

THE GUARDIAN

Rockingham County Guardian ad Litem Program
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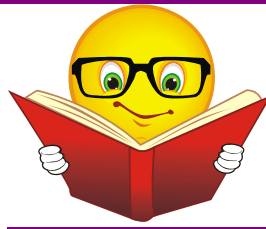
Jan/Feb 2010

Court Calendar 2010



January 14	Judge Allen
January 28	Judge Grogan
February 9	Judge Grogan 2pm
February 11	Judge Allen
March 11	Judge Allen
March 25	Judge Grogan
April 6	Judge Allen
April 22	Judge Grogan
May 6	Judge Allen
May 20	Judge Grogan
June 3	Judge Allen
June 17	Judge Grogan
July 1	Judge Allen
July 29	Judge Grogan

Upcoming Trainings



We would like to know what you as GAL Volunteers are interested in learning about, so that we can set up some upcoming trainings for 2010. Please email or call us and let us know your interests.

**I wanted to share the following lyrics from a new song
from Carrie Underwood that touched my heart. I hope
it touches yours as well!**

Little boy, 6 years old...A little too used to being alone
Another new mom and dad, another school
Another house that'll never be home
When people ask him how he likes this place
He looks up and says with a smile upon his face

This is my Temporary Home
It's not where I belong
Windows and rooms that I'm passing through
This is just a stop, on the way to where I'm going
I'm not afraid because I know....
This is my Temporary Home

Young mom on her own...She needs a little help, got nowhere to go
She's looking for a job, looking for a way out
Because a half-way house will never be a home
At night she whispers to her baby girl
Someday we'll find a place here in this world

This is our temporary home
It's not where we belong
Windows and rooms that we're passing through
This is just a stop, on the way to where we're going
I'm not afraid because I know...
This is our Temporary Home.

Old man, hospital bed...The room is filled with people he loves
And he whispers don't cry for me
I'll see you all someday
He looks up and says "I can see God's face"

This is my temporary Home
It's not where I belong
Windows and rooms that I'm passing through
This was just a stop, on the way to where I'm going
I'm not afraid because I know...
This WAS my temporary home.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/fatality.cfm>

How Many Children Die Each Year From Abuse or Neglect?

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) reported **an estimated 1,760 child fatalities in 2007**. This translates to a rate of 2.35 children per 100,000 children in the general population. NCANDS defines "child fatality" as the death of a child caused by an injury resulting from abuse or neglect, or where abuse or neglect was a contributing factor.

With the exception of FFY 2005, the number and rate of fatalities have been increasing over the past 5 years. The national estimate is influenced by which States report data. For 2007, several States reported increased fatalities compared to FFY 2006, which resulted in a higher national estimate. To some degree, this can be attributed to improved data collection and reporting, but all the causes of the increase are not specifically identifiable.

Most data on child fatalities come from State child welfare agencies. However, States may also draw on other data sources, including health departments, vital statistics departments, medical examiners' offices, and fatality review teams. This coordination of data collection contributes to better estimates.

Many researchers and practitioners believe child fatalities due to abuse and neglect are still underreported. Studies in Nevada and Colorado have estimated that as many as 50 percent to 60 percent of child deaths resulting from abuse or neglect are not recorded as such (Child Fatality Analysis (Clark County), 2005; Crume, DiGuseppi, Byers, Sirotnak, & Garrett, 2002).

Issues affecting the accuracy and consistency of child fatality data include:

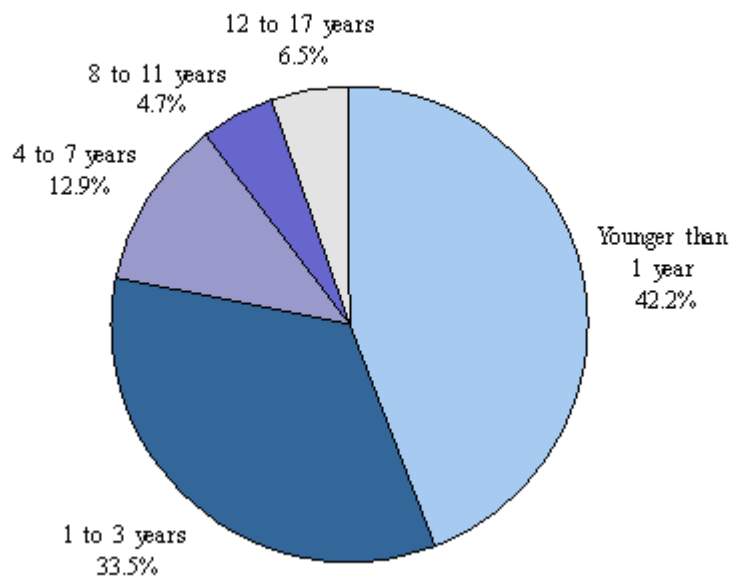
- Variation among reporting requirements and definitions of child abuse and neglect and other terms
- Variation in death investigative systems and in training for investigations
- Variation in State child fatality review processes
- The amount of time (as long as a year, in some cases) it may take to establish abuse or neglect as the cause of death
- Inaccurate determination of the manner and cause of death, resulting in the miscoding of death certificates; this includes deaths labeled as accidents, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or "manner undetermined" that would have been attributed to abuse or neglect if more comprehensive investigations had been conducted (Hargrove & Bowman, 2007)
- Limited coding options for child deaths, especially those due to neglect or negligence, when using the *International Classification of Diseases* to code death certificates
- The ease with which the circumstances surrounding many child maltreatment deaths can be concealed
- Lack of coordination or cooperation among different agencies and jurisdictions

A number of studies, including some funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have suggested that more accurate counts of maltreatment deaths are obtained by linking multiple reporting sources, including death certificates, crime reports, child protective services (CPS) reports, and child death review (CDR) records (Mercy, Barker, & Frazier, 2006).

What Groups of Children Are Most Vulnerable?

Research indicates that very young children (ages 3 and younger) are the most frequent victims of child fatalities. NCANDS data for 2007 demonstrated that children younger than 1 year accounted for 42.2 percent of fatalities, while children younger than 4 years accounted for more than three-quarters (75.7 percent) of fatalities. These children are the most vulnerable for many reasons, including their dependency, small size, and inability to defend themselves.

Child Abuse and Neglect Fatality Victims by Age, 2007

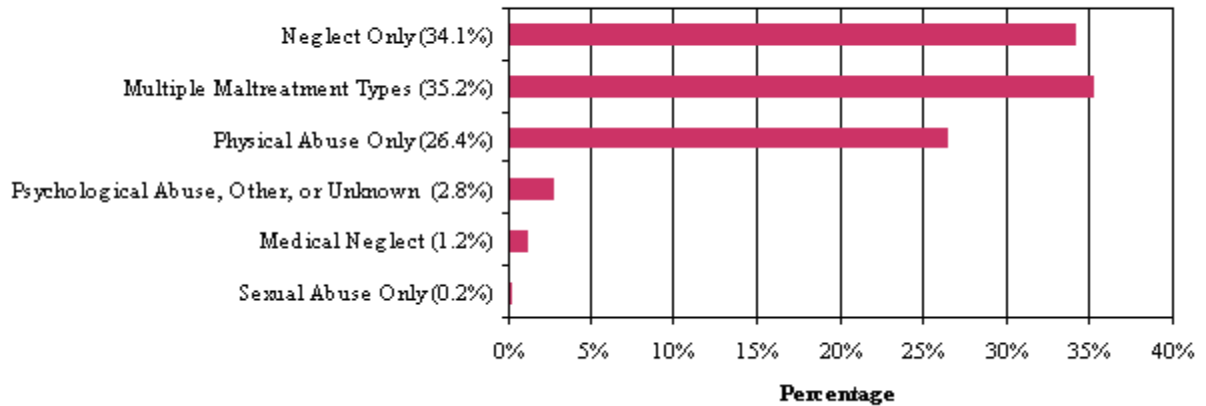


How Do These Deaths Occur?

Fatal child abuse may involve repeated abuse over a period of time (e.g., battered child syndrome), or it may involve a single, impulsive incident (e.g., drowning, suffocating, or shaking a baby). In cases of fatal neglect, the child's death results not from anything the caregiver does, but from a caregiver's *failure to act*. The neglect may be chronic (e.g., extended malnourishment) or acute (e.g., an infant who drowns after being left unsupervised in the bathtub).

In 2007, slightly more than one-third of fatalities (35.2 percent) were caused by multiple forms of maltreatment. Neglect accounted for 34.1 percent and physical abuse for 26.4 percent. Medical neglect accounted for 1.2 percent of fatalities.

Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities by Maltreatment Type, 2007



Who Are the Perpetrators?

No matter how the fatal abuse occurs, one fact of great concern is that the perpetrators are, by definition, individuals responsible for the care and supervision of their victims. In 2007, one or both parents were responsible for 69.9 percent of child abuse or neglect fatalities. More than one-quarter (27.1 percent) of these fatalities were perpetrated by the mother acting alone. Child fatalities with unknown perpetrators accounted for 16.4 percent of the total.

There is no single profile of a perpetrator of fatal child abuse, although certain characteristics reappear in many studies. Frequently, the perpetrator is a young adult in his or her mid-20s, without a high school diploma, living at or below the poverty level, depressed, and who may have difficulty coping with stressful situations. In many instances, the perpetrator has experienced violence firsthand. Most fatalities from *physical abuse* are caused by fathers and other male caregivers. Mothers are most often held responsible for deaths resulting from *child neglect* (U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1995).

How Do Communities Respond to Child Fatalities?

The response to the problem of child abuse and neglect fatalities is often hampered by inconsistencies, including:

- Underreporting of the number of children who die each year as a result of abuse and neglect
- Lack of consistent standards for child autopsies or death investigations
- The varying roles of CPS agencies in different jurisdictions
- Uncoordinated, non-multidisciplinary investigations
- Medical examiners or elected coroners who do not have specific child abuse and neglect training

To address some of these inconsistencies, multidisciplinary and multi-agency child fatality review teams have emerged to provide a coordinated approach to understanding child deaths, including deaths caused by religion-based medical neglect. Federal legislation further supported the development of these teams in an amendment to the 1992 reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which required States to include information on CDR in their program plans. Many States received initial funding for these teams through the Children's Justice Act, from grants awarded by the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Child fatality review teams, which now exist at a State, local, or State/local level in the District of Columbia and in every State but one², are composed of prosecutors, coroners or medical examiners, law enforcement personnel, CPS workers, public health care providers, and others. Child fatality review teams respond to the issue of child deaths through improved interagency communication, identification of gaps in community child protection systems, and the acquisition of comprehensive data that can guide agency policy and practice as well as prevention efforts.

The teams review cases of child deaths and facilitate appropriate follow-up. Follow-up may include ensuring that services are provided for surviving family members, providing information to assist in the prosecution of perpetrators, and developing recommendations to improve child protection and community support systems.

As of April 2008, 47 States had a case-reporting tool for CDR; however, there is little consistency among the types of information compiled. This contributes to gaps in our understanding of infant and child mortality as a national problem. In response, the National Center for Child Death Review, in cooperation with 30 State CDR leaders and advocates, developed a web-based CDR Case Reporting System for State and local teams to collect data and analyze and report on their findings. As of April 2008, 22 States were using the standardized system and one more was in the process of implementing it.³ The ultimate goal is to use the data to advocate for actions to prevent child deaths and to keep children healthy, safe, and protected.

Since its 1996 reauthorization, CAPTA has required States that receive CAPTA funding to set up citizens review panels. These panels of volunteers conduct evaluations of CPS agencies in their State, including policies and procedures related to child fatalities and investigations. As of April 2008, 11 State CDR boards also serve as citizen review panels for child fatalities.

How Can These Fatalities Be Prevented?

When addressing the issue of child maltreatment, and especially child fatalities, prevention is a recurring theme. Well-designed, properly organized child fatality review teams appear to offer hope for defining the underlying nature and scope of fatalities due to child abuse and neglect. The child fatality review process helps identify risk factors that may assist prevention professionals, such as those engaged in home visiting and parenting education, to prevent future deaths. In addition, teams are demonstrating effectiveness in translating review findings into action by partnering with child welfare and other child health and safety groups. In some States, review team annual reports have led to State legislation, policy changes, or prevention programs (National Center for Child Death Review, 2007).

In 2003, the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, within the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, launched a Child Abuse Prevention Initiative to raise awareness of the issue in a much more visible and comprehensive way than ever before. The Prevention Initiative is an opportunity for individuals and groups across the country to work together to strengthen families and communities. Increasingly, this effort focuses on promoting protective factors that enhance the capacity of parents, caregivers, and communities to protect, nurture, and promote the healthy development of children. For more information, visit the [Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect](#) section of the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.

Summary

While the exact number of children affected is uncertain, child fatalities due to abuse and neglect remain a serious problem in the United States. Fatalities disproportionately affect young children and most often are caused by one or both of the child's parents. Child fatality review teams appear to be among the most promising current approaches to accurately count, respond to, and prevent child abuse and neglect fatalities, as well as other preventable death.

We thank each and every one of you for your commitment and dedication to the abused and neglected children in Rockingham County. Your child(ren)'s best interests are being served and you are helping to insure that their "forever home" will be permanent, safe, and loving.

~Amanda Benavides~