



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Alabama Child Death Review System makes positive impact in reducing preventable child deaths

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Aretha Bracy
(334) 206-2951

Each year roughly one-third of all child deaths in Alabama are considered “preventable,” and for the past 17 years child safety advocates throughout the state have worked to decrease needless child deaths. In announcing the release of the 25th annual “KIDS COUNT Data Book” in July, VOICES for Alabama’s Children pointed out improvements in Alabama in several measurement categories and credited the Alabama Child Death Review System with its “positive impact on further reducing preventable deaths.”

The Alabama Child Death Review System (ACDRS) was created by state law in 1997 to review all unexplained or unexpected child deaths in Alabama. The ACDRS is situated within the Alabama Department of Public Health for administrative and budgetary purposes. Its mission is to understand how and why children die in Alabama, in order to prevent other child deaths. ACDRS focuses on prevention through statistical analysis, education, advocacy efforts and local community involvement.

Local teams review qualifying cases within their jurisdiction and submit findings to the state child death review office, which collects and analyzes the data and findings for presentation to the state team. The state team then reviews aggregate data and findings and develops prevention strategies and recommendations.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, chairs the State Child Death Review team. Dr. Williamson and his staff provide leadership for the ACDRS. He commented, “ACDRS has been involved in many successful outreach, awareness, education and policy efforts, all aimed at keeping children safe and preventing child deaths. There has been a significant decline in preventable child deaths since its beginning.”

“The steps Alabama has made in reducing child deaths over the last two decades is a testament to the work of state and local Child Death Review teams,” said Melanie Bridgeforth, executive director, VOICES for Alabama’s Children. “VOICES for Alabama’s Children is proud to provide the research that serves as a roadmap for decision makers to utilize when creating public policy that impacts the well-being of our children. We applaud Don Williamson and his team for their continued leadership in protecting the health and safety of our children.”

Key findings are that the two leading categories of preventable child deaths in Alabama are vehicular and infant sleep-related deaths, and these two categories account for half or more of all preventable child deaths. The most common vehicular deaths involve issues relating to teen driving or unrestrained or improperly restrained child passengers.

Since 2000, local teams have reviewed more than 4,000 child deaths in depth, and recommendations have led to prevention efforts that include the following:

- Recent public education and awareness including Safe Infant Sleep campaigns and a teen driver safety campaign commended by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation
- Public policy recommendations from the state team including improvements in teen driver and child passenger safety, expansion of safe infant sleep efforts, and improved access to injury data in Alabama
- Direct efforts including the distribution of child car seats and booster seats across the state and hands-on instruction in their proper use
- Data and informational support for several successful legislative efforts

For more information, visit www.adph.org/cdr.