



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama Child Death Review System annual report records steady progress in decreasing child deaths

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Each death of a child serves as a powerful warning that other children are at risk. The Alabama Child Death Review System is committed to the goal of preventing child deaths through public awareness, education and direct prevention efforts.

Positive trends in reducing preventable childhood deaths seen over the past few years in Alabama have continued. A total of 823 children under the age of 18 died in the state during 2003, the latest year for which data are available. Of this number, 274 deaths were considered preventable and were qualified for Alabama Child Death Review System review. This is down from 335 preventable deaths in 2002 and marks an over 40 percent decrease in preventable deaths since ACDRS began in 1997.

Statistics and other information on child deaths can be found in the latest annual report of the Alabama Child Death Review System which is titled "A Piece of the Solution: Saving Alabama's Kids...Our Most Precious Resource."

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson, chairman of the State Child Death Review Team, said, "In order to prevent the deaths of children, it is absolutely necessary to understand how and why children die. We are pleased to report several encouraging trends. "

A decrease in the number of vehicular deaths reviewed accounted for the single largest annual death reduction, with 24 fewer deaths in 2003 than in 2002. Six of the 13 categories of causes of child death experienced a decline as well, across a fairly wide spectrum of causes.

Progress has been made in programs which are special interests of the Alabama Child Death Review System such as providing portable cribs for low-income families to prevent risks posed by "bed sharing." The ACDRS has partnered with the Alabama Suicide Prevention Task Force to develop an effective Statewide Youth Suicide Prevention Program. The system has also developed a new All-Terrain Vehicle Safety Brochure.

The system is a grassroots program driven by local citizens for the express purpose of saving the lives of as many of Alabama's infants and children as possible. The ACDRS was created to review all unexplained or unexpected child deaths in Alabama. Its mission is to identify which child deaths can be prevented and to take steps to prevent similar deaths in the future.

Each judicial circuit in Alabama has at least one local child death review team, and every district attorney in Alabama is required to form a local team that meets at least once a year. Local

teams review all infant and child deaths that meet the system's review criteria. Findings are submitted to the state office and then further reviewed as appropriate by the State Child Death Review Team.

Local teams look for hazardous situations in communities and work to change them. The state team analyzes child deaths, educates the public, makes recommendations to elected officials, and helps recommend and support legislation. The state team, which meets quarterly, is made up of 28 individuals and includes state agency directors and representatives; medical, legal and law-enforcement professionals; legislators and private citizens appointed by the governor.

Successes include, but are not limited to, the following legislation passed into law with members' support:

Safe Haven Law, 2000

Graduated Driver's License, 2002

"Baby Douglas" Day Care Medication, 2004

Enhanced Child Safety Restraint Law, 2006

Prevention of Exposure to Drug Labs Law, 2006

The latest and previous annual reports of the Alabama Child Death Review System, other publications and information about the program are available online by visiting the system's Web site at www.adph.org/cdr. Printed copies may also be obtained by contacting Tarina Moores, Alabama Childhood Death Review System, Bureau of Family Health Services, at (334) 206-2953, tmoores@adph.state.al.us.

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