

Oklahoma Child Death Review Board Recommendations
Submitted to the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth
May 2009

The following recommendations are based on the 241 death cases and 59 near death cases reviewed and closed in calendar year 2008. Recommendations this year are based on deaths due to **motor vehicles, drowning, unsafe sleep practices, fires, and child abuse/neglect.**

Motor Vehicle Related Deaths

In order to reduce the number of motor vehicle related fatalities, the Oklahoma Child Death Review Board recommends:

Legislative recommendations

- Mandatory sobriety testing of drivers in motor vehicle accidents resulting in a child fatality and/or a critical or serious injury to a child. (*recommended seven previous times in the past 10 years*)
- Legislation that bans the use of wireless hand-held telephone or electronic communication device by motor vehicle operators. (*recommended one time in past 10 years*)
- Strengthening of the booster seat legislation to include use up to age 8. (*recommended four previous times in past 10 years*)
- Passage of All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) legislation that contains elements requiring helmet use, prohibiting passengers, prohibiting drivers aged 12 and under, and requiring ATV safety training. Requirements should be statewide, including on private land. (*recommended three previous times in past 10 years*)

Administrative recommendations

- Enforcement of child passenger safety restraint laws, which include fines for drivers transporting unrestrained children. (*recommended nine previous times in past 10 years*)
- Develop and disseminate a campaign that will promote the best practices related to booster seat usage. (*recommended three previous times in past 10 years*)
- Provide, at no cost, driver education classes for all high school and career tech students. (*recommended eight previous times in past 10 years*)
- Increase accessibility and usage of drug courts and drug treatment programs. (*recommended nine previous times in past 10 years*)

Sleep Related Deaths

In order to reduce the number of deaths of children due to unsafe* sleeping environments, the Oklahoma Child Death Review Board recommends:

- The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and law enforcement agencies should adopt the Centers for Disease Control's model policy for investigation and classification of Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID) and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), including the use of scene recreation and digital photography. The methods currently

utilized do not adequately provide the opportunity to distinguish accidental overlay (smothering) from undetermined causes. *(recommended three previous times in past 10 years)*

- Affordable childbirth classes should be available to all expectant mothers and address safe sleep issues prior to birth. Scholarships should also be available to those who cannot afford classes. *(recommended three previous times in past 10 years)*
- Education on safe sleep environments be provided to families after delivery but prior to discharge. *(recommended three previous times in past 10 years)*
- Education on safe sleep environments should be provided to families at the first well-child visit. *(already occurring for OHCA clients-recommended two previous times in past 10 years)*
- Distribute cribs for low-income families. *(recommended two previous times in past 10 years)*
- All hospitals in Oklahoma should adopt a policy regarding in-house safe sleep issues. *(recommended one previous time in past 10 years)*

*An unsafe sleep environment is defined as the child not in his/her own personal sleep area (i.e. crib, bassinet, play pen), with pillows or other items, including people, and/or placed face down to sleep.

Drowning Deaths

In order to reduce the number of deaths due to drowning, the Board recommends:

Legislative recommendations:

- All pool/hot tub retailers in Oklahoma should be bound by law to distribute information on pool/hot tub safety to new pool/hot tub owners at the time of sale or installation of any new pool/hot tub. *(recommended four previous times in past 10 years)*

Administrative recommendations:

- Increase access to swimming lessons for all children. *(recommended one previous time in past 10 years)*
- Fund and distribute the “water watcher” badges that promote appropriate and responsible adult supervision of children around water. *(recommended one previous time in past 10 years)*
- Work with Oklahoma Parks and Recreation to provide water watcher badges at Oklahoma lakes. *(not previously recommended)*
- EMS/National Weather Service include a warning regarding the dangers of flash floods in weather alerts. *(recommended four previous times in past 10 years)*

Fire Deaths

In order to reduce the number of fire related deaths, the Board recommends:

- Smoke alarm give away programs should include carbon monoxide detectors. *(recommended one previous time in past 10 years)*
- Increased penalties for homeowners who do not provide smoke alarms for rental houses. *(recommended one previous time in past 10 years)*

Child Abuse/Neglect Deaths

In order to reduce the number of deaths due to child abuse/neglect, the Oklahoma Child

Death Review Board recommends:

- Increased funding of primary and secondary prevention programs of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Oklahoma State Health Department, Department of Education, and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. *(recommended six previous times in past 10 years)*
- Provide the Oklahoma Department of Human Services with funding to hire additional child welfare staff to be in compliance with the recommended national standard issued by the Child Welfare League of America and with a salary competitive with positions in other states. *(recommended nine previous times in past 10 years)*
- Make court records pertaining to custody and guardianship available for public inspection after a child death. *(recommended two previous times in past 10 years)*
- Create and support through funding, a medical team to review the medical records in child abuse/neglect cases and submit an opinion if requested by the court. *(recommended two previous times in past 10 years)*

Agency Specific Recommendations

Oklahoma Safe Kids Coalition *(recommended five previous times in past 10 years)*

- Promotion and establishment of funding for the Safe Kids Oklahoma Child Passenger Safety Program. This program includes: providing car seats for low-income families; providing training and car seats for **every** child care center in the state starting July 2006; providing, through a loaner program, car seats for special needs children; piloting a program for providing car beds for babies born prematurely; and the “Please Be Seated” program which allows citizens the opportunity to send a card to Safe Kids with license plate information when a citizen has observed a child to be transported unrestrained. Safe Kids then contacts the family through a letter reminding them of the law and offering assistance for obtaining a car seat.
- Promotion and establishment of funding for the Safe Kids Oklahoma “Walk This Way” program which is aimed at reducing the number of child pedestrian injuries and fatalities.
- Promotion and establishment funding for the Safe Kids Oklahoma bicycle safety program, which includes conducting bicycle safety rodeos and provided free helmets to groups who conduct bike safety education events utilizing Safe Kids curriculum.
- Promotion and establishment of funding for Safe Kid’s Oklahoma’s burn prevention programs, which include the “Save-A-Life” smoke detector giveaway/installment programs, and a fireworks safety campaign.
- Promotion and establishment of funding for Safe Kids Oklahoma’s water safety programs, which include the Wee Water Wahoo and Wacky Water Wahoo water safety training events and the Brittany Project, which provides loaner life jackets at Oklahoma Corps of Engineer lakes.

Oklahoma Child Death Review Board *(recommended one previous time in past 10 years)*

- Promotion and establishment of funding for the Oklahoma Child Death Review Board’s Think. Prevent. Live campaign that addresses deaths due to drowning, fires, wheeled activities, unsafe sleep practices, and child abuse/neglect.