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**DCS releases 2018 child fatality report**

INDIANAPOLIS (**Dec. 31, 2019**) – The Indiana Department of Child Services investigated 242 child deaths in 2018 as required by state law and determined 65 were caused by neglect or abuse.

DCS is legally required to review all child fatalities that fit the following circumstances:

- Children under the age of 1: The child’s death is sudden, unexpected or unexplained, or involves allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Children age 1 or older: The child’s death involves allegations of abuse or neglect.

In 2018, unintentional suffocation due to unsafe sleeping conditions remained a leading cause of accidental child death, new fatality data shows.

Consistently, the DCS Child Fatality Report cites unsafe sleeping conditions as a common factor contributing to neglect-related deaths.

Historically, the report has examined data reported during the state fiscal year. In 2019, Indiana law was revised to require the report cover the calendar year. An addendum covering the six-month period between July 1 and Dec. 31, 2017 is attached to this year’s report. The addendum details 26 abuse- neglect-related deaths; 135 deaths were investigated during that time.

“We have an obligation to learn from these deaths and determine what changes need to be made in policy, practice, or legislation to protect children,” Director Terry Stigdon said. “This report is difficult to read, but it highlights what is needed in our communities to help children. We must confront what endangers our children in order to make the difference all children deserve.”



*Indiana children will live in safe, healthy and supportive families and communities.*

DCS and the Indiana State Department of Health work together to promote best practices for keeping children safe while sleeping. Experts encourage parents and caregivers to remember the ABCs: Children should sleep **a**lone, on their **b**ack, in a **c**rib. Learn more about safe sleep practices [here](#). The full 2018 fatality report can be found [here](#).

**About Indiana DCS:** *The Indiana Department of Child Services engages with families and collaborates with state, local and community partners to protect children from abuse and neglect and to provide child support services.*



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