

Oklahoma Child Death Review Board Recommendations
Submitted to the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth
May 2010

The following recommendations are based on the 252 death cases and 53 near death cases reviewed and closed in calendar year 2009. Recommendations this year focus 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 eight times in the past 11 years. A total of 750 vehicular related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.*)
- Legislation that bans the use of wireless hand-held telephone or electronic communication device by motor vehicle operators. (*Recommended two times in the past 11 years—House Bill 3250 of the 2010 Oklahoma Session addressing this issue. A total of 145 vehicular related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.*)
- Strengthening of the booster seat legislation to include use up to age 8. (*Recommended five times in the past 11 years. A total of 42 vehicular related deaths for children between the ages of 6 and 8 have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made. Oklahoma's current booster seat legislation covers children through age five.*)
- Passage of All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) legislation that contains elements prohibiting passengers, prohibiting drivers aged 12 and under, and requiring ATV safety training. Requirements should be statewide, including on private land. (*Recommended four times in the past 11 years--Required helmet use on private land was legislated in the 2005 Oklahoma Session. House Bill 1686 of the 2007 Oklahoma Session made helmets a requirement on public lands for persons less than 18 years of age and prohibits passengers of any age on public lands unless the ATV was specifically designed to carry a passenger. A total of 18 ATV related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.*)

Administrative recommendations

- Enforcement of child passenger safety restraint laws, which include fines for drivers transporting unrestrained children. (*Recommended ten times in the past 11 years. A total of 452 vehicular deaths have been reviewed and closed where the child was not utilizing a safety restraint since the first time this recommendation was made.*)
- Develop and disseminate a campaign that will promote the best practices related to booster seat usage. (*Recommended four times in the past 11 years. A total of 31*

vehicular related deaths for children between the ages of 6 and 8 have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)

- Provide, at no cost, driver education classes for all high school and career tech students. *(Recommended nine times in the past 11 years. A total of 250 vehicle related deaths where the driver was the decedent have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Increase accessibility and usage of drug courts and drug treatment programs. *(Recommended ten times in the past 11 years. A total 958 vehicle related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*

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 other causes. *(Recommended three times in the past 11 years. A total of 255 sleep related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- 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 four times in the past 11 years. A total of 332 sleep related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Education on safe sleep environments should be provided to families after delivery but prior to discharge. *(Recommended four times in the past 11 years. A total of 332 sleep related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Education on safe sleep environments should be provided to families at the first well-child visit. *(This is already occurring for Oklahoma Health Care Authority clients- Recommended three times in the past 11 years. A total of 255 sleep related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Distribute cribs for low-income families. *(Recommended three times in the past 11 years. A total of 255 sleep related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- All hospitals in Oklahoma should adopt a policy regarding in-house safe sleep issues. *(Recommended two times in the past 11 years--**House Bill 2920 of the 2010 Oklahoma Legislative Session addressing this issue.**)*

*An unsafe sleep environment is defined as the child not in his/her own personal sleep area (i.e. crib, bassinette, 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 five times in the past 11 years. A total of 38 private pool/hot tub related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*

Administrative recommendations:

- Increase access to swimming lessons for all children. *(Recommended two times in the past 11 years. A total of 30 drowning related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Fund and distribute the “water watcher” badges that promote appropriate and responsible adult supervision of children around water. *(Recommended two times in the past 11 years. A total of 30 drowning related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Work with Oklahoma Parks and Recreation to provide water watcher badges at Oklahoma lakes. *(Recommended one time in the past 11 years. A total of 8 lake related drowning deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- EMS/National Weather Service include a warning regarding the dangers of flash floods in weather alerts. *(Recommended five times in the past 11 years. A total of 40 deaths that occurred in open bodies of water have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*

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 two previous times in past 11 years. A total of 14 fire related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- Increased penalties for homeowners who do not provide smoke alarms for rental houses. *(Recommended two previous time in past 11 years. A total of 8 fire related deaths where there was no smoke alarm have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*

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 seven times in the past 11 years. A total of 283 abuse and/or neglect related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- 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 ten times in the past 11 years. A total of 385 abuse and/or*

neglect related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)

- Make court records pertaining to custody and guardianship available for public inspection after a child death. *(Recommended three times in the past 11 years. A total of 114 abuse and/or neglect related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*
- 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 three times in the past 11 years. A total of 114 abuse and/or neglect related deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)*

Agency Specific Recommendations

Oklahoma Safe Kids Coalition

- 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.
(All recommended six times in past the 11 years. A total of 956 unintentional injury deaths have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)

Oklahoma Child Death Review Board

- Promotion and establishment of funding for the Oklahoma Child Death Review Board’s Think. Prevent. Live. public service campaign addressing deaths due to drowning, fires, wheeled activities, unsafe sleep practices, and child abuse/neglect.
(All recommended two times in the past 11 years. A total of 407 deaths related to drowning, fires, wheeled activities, unsafe sleep practices, and child abuse and/or neglect have been reviewed and closed since the first time this recommendation was made.)