration
- As an organization
  - ask how state agencies implement and monitor suicides in hospitals and RTCs
  - ask for performance improvement plans subsequent to suicides,
  - ask for your organization's members to be appointed to the review panels convened subsequent to a suicide or demand that such a group be convened





# Using information responsibly

- Don't use family stories without their permission
- Identify your sources
- Verify the sources
- Understand opposing viewpoints and be prepared to address them



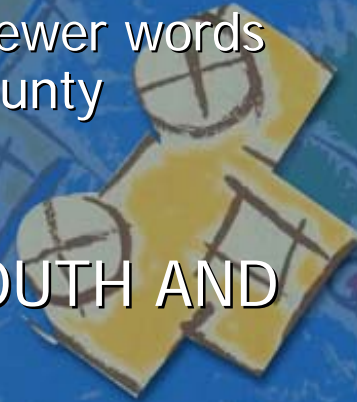
**How do we best tell  
the story?**





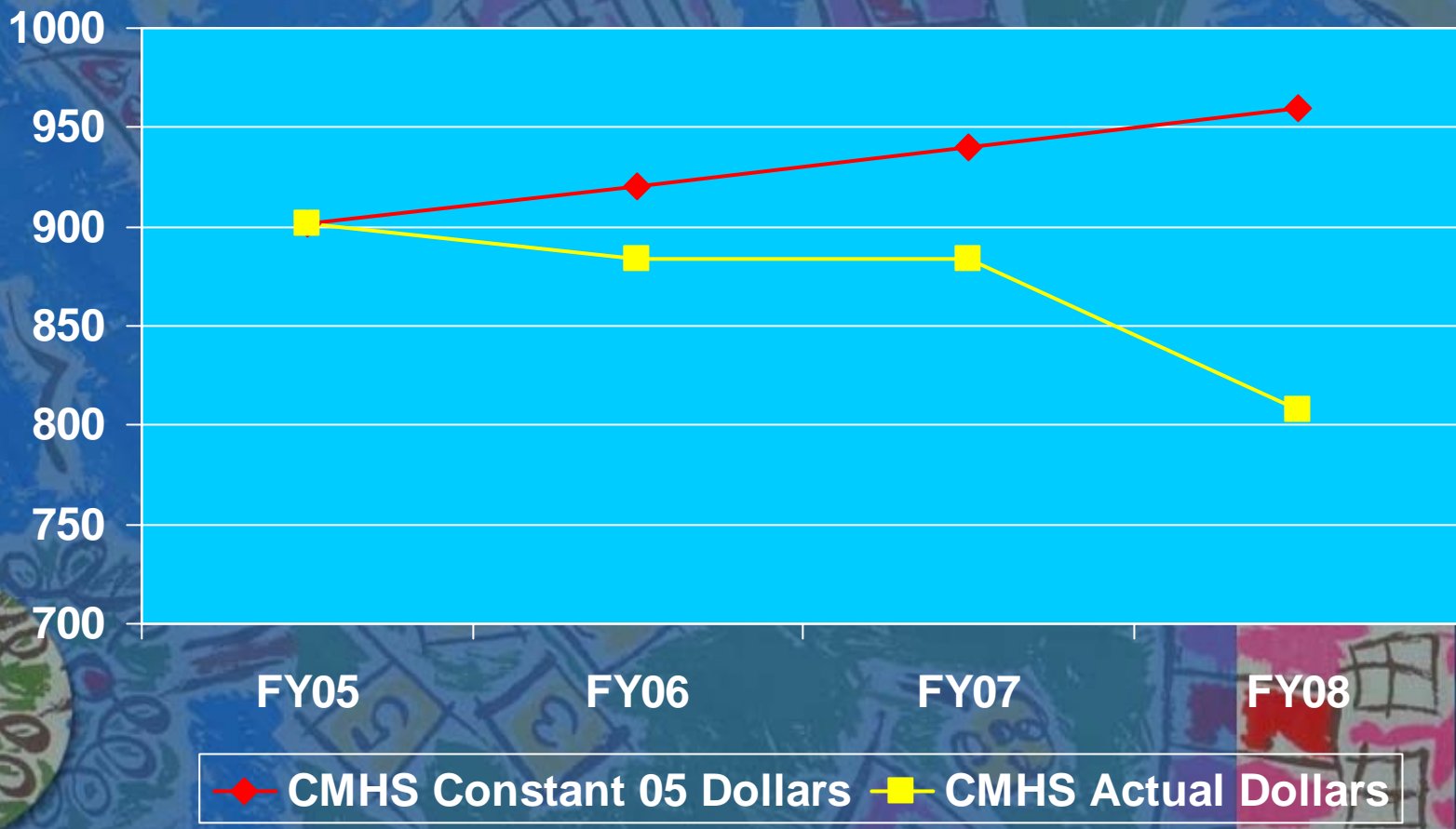
# Who is the Audience?

- People use information in different ways
  - People who MAKE DECISIONS
    - The higher up the organizational chart, the fewer words you need to communicate your message (County Commissioners, School Boards, Legislative Representatives)
  - People who WORK WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
    - Need instructions and ways to find more information (teachers, therapists)
  - People who FUND THINGS
    - Need details on what you propose to do with the money and what they should expect in return

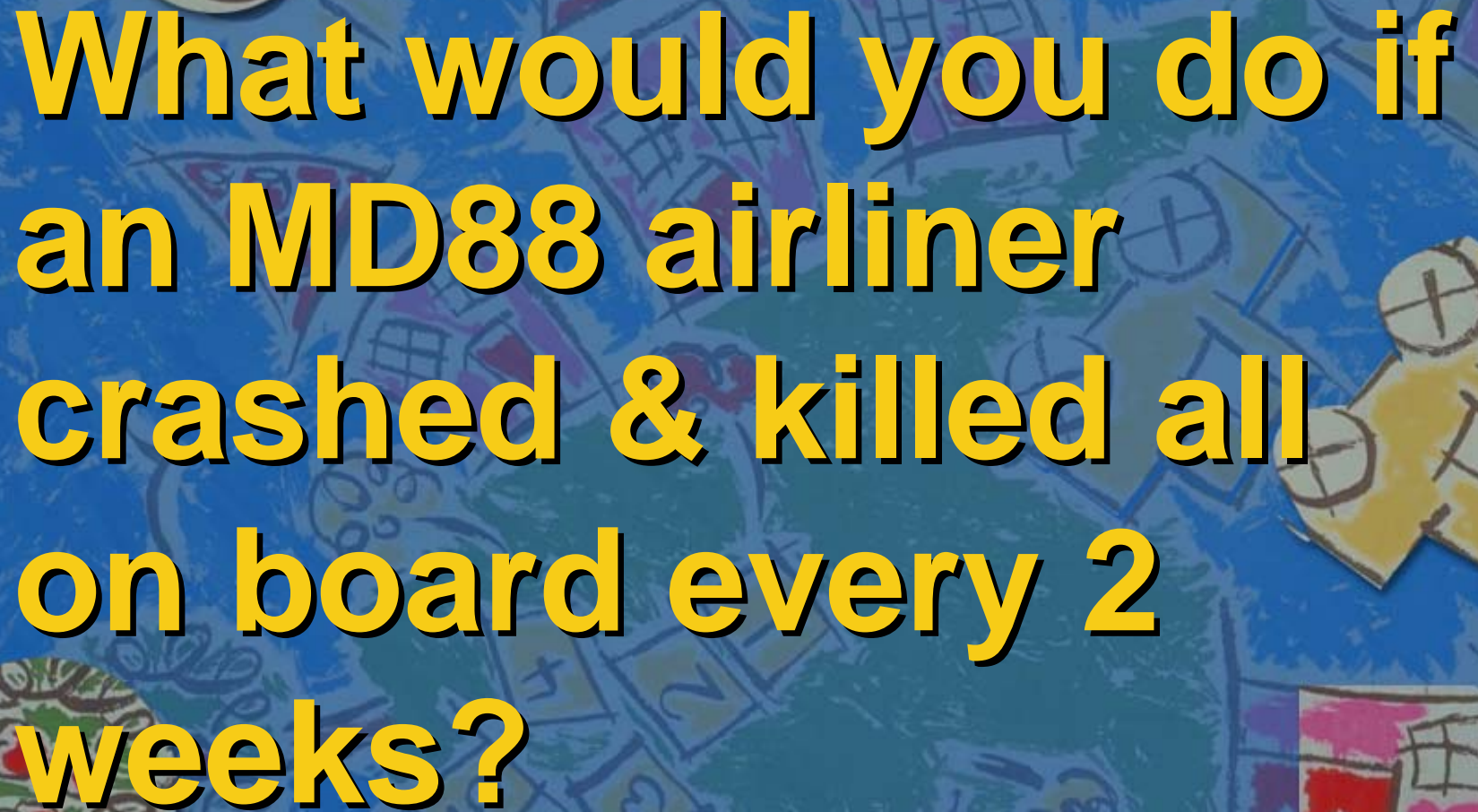




# What is the title?



Data source?

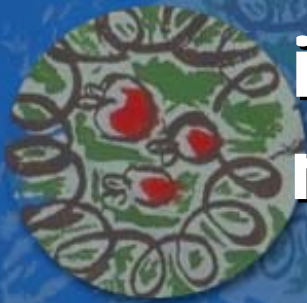
The background is a vibrant blue with a collage of hand-drawn illustrations. In the top left, there is a yellow sun with rays. Below it is a white plate with a yellow food item. To the right, there is a yellow figure with a cross on its head. In the bottom left, there is a green and white patterned plate. In the bottom right, there is a window with a red and pink background. The text is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a black outline, centered on the page.

**What would you do if  
an MD88 airliner  
crashed & killed all  
on board every 2  
weeks?**



# Having an impact

- Take time to tailor your advocacy presentation to your audience
- Find a 'naive' reader and test their reaction and questions
- Use a family story to highlight the data you present, the numbers are important and the story makes it real





# Contact us

- Elaine Slaton, [eslaton@ffcmh.org](mailto:eslaton@ffcmh.org), (240) 403-1901x104
- Norín Dollard, [dollard@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:dollard@fmhi.usf.edu), (813) 974-3761

