Local Child Fatality Review Team: Role of the Pediatrician/Family Practice Physician

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 pediatrician/family practice physician can provide the team with information on:
  - Services provided to the child or family if seen by the health professional
  - General health issues, including child development, injuries and deaths, medical terminology, concepts and practices

- The pediatrician/family practice physician can provide the team with expertise by:
  - Offering an expert opinion on medical evidence in a child death
  - Giving a medical explanation and interpretation of events based on subject matter expertise

- The pediatrician/family practice physician can support the team by:
  - Accessing medical records from hospitals and other medical care providers
  - Providing the medical information needed for a successful prevention campaign

- The pediatrician/family practice physician 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 medical community
  - Explaining to the team how to improve relationships with the community’s medical providers