

NEBRASKA CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM

Review Methodology

In order to review child deaths, the Team obtains information from multiple sources, including:

- The Vital Records section of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), which provides death certificates for all Nebraska resident children under the age of 18, and matched birth certificates for those under the age of one year;
- County Attorneys, who are contacted annually for information on all deaths to children who resided in their respective counties;
- Hospitals, which are contacted annually for information on all deaths to children that occurred in those facilities;
- The DHHS Office of Protection and Safety and the Child Care Licensing section;
- Additional sources as needed, e.g., private providers, public officials in counties or states where a death occurred but where the child was not a resident.

The annual State of Nebraska Vital Statistics Reports provide categorized cause of death information for infants and older children. However, the CDRT review determines underlying causes that do not always correspond to those assigned by Vital Statistics, as the Team tends to reach further back in the chain of events that led to the death to assign an underlying cause. As the goal of the CDRT is prevention of future deaths, this process was felt to better distinguish between preventable and non-preventable deaths.

The Team also uses DHHS electronic databases, including children's birth and death certificates. Numbers and names of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), suicide, homicide and criminal child abuse cases are compared to ensure that all children known to the state were listed appropriately in the CDRT files. Similarly, the state's Cancer Registry is used to cross-check cancer deaths. The Nebraska Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) database provides aggregate data on passenger restraint (e.g., seatbelt) use and the involvement of alcohol in automobile crashes. CODES data were not individually matched to CDRT cases but do

provide an aggregate assessment of the same children and incidents. Finally, archived newspaper reports are searched for additional information.

Using this information, the CDRT Coordinator reviews all cases and classifies them into one of 16 categories based on the “underlying” cause and circumstances of death.¹ Because information is not always complete, some misclassification may occur. Team members discuss cases where the classification is not immediately obvious or is controversial.

All unintentional injuries (“accidents”) to young children, child abuse cases and suicides are reviewed by at least two Team members to determine whether caretaker neglect may have been involved.

All rates are calculated using the most recent population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Because these estimates are updated periodically, rates shown for any given year may vary slightly from those published in a previous report.

Questions or comments regarding the report or the Nebraska Child Death Review Team should be directed to:

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¹ The underlying cause of death is the disease or condition that initiated the chain of morbid events leading directly to death, and may be many years removed from the actual occurrence of death. See Glossary for further discussion.