

2003 RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislative

1. The Child Death Review Board (CDRB) 2002 statistics indicate the manner in which the highest incidents to child deaths occurred in Oklahoma was motor vehicle accidents (80 out of 313 reviewed deaths – 25.6%). The CDRB recommends amending statute 47 OS Sec 751 to include mandatory field sobriety testing of drivers in motor vehicle accidents resulting in a child fatality and/or a critical or serious injury to a child.
2. Also due to the number of traffic fatalities, the CDRB recommends increase fines for drivers transporting unrestrained children.
3. In order to reduce the number of traffic child fatalities due to substance abuse, court sanctions and education prevention programs, such as drunk driving victim's panels should be required for first time and/or repeat offenders. Drug Court, or a comparable drug and alcohol treatment program for repeat offenders, should also be required.
4. In 2001, the CDRB reviewed three cases of children who die in motor vehicle accidents as a consequence of drivers who were speeding in an attempt to elude the police. The CDRB recommends amending statute 21 OK Sec 540A to increase the fine for motor vehicle speeding violations for drivers who attempt to elude the police.
5. In 2002 there were 38 (46.9%) children who died in motor vehicle accidents in which the driver was 18 years or younger. In order to promote safer driving practices among younger drivers, the CDRB recommends mandated universal driver education classes for all high school and career tech students.
6. Due to the number of child deaths attributed to motor vehicle accidents where the driver was 18 or younger, the CDRB recommends strengthening and enforcing statutes regarding the graduated drivers licensing system in Oklahoma.
7. In 2001, Oklahoma child passenger safety laws earned an "F" from the National Safe Kids Campaign. Therefore, in order to reduce the number of child fatalities resulting from motor vehicle accidents, Oklahoma should continue to strengthen the statutes regarding the use of seat belts and child restraint systems. This can be accomplished by following the standards set by the Safe Kids Campaign regarding the age and weight limit of children required to use a child passenger restraint system. Furthermore, the CDRB recommends increasing the fine for violating child passenger restraint system laws.
8. In 2002, the CDRB reviewed 22 cases of children who died as a result of firearms. To facilitate the identification of unsafe child environments and to promote firearm injury prevention, the CDRB recommends that all health care providers be mandated to report any and all gunshot wounds to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Subsequently, law enforcement agencies be mandated to report all gunshot wounds to the Injury Prevention Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health for review.
9. In cases of child deaths resulting from firearms, the CDRB recommends the child death scene investigation include mandatory field sobriety testing of all individuals who were present during the shooting.

10. Do to the limited funding allocated the prosecution for expert witnesses in child abuse cases, the CDRB recommends an increase in funding to the District Attorney's Council for the purpose of providing comparable resources to the prosecution as those used by the defense in cases of alleged child abuse.
11. In 2002, the Child Death Review Board reviewed 36 child fatalities where the cause of death was identified as "undetermined." The CDRB recommends increasing appropriations to the State Medical Examiner's Office for additional regional child death scene investigators in order to facilitate in the investigation of unexplained and/or "undetermined" child deaths.
12. Support funding to the State Medical Examiner's Office to ensure the continuance of toxicological and metabolic testing in unexplained and/or "undetermined" infant and child deaths.
13. Many Child Welfare Workers and Supervisors carry an active caseload that is 2 to 3 times greater than those recommended nationally by the Child Welfare League of America. Funding should be made available to the Department of Human Services to hire additional child welfare staff that will bring Oklahoma into compliance with the recommended national standards.
14. The CDRB recommends the state legislature continue to fund the Oklahoma State Department of Health's early intervention and child abuse and neglect programs at its current level.

Administrative

1. The Oklahoma Department of Education, in conjunction with the appropriate entities, should develop gun safety and avoidance programs, including implementation plans, with a particular emphasis on elementary aged children.
2. In 2001, the CDRB reviewed case #01-5559-B in which a child died as a result of a fatal gunshot wound inflicted by the biological parent during the exchange of two minor children following a court ordered visitation. The CDRB encourages the identification of secure visitation drop-off locations for the safe exchange of children in cases where either parent has expressed to the court a concern over safety.
3. Due to the number of child deaths attributed to motor vehicle accidents where the driver was 18 or younger, the CDRB recommends that the Oklahoma Department of Education reinstate universal driver education classes for all high school and career tech students.
4. In 2002, the Board reviewed 94 natural deaths. In order to reduce the number of natural deaths, the CDRB recommends improving the Medicaid program to provide appropriate and decent health care that is unavailable with the current Medicaid program.