Local Child Fatality Review Team: Role of the Fire Department 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 fire department representative can provide the team with information on:
  - Case status and investigation of the scene for fire-related deaths
  - Fire Department policies and procedures

- The fire department representative can provide the team with expertise by:
  - Educating the team about the investigation and determination of fire-related deaths
  - Providing information on whether or not safety devices, such as smoke detectors, were present and working

- The fire department representative can support the team by:
  - Persuading fire department professionals from other agencies and/or jurisdictions to participate on the CFR team when there is a death in that jurisdiction
  - Providing access to and information from other fire department agencies
  - Providing assistance to member agencies in working with area fire departments

- The fire department representative can help build bridges by:
  - Learning about the policies and practices of other agencies through team participation
  - Acting as liaison between the CFR team and the jurisdiction’s other fire departments
  - Explaining to the team how to improve coordination with area fire departments