Local Child Fatality Review Team: Role of the Department of Child Services Representative

Child Fatality Review (CFR) is a multidisciplinary process to help us better understand why children in our community die and to help us identify how we can prevent future deaths. The child fatality review program in Indiana was redefined in 2012 pursuant to IC 31-33-24-6, which mandates that the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) establish a multidisciplinary child fatality review team in each of the eighteen DCS geographical regions.

Each team will meet with varying frequency to review sudden, unexpected, and unexplained deaths, deaths investigated by DCS, and those deaths classified as homicide, suicide, or accident, for all children under the age of eighteen. Team members will share case information on child deaths that occur in their region with the goal of preventing future deaths. In order for this team to be successful, all agencies involved in the safety, health, and protection of children must be involved.

The death of a child is a tragic event. Reviewing the circumstances involved in every death is part of our job as professionals and requires our time and commitment. Only then can we truly understand how to better protect our children and prevent future deaths from occurring.

- The DCS representative can provide the team with information on:
  - Case status and investigation summary
  - Prior DCS history, caregiver stress factors, and child risk factors

- The DCS representative can provide the team with expertise on:
  - Using specialized knowledge to design better intervention and prevention strategies and identify ways to integrate these strategies into the system
  - Identifying local and state issues related to preventable deaths
  - DCS policy and practice

- The DCS representative can support the team by:
  - Educating the team regarding child protection issues and how the DCS system works
  - Work to improve human service system’s responsiveness to child deaths
  - Training other team members about warning signs of abuse and neglect and identifying services that can be offered to families

- The DCS representative can help build bridges by:
  - Learning about the policies and practices of other agencies through team participation
  - Acting as liaison between DCS and team member agencies
  - Explaining to the team how to improve coordination with DCS agencies