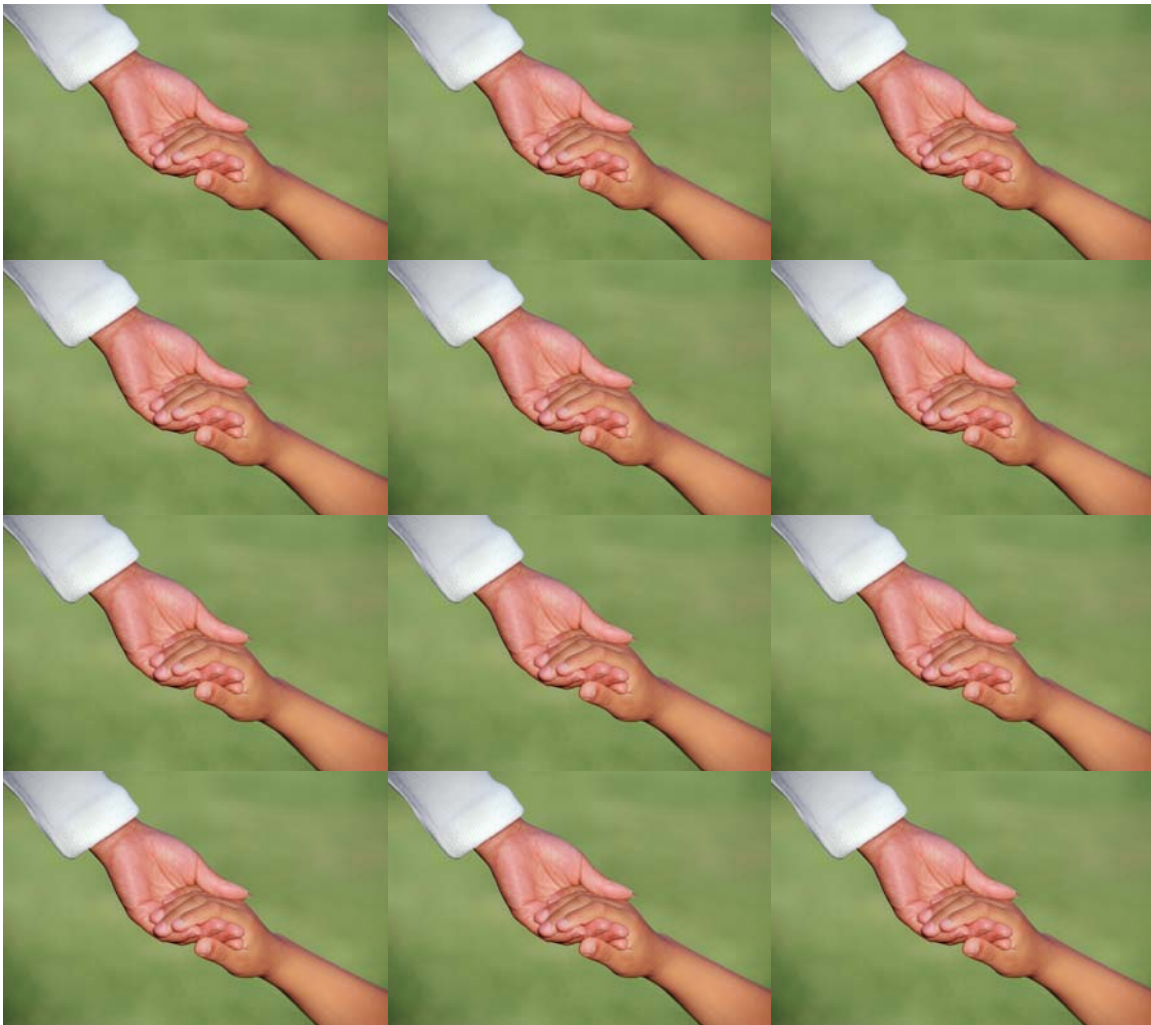


# Georgia's CAPTA Citizen Review Panel Program

## 2008 Annual Report



Hand in Hand  
Making a Difference



## **2008 Annual Report**

### Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Citizen Review Panels

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Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee

Child Fatality Review Panel

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#### *Steering Committee*

Liz Ferguson  
Amy Rene  
Carole Steele

Angela Tanzella  
Trish McCann  
Melissa Carter

David Miller  
Eva Patillio  
Lisa Dawson



## Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Citizen Review Panels

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2008 Annual Report

### Executive Summary

**32,951**

*# of child abuse victims substantiated cases*

**60\***

*# of maltreatment-related fatalities*

Most recently available Georgia child welfare statistics<sup>1</sup> indicate that of the 92,268 reports of suspected abuse and neglect received, 43,766 were considered credible and warranted full investigation by the state's child protective system. Of the reports that were investigated, 19,868 were substantiated; 83% due to neglect, 10 % due to physical abuse, 4% due to sexual abuse and 3% emotional or other forms of abuse. The work of Georgia's citizen review panels is directed at improving how our child welfare system and the community respond to protect these children and support their families and how we, as a community, can improve our efforts to prevent child maltreatment.

The establishment of citizen review panels for all state Child Protective Services (CPS) systems was mandated by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) reauthorization of 1996 for all states receiving a CAPTA grant. Georgia designated three existing committees to serve as CAPTA citizen review panels to fulfill this requirement: Child Protective Services Advisory Committee, Children's Justice Act

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\* This reflects the number of child deaths investigated and substantiated by DFCS in 2007, however, the actual number may be higher. In 2006, although DFCS reported 64 of these deaths, local child fatality review committees determined that 116 fatalities were attributed to child abuse and/or neglect.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services, Protective Services Data System Annual Report 2007

Advisory Committee, and Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel. The purpose of CAPTA citizen review panels is threefold: 1) to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protective service (CPS) agencies; 2) to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the agency's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies in producing the desired child and family outcomes; and 3) to determine whether they (CPS) are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. Each of the three existing panels had a child welfare vision and mission that would support meeting these objectives and satisfy the CAPTA requirement.

The mission of Georgia's CAPTA citizen review panels is to assure that children are protected from maltreatment, and children and families are provided the best possible services within the framework of available resources through:

- Evaluating and assessing the child welfare system
- Promoting quality child protective services practice
- Advocating for the strengthening of resources
- Recommending and advocating for policies and procedures that promote the highest practice standards
- Cross-system problem-solving involving both formal and informal support agencies, groups and individuals

The purpose of these panels is to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that states are meeting their goals of protecting children from child abuse and neglect.

Georgia's Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC) was established originally as an advisory group to the state's Child Protective Services Unit of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). Re-configured in 2006 to serve as a CAPTA citizen review panel, the CPSAC is composed of dynamic and committed individuals with diverse backgrounds, expertise and experience along the full child welfare continuum who have a special interest in the prevention of

child abuse and neglect and whose primary concern is the safety and well-being of Georgia's children and youth.

The Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC) serves a dual role - both as a CAPTA citizen review panel and a multi-disciplinary task force on children's justice. Established as a result of the 2003 CAPTA re-authorization as a condition of the state's Children's Justice Act grant, the CJAAC has an expanded purpose; it is also charged with the review and evaluation of the investigative, administrative and judicial handling of child maltreatment-related cases and making policy and training recommendations for improvement. Its membership is composed of professionals with knowledge and experience relating to the criminal justice system and issues of child physical abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child maltreatment-related fatalities. The task force also provides technical support in the administration of the Children's Justice Act grant, including funding recommendations and administrative oversight.

Georgia's Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP), established in 1990 by state statute, is an appointed body of 17 representatives that oversees the process of reviewing child fatalities, which includes sponsoring multi-disciplinary training of investigative teams, data review and analysis, and making recommendations for prevention. Its mission includes providing high-quality data, training, technical assistance, investigative support services, and resources to prevent and reduce child abuse and fatalities.

The overlapping interests of these three panels address the full child welfare continuum from prevention and investigation to treatment and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect. Each panel has a statewide approach to examining systemic issues that impact the effectiveness of the state's child protection system, and they identify opportunities to reform state systems and improve processes by which Georgia's child welfare system responds to cases of child abuse and neglect.

Activities of the individual panels are detailed in their annual reports. *See Attachments I, II, & III.* The following section highlights recommendations resulting from their activities in 2008.

#### Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

The priorities of the CPSAC focus on the prevention/early intervention end of the child welfare continuum. Recommendations in 2008 include:

- Develop and implement statewide policy to support an effective differential response model that is based on recognized best practices
  - Establish minimum standards for community-based resources necessary to support such a system
  - Evaluate outcomes and effectiveness of practice model
- Develop and implement/support a comprehensive child abuse and neglect prevention plan that includes:
  - A common “prevention” language that addresses prevention along the full child welfare continuum
  - An assessment of Georgia’s current prevention assets
  - Resource development and technical assistance for local, regional and statewide efforts
  - Assignment of responsibility for facilitating the development, promotion, monitoring and evaluation of such a plan

#### Children’s Justice Act Advisory Committee

The CJAAC continues to place a high priority on supporting activities and practices that specifically address the handling of cases of child sexual abuse as well as the multi-disciplinary cross-training of child welfare professionals. Recommendations support these priorities:

- Continued support of training priorities:
  - Legal training for caseworkers to improve adjudicated outcomes
  - Training for Special Assistants to the Attorney General (SAAG)



- Pre-appointment training for Guardians ad litem (*meeting CAPTA requirement*)
- Specialized training for law enforcement in de-escalating family crisis situations
- Multi-disciplinary training in the investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse
- Continued support of internship programs in the fields of child welfare and child advocacy
- Continued support and expansion of child fatality investigation teams
- Improved alignment of training for professionals involved in the screening, investigation, treatment and prosecution of cases involving child sexual abuse (*on-going 2009 activity*)

#### Child Fatality Review Panel

Recommendations from the Child Fatality Review Panel and its CAPTA committee in 2008 include:

- Mandatory interview of surviving siblings in cases where there has been a suspicious child death to determine whether or not children should remain in the home
- Expand Safe Haven law to include abandonment of infants up to 90 days old, and anonymity for mother
- Vital Records to provide monthly death certificate reports to facilitate the timely review of child deaths
- Expand training to improve death scene investigations in cases of child fatality
- More timely autopsy results in cases of suspicious child deaths

The panels recognize that the state is already making progress in addressing several of their recommendations and request that the state continue to provide an independent project coordinator to support their activities and facilitate ongoing development of the citizen review panel program.

Georgia has made progress in recent years to change its culture to reduce caseloads, improve systems for supporting families in crisis, reduce the number of children taken into foster care, and identify permanency solutions in shorter times for children who cannot return home. Most significant among the cultural changes happening in the child welfare system is the move toward more open communication, consultation, and collaboration with its partners. Georgia's citizen review panels look forward to improving transparency through open dialogue with Georgia Division of Family and Children Services and improving community involvement in the response to children in need and families in crisis.

*Respectfully submitted,*

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee

Child Fatality Review Panel

## Attachments



# Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

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## Annual Report 2008

### Vision

Every child will live in a safe and nurturing home and, every family will have the community-based supports and services they need to provide safe and nurturing homes for their children.

### Mission Statement

To work in partnership with Georgia's child welfare system to ensure that every effort is made to preserve, support and strengthen families and, when intervention is necessary to ensure the safety of children, that they and their families are treated with dignity, respect and care.

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*Never doubt that a small, dedicated group of citizens can make a difference. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has...*

*~Margaret Mead*

Georgia's Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC), one of three citizen review panels, was established in 2000 in response to Section 106 of CAPTA Title I to solicit input from citizens regarding the activities of the state's Child Protective Services Unit of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services (the Division). The other two panels are the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee and the Child Fatality Review Panel. The purpose of CAPTA citizen review panels is threefold: 1) to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protective service (CPS) agencies; 2) to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the agency's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies in producing the desired child and family outcomes; and 3) to determine whether they (CPS) are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Division, committed to providing ongoing administrative and organizational support, has engaged an external, independent Project Coordinator to serve as a dedicated liaison between the panels and the child

welfare agency to facilitate communication, coordinate resources, and ensure continuity of support for panel activities.

CPSAC is composed of dynamic and committed individuals with diverse backgrounds, expertise and experience along the full child welfare continuum who have a special interest in the prevention of child abuse and neglect and whose primary concern is the safety and well-being of Georgia's children and youth. While core membership was stable in 2008, efforts continue to expand the base to incorporate additional child welfare disciplines and consumers and to improve engagement of members. (*See Appendix A for list of members.*) Representatives from CPSAC serve on a joint CAPTA panel steering committee with members from the other two panels. This provides an opportunity for inter-panel collaboration to identify shared goals, support collective objectives and coordinate activities and planning with Georgia's child welfare agency.

In 2008, members met bi-monthly, exceeding the federally-mandated CAPTA quarterly meeting requirements. Subcommittees met or communicated between meetings, as needed.

A CPSAC representative attended the national citizen review panel conference in May 2008. In addition to networking opportunities, participation in the national conference provided additional insight into the purpose of CAPTA citizen review panels, a better understanding of the role of panels on both a local and national level, and the potential contribution of panels to the child welfare system. Following the conference, participants shared findings and provided recommendations to the panel to help shape the committee's work.

Georgia's second federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) was conducted in 2007. Several panel members who participated in the state's self-assessment component of the review continue to serve on Georgia's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) work groups established to address areas identified as needing improvement. In addition to improving specific child welfare practices, the role of these work groups is to help ensure that the state's PIP objectives are met. Panel member participation allows CPSAC members to be kept abreast of developments in those areas where the panel has particular interest, such as risk assessment and family-centered practice.

CPSAC members also participated in a formal review of the new caseworker training curriculum and provided feedback on revised CPS intake policy (FEB 2008).

During 2008, CPSAC decided to concentrate their efforts in two key areas:

- Review of Georgia's differential response system
- Feasibility of a statewide child abuse prevention plan

#### Georgia's Differential Response System – Family Support (formerly known as Diversion)

In 2007, panel members raised concerns with respect to the handling of reports referred for “Diversion” and established a subcommittee in 2008 to examine Georgia's differential response system to gain a better understanding of the practice and its potential impact on families and children. Differential response is a practice that allows for more than one method of response to reports of child abuse and neglect, recognizing variation in the nature of reports and the value of an alternative to investigation when risk is low. The subcommittee reviewed child abuse report statistics, several local differential response protocols and supplementary documentation provided by the Division including:

- Alternative/Differential Response (Diversion) Analysis - DFCS Policy Planning & Practice Development Unit, FEB2008
- Diversion, Executive Summary (Undated)
- Diversion Best Practice Proposal, OCT2006

Analysis of Georgia's child maltreatment statistics reveals a decline in reports from FY2007 to FY2008 of 5%. A comparable decrease was also seen from FY2006 to FY2007. Reports referred for investigation have steadily declined from a high in 2006 of 66% to 38% in 2008, with a 34% decrease from 2007 to 2008. Of reports that were investigated, the proportion that was substantiated and opened fell from 15% in 2006 to 11% in 2008 numbering fewer than 9,400 cases. However, the marked decline in unsubstantiated and closed cases appears to have a direct correlation to the increase in cases referred for “Diversion” which rose by 44% from 2007 to 2008.

Although not meeting the criteria for investigation, these 39,744 reports were considered at

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*Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Citizen Review Panels*

sufficient risk for child abuse and/or neglect to warrant a referral to “Diversion” for follow-up and community supports and services. In addition, a 43% decrease in unsubstantiated closed investigations suggests the potential for additional referrals to Family Support as the result of any improvement in the intake process and their subsequent referral for community-based supports.

<b>Child Protective Services: Reports of Child Maltreatment</b>							
	<b>FY2006</b>		<b>FY2007</b>		<b>FY2008</b>		<b>% Change FY06 - FY08</b>
<b>Disposition</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Substantiated Open	14,432	15	12,059	13	9,388	11	- 35
Substantiated Closed	11,137	12	9,721	11	7,175	8	-36
Unsubstantiated Open	1,271	1	1,545	2	1,202	1	-5
Unsubstantiated Closed	36,988	38	26,826	29	15,295	17	-59
Total Cases Investigated	63,828	66	50,151	54	33,060	38	-48
Screened Out	15,187	16	14,402	16	15,088	17	---
<b>Family Support/Diversion</b>	<b>17,496</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27,632</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39,744</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>+127</b>
Total Reports	96,511	100	92,185	100	87,892	100	-9

*Source: Georgia DHR DFCS, Child Protective Services Data System*

Georgia’s Family Support practices are ultimately determined at the local level, where county departments interpret broad state or regional guidelines. While the state guidelines are based in sound principles and allow for flexibility, review of regional and local protocols by panel members and anecdotal reports revealed some inconsistencies in practice and decision-making related to disposition of reports referred for Family Support from county to county, raising concerns with respect to the following:

- Process for approving referral of reports to Family Support
- Decision-making process for families with previous reports and/or substantiated cases
- Tracking/monitoring of CPS involvement in other counties and subsequent reports
- Response time for cases referred to Family Support
- Type of contact required in response to report
- Follow-up on family utilization of resources and documentation of family engagement
- Guidelines for staffing



- Training of new caseworkers

Ultimately, the subcommittee felt that differences in local practices and resource availability could potentially impact the safety of children and reduce the overall effectiveness of differential response. A review of literature on best practices (Child Welfare Information Gateway), practice models implemented in other states and lessons learned in other states (National Study on Differential Response in Child Welfare, November 2006) indicated that the most effective differential response systems are supported by comprehensive child protective services policy. The panel concluded that an effective differential response system should include the following core elements:

- Clear, concise policy
- Consistent implementation of an effective practice model
- A standard assessment tool
- Clearly defined screening/exclusionary criteria
- Guidelines for minimum standards for community-based resources to support referrals
- Systematic tracking and monitoring of family engagement and outcomes
- Training for new caseworkers and appropriate staffing guidelines

The panel feels that reports referred for differential response is such a significant percent of all reports made that a formal statewide policy to ensure that the differential response system is sufficiently comprehensive to guarantee the safety of the children in these families is warranted. It is the opinion of the subcommittee that a clearly defined policy and adequate and equitable access to necessary community-based resources are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of Georgia's alternative response system as an early intervention strategy.

**CPSAC Recommendations:**

- *Develop a statewide policy to support Georgia's differential response system*
- *Design and implement a best practice model based on national standards for differential response*
- *Assess and establish minimum standards/guidelines for community-based service array*
- *Evaluate outcomes including the impact of resource access, availability and utilization*

### Child Abuse Prevention Plan

In 2006, CPSAC identified the importance of a statewide, coordinated, and comprehensive child abuse prevention plan. The panel reiterated their commitment to the collaborative development of a statewide plan in 2007, and a prevention subcommittee was formed. The prevention subcommittee undertook a review of previous Georgia prevention plan efforts and statewide prevention plans implemented in other states. The goal was to identify an appropriate framework for developing such a plan, including an assessment of local, county and state assets and resources; identification of effective prevention strategies and promising or proven practice models or initiatives; and state and community-based services and supports necessary to the success of the plan.

The subcommittee's research revealed that over the years, there have been many prevention-driven initiatives by a variety of agencies and groups and several "prevention" plans developed that addressed child abuse and neglect. For the most part, these plans, although sound in principle, may have been narrow in scope or application or did not incorporate prevention activities along the full child welfare continuum. In addition, these may lack current research and evidence-based practices. The main failing of these plans tended to be the lack of a coordinated effort by a single oversight body responsible for facilitating statewide implementation, maintaining momentum and monitoring results. The panel feels that a single oversight body is necessary in order to facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of an effective child abuse prevention plan.

The panel also identified the importance for a common "prevention" language that addresses prevention objectives along the full continuum of child welfare, recognizing that even the meaning of "prevention" can vary, depending on the environment or the stakeholder, potentially creating gaps along the continuum. The panel remains committed to encouraging the Division to facilitate the collaborative development and implementation of a statewide child abuse prevention plan that addresses the full continuum of child welfare.

### **CPSAC Recommendations:**

- ***Develop/clarify a common "prevention" language that addresses prevention along the full child welfare continuum***

- *Conduct an assessment of Georgia's current prevention assets*
- *Develop and implement/support a comprehensive child abuse and neglect prevention plan that includes resource development and technical assistance for local, regional and statewide efforts*
- *Identify and engage an agency, group or individual responsible for facilitating the development, promotion, monitoring and evaluation of such a plan*

CPSAC panel members recognize that the state is planning to address some of these concerns in the upcoming fiscal year. They respectfully request that the Division consider their recommendations, continue to provide them with opportunities to participate in planning, and maintain an open dialogue on these CPSAC priorities in 2009.

#### *Moving Forward...*

In the fall of 2008, panel members participated in the second annual citizen review panel retreat. Key activities at the retreat included strategic planning, identification of CAPTA priorities and CAPTA compliance review, all of which will guide panel activities for 2009. In addition to turning their attention to youth in foster care, intake policy, protocols and practice, and pursuing opportunities to participate in Georgia's case review process, CPSAC will continue to monitor the evolution of the state's differential response system, promote the collaborative development of a comprehensive statewide child abuse prevention plan and revisit its interest from previous years in mandated reporting, including training and evaluation.

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*"It is heartening to see this group come together for a common purpose, putting aside their personal and professional agendas to ensure that children in Georgia are safe, respected and healthy."*

*Liz Ferguson, CPSAC Co-Chair*

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*Thank you to the following agencies who hosted CPSAC meetings in 2008:*

*Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, Inc.*

*Hillside, Inc.*

*CHRIS Kids, Inc.*

**2008 Membership**

Liz Ferguson\*, Co-Chair  
Associate Director of Programs  
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

Sarah O’Leary, Co-Chair  
Public Health Advisor  
Centers for Disease Control

Angie Burda, Program Coordinator  
Clayton County Kinship Care Resource Center

Diane Bellem, Vice President  
Georgia Training Institute, Sheltering Arms Early  
Education & Family Centers

Jana Glass, Community Programs Director  
CHRIS Kids, Inc.

Karl Lehman, Executive Director  
Childkind, Inc.

Amy Leverette, Attorney  
Ocmulgee Circuit

Dee Dee Mize, Executive Director  
Family T.I.E.S., Inc.

Lori Muggridge, Executive Director  
Ocmulgee CASA

Scott Rhoden, Executive Director  
Compassion House

Carole Steele\*, Director of Prevention  
Programs  
Governor's Office for Children and  
Families

Amy Rene\*, Community Services  
Hillside, Inc.

**DHR/DFCS Support and Consultation**

Ann D. Pope, State Director  
Promoting Safe & Stable Families

Deb Farrell, Care Solutions, Inc.  
CAPTA Citizen Review Panel Project  
Coordinator

\* Members of CAPTA Steering Committee

# Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee

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## Annual Report 2008

### Vision

All of Georgia's children will receive the best possible protection from all forms of child abuse and neglect from a system of highly trained professionals, who thoroughly investigate alleged abuse and adequately prosecute those who abuse children, while protecting children from repeat maltreatment.

### Mission Statement

To identify opportunities to reform state systems and improve processes by which Georgia's child welfare system responds to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and child abuse or neglect-related fatalities; and, in collaboration with the state's child protection agency and its external partners, make policy and training recommendations regarding methods to better handle these cases, with the expectation that it will result in reduced trauma to the child victim and the victim's family while ensuring fairness to the accused.

***"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much." Marian Wright Edelman***

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Georgia's Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC) was established in response to the re-authorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) in 2003. The amended Act authorized grants to states to improve the handling of child abuse cases, and more specifically, cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation. As a recipient of a Children's Justice Act grant, Georgia was required to establish and maintain a multi-disciplinary task force on children's justice composed of professionals with knowledge and experience relating to the

criminal justice system and issues of child physical abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child maltreatment-related fatalities. The purpose of the task force is to review and evaluate investigative, administrative and judicial handling of these cases and make policy and training recommendations for improvement. The task force also provides technical support in the administration of the Children's Justice Act grant, including funding recommendations and administrative oversight.

The task force membership includes representatives of the following required disciplines/groups:

- Law enforcement
- Judges & attorneys, civil and criminal, prosecuting and defense
- Child advocates, Guardian ad Litem (GAL), Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Health & mental health professionals
- Child Protective Services representative
- Child disabilities
- Parents, parent groups

*See Appendix A for a list of members.*

During 2008, a concentrated effort was made to recruit new law enforcement representation. Unfortunately, task force efforts were not successful but renewed efforts in 2009 look promising. Guidance from a law enforcement member on the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee is expected help identify and engage a replacement. In 2009, the task force will also need to recruit a replacement for a judge who has retired from the bench. Several recommendations have been received and are under consideration by the task force.

In addition to its required membership, the task force has expanded to include law students interested in child welfare, community-based service providers with expertise in sexual abuse, child victims and child perpetrators, and foster parent advocates. The task force continues ongoing efforts to engage former foster youth and parents.

In addition to serving as a CJA task force, the CJAAC also serves as one of Georgia's three CAPTA citizen review panels (CRP). The other two panels are the Child Protective Services

Advisory Committee and the Child Fatality Review Panel. The purpose of CAPTA citizen review panels is threefold: 1) to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protective service (CPS) agencies; 2) to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the agency's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies in producing the desired child and family outcomes; and 3) to determine whether they (CPS) are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.

Georgia's Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services (the Division), committed to supporting the priorities of the task force, contracted with an independent coordinator to:

- a) Provide administrative oversight and support; ensure the continued development of the task force;
- b) Assist in the identification, recruitment and retention of task force members;
- c) Coordinate inter-panel (CRP) communications;
- d) Promote collaboration between the panels; and
- e) Serve as a liaison between the task force and the Division.

In 2008, task force members met bi-monthly, exceeding the federally-mandated quarterly meeting requirements. Subcommittees met or communicated between meetings, as needed.

Representatives from CJAAC serve on a joint CAPTA panel steering committee with members from the other two panels. This provides an opportunity for inter-panel collaboration to identify shared goals, support collective objectives and coordinate activities and planning with Georgia's child welfare agency. Representatives from the Division also participate on the steering committee as a shared resource among all panels, including the task force.

A task force representative attended the national citizen review panel conference with the CAPTA Project Coordinator in May 2008. In addition to networking opportunities, participation in the national conference provided the task force member with additional insight into the purpose of CAPTA citizen review panels, a better understanding of the role of panels on both a local and national level, including that as a CJA task force, and its opportunities to contribute to

the improvement of the child welfare system. Conference participants included representatives from other states whose task forces also serve a dual role. Following the conference, participants shared findings and provided recommendations to the task force to help shape its work.

Georgia's second federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) was conducted in 2007. Several task force members who participated in the state's self-assessment component of the review continue to serve in 2008 on Georgia's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) work groups established to address areas identified as needing improvement. In addition to improving specific child welfare practices, the role of these work groups is to help ensure that the state's PIP objectives are met. Participation in these work groups allows members to be kept abreast of developments in areas where the task force has a particular interest.

Several task force members also participated in a formal review of the new caseworker training curriculum on child sexual abuse (April/May 2008) and revised CPS intake policy (February 2008) and provided feedback to the Division. Task force members were impressed by the quality and content of the updated curriculum and were able to recommend additional resources to the training unit for consultation on child sexual abuse. The Division's education and training unit continues to solicit and welcome feedback on subsequent updates to its curriculum.

### ***The Task Force at Work in 2008...***

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To support its primary objectives as a task force on children's justice, the CJAAC promotes and supports activities that:

- Build and support a network to promote the best response to child maltreatment
- Strengthen intervention and prosecution in child maltreatment cases
- Promote effective multi-disciplinary approaches to training and education to improve the identification, intervention, and prosecution of child maltreatment
- Encourage advocacy in the field of child welfare
- Reduce trauma to child victims of abuse
- Encourage collaborative efforts between the Georgia's child welfare agency and its external partners



- Support legislative, policy and practice change to improve child abuse prevention and treatment

During 2008, the task force explored several areas of interest, including:

- Reasonable search efforts in permanency cases
- Georgia's CAPTA compliance with regard to the appointment of a Guardian-ad-Litem for every child involved in a deprivation cases
- Opportunities to participate in activities related to Georgia's Program Improvement Plan (PIP)
- Centralized intake of reports of suspected child abuse

In addition, the task force continues to place a high priority on supporting activities and practices that specifically address the handling of cases of child sexual abuse as well as the multi-disciplinary cross-training of child welfare professionals. In 2008, in response to anecdotal reports that stirred their concern, the task force decided to concentrate its efforts on practices and protocols related to child

sexual abuse. Reported inconsistencies in the handling of these cases from reporting to investigation and during disposition across disciplines were troubling. These inconsistencies included mandated reporters experiencing difficulty reporting child-on-child sexual abuse, and inconsistent or lack of core training on child sexual abuse. Initial discussions by the task force suggested that lack of a coordinated multi-disciplinary training effort and lack of core training components may be the root cause of these inconsistencies. As a result, the task force undertook a review of training and education protocols for the many professional disciplines often involved in these cases.

#### 2007 Statistics on Sexual Abuse

3,721 reports

1,424 substantiated

#### Victims of Sexual Abuse

82% are female

32% are ages 13-17

50% are Caucasian

#### Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse

54% are related to the victim

Source: DHR DFCS Protective Services Data System Annual Report 2007

Curricula or training components related to child sexual abuse were collected from the following disciplines:

- New caseworkers
- Judges

- Child attorneys/GALs
- CASA
- Law Enforcement
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Mental Health
- Parent Attorneys

An in depth review of the revised Department of Family and Children Services' curriculum on sexual abuse for new caseworkers was completed by a task force member who is a clinical expert in the field of child sexual abuse. Her findings were complimentary of the curriculum noting that it was comprehensive and included current research and best practices. It was recommended that the caseworker curriculum be used as the standard against which other training and education protocols would be evaluated. An evaluation matrix is being designed to facilitate this process. This review was not completed during 2008; it is expected that results and recommendations will be available by the end of 2009.

### ***Children's Justice Act Grant in Action...***

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In 2008, the task force supported the allocation of the state's CJA grant for the wide variety of activities aimed at the improvement of the investigative, administrative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse. Recommendations were made to:

- Continue the support of several training priorities identified by the Division, including legal services training, SAAG training, and training for crisis and child fatality investigations
- Continue to support task force priorities on multi-disciplinary training on sexual abuse, pre-service training for GALs and summer internships
- Expand to provide additional opportunities to grantees to encourage and support new projects that meet CJA objectives

Following is a summary of grant-funded activities in 2008.

**Finding Words** is a nationally recognized curriculum designed to reduce trauma to child victims of sexual abuse. Developed by the National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse and Corner House Children's Advocacy Center for professionals investigating allegations of child sexual abuse, skills developed in this training translate to improved outcomes in cases involving child victims and children who have witnessed traumatic events. In addition, to improved interview techniques, *Finding Words* improves the competency of the evidence, and preparedness for court testimony.

In 2008, three *Finding Words* trainings, co-sponsored by Georgia's Office of the Child Advocate, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia and the Division of Family and Children Services provided training to 108 professionals involved in child sexual abuse cases. This training was rated as "very effective" in 90-93% of the course evaluation responses.

<b>Trained in 2008</b>	<b>#</b>
Child Protective Service Caseworkers	30
Child Advocates	14
District Attorneys	7
Law Enforcement	48
Other (Includes school social workers, therapists, etc.)	9

*Source: Office of the Child Advocate, December 2008*

**Summer Internship** positions were provided to law students at Mercer University Law School and Emory University School of Law. The former, sponsored by Georgia CASA, provided opportunities for Mercer law students to gain experience in the field of child advocacy at both local CASA sites and the state CASA office. Students at the Emory University School of Law participated in a wide variety of internship opportunities including positions at:

- Supreme Court of Georgia Committee on Justice for Children
- Dekalb County Child Advocacy Center
- Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia
- Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation
- County offices of the Special Assistant to the Attorney General

- Georgia Advocacy Office
- Georgia Office of the Child Advocate
- Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic
- County Juvenile Court Attorney, Guardian ad Litem Division

A four-day, pre-service training for all summer interns was provided by Emory University School of Law. An additional 18 students interested in child welfare advocacy fields also participated in the training prior to their placement in a variety of agencies and courts. Training included presentations by mental health and pediatric specialists, law school faculty, juvenile court judges, child advocate attorneys and former foster children. Evaluation of the comprehensive and intensive pre-service training component indicated a high degree of satisfaction with respect to the diversity, relevance and presentation of materials.

*Four current task members participated in summer internships supported with Children's Justice Act funds. In addition, several former summer interns have gone on to careers in child advocacy and law.*

Exposure to this wide array of child advocacy positions provided opportunities for interns to observe courtroom proceedings, assist in investigations, participate in systemic reviews and conduct research. At the completion of the summer program, evaluations revealed a high degree of satisfaction with their individual experiences, with several intending to pursue careers in child welfare related disciplines. Each student was required to provide a summary of their activities and experiences.

*Summer interns speak about their experiences...*

*JC – "I don't know if my sole career aspiration at this point is to work in child advocacy, but I do know that this summer ensured that I absolutely plan on doing some kind of child advocacy work in whatever capacity I can."*

*LH – "My internship experience has strengthened my desire to pursue a career path that allows me to advocate for children in the care and control of the Department of Family and Children Services either as a Child Advocate or a SAAG. My experiences as an ESCAP summer intern have helped me find my niche."*

*WK – “When I started my internship I knew very little about disability law or mental illness. Working with the advocates, attorneys, and investigators at the GAO helped me better understand the needs of children with disabilities and showed me the impact that I could make in this field.”*

Source: [www.childwelfare.net](http://www.childwelfare.net) – Barton Clinic Internships

**Child Fatality Investigative Team (CFIT)** program provides training to develop and support local teams to investigate suspicious or unexpected child deaths as part of Georgia’s child fatality review process. The multi-disciplinary training provided by the Office of Child Fatality Review (OCFR) is designed to improve the investigative process to ensure the successful identification and prosecution of suspicious child deaths and expand and enhance community resources for the investigation of these deaths.

*In 2008...*

*Child fatality investigative teams operated in 25 Georgia jurisdictions representing 55 counties.*

*New and advanced training was provided to more than 400 individuals.*

Source: Office of Child Fatality Review  
December 2008

In 2008, training was provided to teams in DeKalb, Fulton, Newton, Floyd, Spalding, Bibb, Henry, Decatur, Crawford, Baldwin, Forsyth and Cherokee counties. Evaluation from all 8 sessions indicated strong agreement that the training was helpful and that additional training would be welcome. The two new teams established in 2008 were from Towaliga and Paulding circuits. Coweta County is planning to establish a CFIT in 2009. Additional technical assistance was provided to teams in Cherokee, Floyd, and Carroll counties at their request.

In addition to training for child fatality investigative and review team members, OFCR staff collaborated with several agencies including the Division, Georgia Bureau of Investigations and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, in trainings or presentations to individuals from law enforcement on child neglect, crime scene investigations and child victims with special needs. The latter training, involving investigations in instances when children with special needs are victims, included:

- Vulnerability of special needs and medically fragile children in terms of neglect and physical/sexual abuse
- Implications of children's developmental status
- Need for developmentally-appropriate interviews/investigation and follow-up
- Legal requirements under the ADA for these investigations
- Indicators that a victim may be an undiagnosed special needs child
- Susceptibility of medically fragile kids to medical neglect homicides

**Legal Services Training** provided specialized training to Child Protective Services and Foster Care staff to increase their knowledge of the justice system and enhance their skills so that they can utilize and collaborate with the legal system more effectively in their efforts to protect children. The primary objective of the *Basic Legal* training is to provide case managers with basic information on Georgia law concerning the protection and movement to permanency of abused and neglected children through deprivation actions in the juvenile court. Training participants are taught how to prepare their cases for court, which includes, but is not limited to, staffing cases with their attorney, identifying appropriate witnesses, gathering records and understanding the information that is in their records. This preparation enhances their ability to present their cases effectively, which improves judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases.

**Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)**, sponsored by the Georgia Bureau of Investigations, Child Abuse Investigative Support Center, provides specialized training for law enforcement officers in techniques for defusing volatile situations to ensure the appropriate treatment of children with emotional, behavioral and mental health problems in these situations. Law enforcement officers are trained in techniques to de-escalate these situations and to identify individuals best served by treatment rather than incarceration. The CIT program is a tool for ensuring that children with emotional, behavioral or mental health problems receive proper treatment.

~ ~ ~

*Bitter are the tears of a child: Sweeten them. Deep are the thoughts of a child: Quiet them. Sharp is the grief of a child: Take it from him. Soft is the heart of a child: Do not harden it.*

*Pamela Glenconner*

### ***Moving Forward...***

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In the Fall of 2008, task members participated in the second annual citizen review panel retreat. Key activities at the retreat included strategic planning, identification of CAPTA and CJA priorities and a CAPTA compliance review, all of which will direct task force activities in 2009. In addition to completing their review of child sexual abuse training and education, in 2009 the task force will concentrate its efforts on the following objectives and activities:

1. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the State's systems related to the investigative, administrative and judicial handling of child abuse, neglect and exploitation cases and child maltreatment-related fatalities and make training and policy recommendations
  - Design survey instrument (requirement of 2009 Children's Justice Act grant application)
  - Collaborate with the Division to identify common priorities from the results of the survey
  - Revamp process for determining Children's Justice Act funding recommendations to provide opportunities for new and innovative projects
2. Identify inconsistencies in the training of professionals involved in the investigation, treatment and prosecution of cases of child maltreatment, particularly child sexual abuse
  - Develop recommendations on improving the coordination of multi-disciplinary training on child sexual abuse
3. Improve the intake screening of reports of child sexual abuse
  - Explore centralized intake system
  - Review revised intake and investigations policy
  - Review caseworker training with regard to screening of reports
4. Collaborate more effectively and consistently with Georgia's child welfare system
  - Provide input on the development of Georgia's five-year Child and Family Service Plan, CAPTA Plan and Children's Justice Act three-year plan

- Provide input on revised child welfare legislation and policy
- Provide input in the areas of GAL appointments and public disclosure of maltreatment-related child deaths and serious injuries to improve Georgia's CAPTA compliance

The task force had few systemic recommendations stemming from their work in 2008 aside from feedback to the Division on revised training curriculum and intake policy, the Division's continued administrative support with an independent citizen review panel project coordinator, and recommendations on CJA funding allocations that supported their objectives. Other activities were initiated and are expected to result in several recommendations in 2009. The task force respectfully requests that the Division commit to improving transparency through open dialogue on task force priorities and helping to identify opportunities for the task force to contribute to systems improvement.

*"CAPTA citizen review panels provide a great opportunity for stakeholders and other interested citizens to become involved in Georgia's child welfare system and influence decisions that will ultimately better protect our state's most vulnerable citizens."*

*Angela Tanzella  
Co-Chair, Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee,*



### 2008 Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee Members

Angela Tanzela* (Co-Chair)	Director of Advocacy and Program Development, Georgia CASA, Inc.	CASA
Trish McCann (Co-Chair)	Appellate and Juvenile Advocacy Attorney GPDSC	Defense Attorney
Suzanne Lindsey, LPC*	Program Director 1, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases	Mental Health
Jenny Manders, Ph.D.*	Coordinator, Institute on Human Development and Disability, University of Georgia	Children with Disabilities
Melissa Carter	Deputy Director, Office of the Child Advocate	Child Advocate
Karen Sullivan, MD	Fulton County Coroner's Office	Health Professional
Beth Locker, JD	Supreme Court of Georgia Committee on Justice for Children, Administrative Office of the Courts	Attorney
Lisa Ellis	Clinical Supervisor, Morningstar Treatment Services, Inc.	Mental Health
Hon. Billy J. Waters	Civil Court Judge Newton County	Juvenile Court Judge
Kelli James		Law Student and Child Advocate
Cynthia Howell	Executive Director, Georgia Child Advocacy Centers	Child Advocate
Lauren Bowen	Troup County Juvenile Court	Attorney Child Advocate
Lalaine Briones	Prosecuting Attorneys Council of Georgia	Prosecuting Attorney
Ann D. Pope	State Director, Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, DHR/DFCS/CAPTA	Child Protective Services
Vala Peyton	Secretary AFPAG	Foster Parent Advocate
Open Position		Law Enforcement
Deb Farrell	Care Solutions, Inc.	CAPTA Project Coordinator

\* Members of CAPTA Steering Committee



# Child Fatality Review Panel

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## **Georgia CAPTA Citizen Review Panel 2008 Summary Report**

### **History**

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The Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) is a statutory body whose creation was mandated by the Georgia State Legislature in 1990. Since that time, laws governing the membership, organization and functions of the Panel have been amended several times.

The 17 members of the CFRP are set forth in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) § 19-15-4. It is essentially comprised of the agency heads of all state agencies which play a significant role in the health and welfare of the children of the State, as well as representatives of agencies/offices involved in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of criminal offenders. Except for the agency heads listed in the statute, all other members are appointed by the Governor, with the exception of one appointment by the Lt. Governor and one by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

In addition to the Panel members, there is a professional administrative staff assigned to the agency to assist the Panel in carrying out its statutory duties.

The panel and staff review the work of the 159 county Child Fatality Review Committees and make recommendations based upon issues raised by both the local committees and the State Panel after reviewing state-wide trends. *See Appendix A for summary findings on 2006 child deaths.*

While the Georgia statutes set forth the statutory duties of the Panel, there is no provision under Chapter 15 of Title 19 of the O.C.G.A. which mandates that the Panel is one of the three citizen review panels for purposes of the federal Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Nevertheless, the state Department of Human Resources has designated the CFRP as one of the three citizen review panels to review state laws, policies and procedures for compliance with the CAPTA legislation. The other two Georgia citizen review panels are the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC) and the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC).

In the fall of 2007, three members of the CFRP volunteered to serve on a CAPTA steering committee, comprised of members of all three panels. Two CFRP members, Office of Child Fatality Review (OCFR) Executive Director, Eva Pattillo, and District Attorney J. David Miller, attended the Fall 2007 CAPTA Steering Committee Retreat and were made aware of the CFRP's obligations under Georgia's CAPTA plan.

## **2008 Activities**

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The CFRP met quarterly in order to review death reports submitted by the counties and to address compliance issues with certain counties. The private vendor software utilized in the county reporting process proved to be a continuing problem, so much so that the decision was made to migrate to the National Child Fatality Reporting form utilized by over 30 states. The county committees, as well as OCFR staff, look forward to fewer technical problems when the new system is implemented.

In addition to the quarterly half-day meetings of the CFRP, we also met for two days for a retreat at Unicoi State Park in order to take stock as to where we are as a panel, what our goals should be and whether or not we needed to undergo structural changes, as a panel, in order to meet our goals.

One of the most concrete goals which we are able to meet, year in and year out, is the training of local CFRCs. During 2008, 18 trainings were provided around the state at

which 794 local committee members attended. The CFRP training has been a leader in state government in providing training on a very economical basis.

By having only the trainers traveling, instead of requiring our attendees to have to incur hotel expenses, the training can be delivered with substantial cost savings to our county members, including DFACS child protection services staff members.

During the Fall of 2008, at the CAPTA Steering Committee Retreat, Dr. Blake Jones of the University of Kentucky School of Social Work gave an overview of panel operations from a national perspective and offered his suggestions as to how the three panels could become more effective.

At the retreat, the members of the CFRP who were present agreed that it was not practical to expect the 17 members of the CFRP to attend additional meetings to address CAPTA issues. This was in recognition of the history of attendance by CFRP members at our regular quarterly meetings. It is simply an acknowledgement of the reality that, given the nature of the full-time jobs of the people who are statutorily appointed to the CFRP, there will often be times when members simply cannot attend.

While some members appoint designees who are kept well informed, not all designees have authority to speak for their panel members on an issue. The consensus was that we would ask for volunteers who were interested in the CAPTA issues and who would be interested in investing additional time into the program.

Initial members of the CAPTA team will include Lisa Dawson, Nancy Fajman, David Miller, Eva Pattillo, Tom Rawlings, and Velma Tilley. Other CFRP members will be added as they volunteer.

## **Recommendations**

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During the training sessions conducted across the state, numerous recommendations were made by local committees aimed at protecting our children and preventing harm and/or death.

A recommendation specifically appropriate for CAPTA purposes relates to the requirement of “Procedures for immediate steps to be taken to ensure and protect the safety of the abused or neglected child...and ensuring their placement in a safe environment.”

The recommendation is that **surviving sibling interviews should be mandatory to assist in determining whether children should remain in the home.**

It is the experience of many local committees that siblings are often not interviewed regarding deaths of siblings. While the death of a brother or sister is obviously traumatic for a child, they may, in fact, be material witnesses who are in a position to either verify or contradict the statement of custodial adults. Too often in cases of child deaths, both DFACS and law enforcement officers overlook the fact that children are witnesses, too, and often are in position to give information that no one else is able to provide. Failure to interview the siblings can put them at risk.

## **2009 Objectives**

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The CFRP CAPTA committee will choose its CAPTA evaluative topics by the next Steering Committee meeting, presently scheduled for February 11, 2009. When evaluating specific topics, we will utilize the SMART methodology; i.e., issues which we feel are Specific Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited.

During the Steering Committee Retreat, a number of possible issues were ranked by all members in order of importance, including:

1) Improving the intake, assessment, screening and investigation of child abuse and neglect;

(2) Improving the skills, qualifications, and availability of individuals providing services to children and families, and the supervisors of such individuals, through the child protection system, including improvements in the recruiting and retention of caseworkers;

3) Developing and enhancing the capacity of community-based programs to integrate shared leadership strategies between parents and professionals to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect at the neighborhood level;

(4) Developing research-based strategies for training individuals mandated to report child abuse and neglect.

In addition to these possible areas of interest, committee members will review CAPTA requirements and State compliance to identify additional areas of interest.

Respectfully submitted, this 9th day of January, 2009.

J. David Miller

Chairman, CAPTA Committee of CFRP





# **GEORGIA CHILD FATALITY REVIEW PANEL**

**Calendar Year 2006**



Edward Lukemire  
*Chairperson*

Sonny Perdue  
*Governor*

December 2008

# **GEORGIA CHILD FATALITY REVIEW PANEL**

**Annual Report  
Calendar Year 2006**



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## Mission

The Mission of the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel is to provide the highest quality child fatality data, training, technical assistance, investigative support services and resources to any entity dedicated to the well being and safety of children in order to prevent and reduce incidents of child abuse and fatality in the state. This mission is accomplished by promoting more accurate identification and reporting of child fatalities, evaluating the prevalence and circumstances of both child abuse and child fatalities, and developing and monitoring the statewide child injury prevention plan.

## Acknowledgements

The Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel wishes to acknowledge those whose enormous commitment, dedication, and unwavering support to child fatality review have made this report possible. These include:

- All the members who serve on each of the county child fatality review committees
- John Carter, Ph.D. Epidemiology Department of Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health
- Katherine Kahn, MPH, Department of Epidemiology, Evaluation, and Health Information, Georgia Department of Human Resources
- Jimmy Clanton, Graphic Designer, Georgia Division of Public Health, Department of Human Resources
- All the other public and private agencies that have so willingly collaborated with this office and provided support

# GEORGIA CHILD FATALITY REVIEW PANEL

## MEMBERS

Chairperson

**Edward D. Lukemire**

Superior Court Judge, Houston Judicial Circuit

**Mary Burns, M.D.**

Board Chair, Dept. of Human Resources<sup>3</sup>

**Gloria Butler**

Member, Georgia Senate<sup>1</sup>

**Melvin Everson**

Member, Georgia House of Representatives<sup>2</sup>

**Nancy N. Fajman, M.D., Emory School of Medicine**

Child Abuse Prevention Advocate

**S. Elizabeth Ford, M.D.**

Director, Division of Public Health<sup>3</sup>

**Vanita Hullander**

Coroner, Catoosa County

**Vernon M. Keenan, Director**

Georgia Bureau of Investigation<sup>3</sup>

**J. David Miller, District Attorney**

Southern Judicial Circuit

**Tom Rawlings**

Child Advocate for the Protection of Children<sup>3</sup>

**Gwendolyn Skinner**

Director, Division of MHDDAD<sup>3</sup>

**Kris Sperry, M.D.**

Chief Medical Examiner, GBI<sup>3</sup>

**Velma Tilley**

Judge, Bartow County Juvenile Court

**Myra Tolbert**

Board Chair, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council<sup>3</sup>

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**Vacant**

Child Injury Prevention Advocate

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Prevention Specialist

**Wende Parker**

Program Manager

**Malaika Shakir**

Program Manager

The Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel is an appointed body of 17 representatives that oversees the county child fatality review process, reports to the governor annually on the incidence of child deaths, and recommends prevention measures based on the data. Two year appointments are made by the governor except as otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> Appointed by the Lieutenant Governor

<sup>2</sup> Appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives

<sup>3</sup> Ex-Officio



# Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel

**Chairperson:**

**Edward Lukemire**  
Superior Court Judge,  
Houston Judicial Circuit

**Co-Chair:**

**Vanita Hullander**  
Coroner, Catoosa County

**Secretary:**

**Velma Tilley**  
Associate Judge  
Bartow County Juvenile Court

**Members:**

**S. Elizabeth Ford, M.D.**  
Director  
Division of Public Health

**Mary Burns, M.D.**  
Board Chair  
Dept. of Human Resources

**Gloria Butler**  
Member, GA State Senate

**Melvin Everson**  
Member, GA House of  
Representatives

**Nancy Fajman, M.D.**  
Child Abuse Prevention Advocate

**Mark Washington**  
Director, Division of  
Family & Children Services

**Vernon M. Keenan**  
Director  
Georgia Bureau of Investigation

**J. David Miller**  
District Attorney  
Southern Judicial Circuit

**Gwendolyn Skinner**  
Director, Division of  
MHDDAD

**Tom C. Rawlings**  
Director, Child Advocate  
for the Protection of Children

**Kris Sperry, M.D.**  
Chief Medical Examiner,  
Georgia Bureau of Investigation

**Myra Tolbert**  
Board Chair  
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Dear Governor and Members of the Georgia General Assembly:

On behalf of the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel, I am pleased to submit the 2006 Annual Report. As you know, one of the responsibilities of the Panel is to gather from local review committees information concerning child deaths. The Report is a compilation of that data as to the number and manner of child fatalities in this state for the designated period, as well as assessments regarding preventability. Also included are suggestions for prevention in each fatality category reviewed. We hope this Report will assist you as you seek to protect Georgia's children.

As always, we appreciate your efforts and your leadership in this very difficult task. You enable this Panel, local review committees and numerous participating agencies to continue the fight. Thank-you for that.

Sincerely,

Edward D. Lukemire

Chairperson, Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission.....	2
Members .....	3
Message from the Chair .....	4
List of Figures and Tables.....	6
Preface.....	8
Executive Summary .....	9
Accomplishments and Recommendations .....	11
Information and Inconsistencies .....	12
Child Fatality Investigation Program.....	13
Prevention .....	14
Child Deaths in Georgia.....	15
• Summary of All Child Deaths.....	16
• All 2006 Reviewed Deaths .....	17
• All Reviewed Medical .....	18
• Preventability .....	19
• Child Abuse and Neglect .....	21
• Prior Agency Involvement .....	25
• Sleep-Related Infant Deaths .....	26
SIDS and SUID.....	27
Asphyxia .....	31
• Unintentional Injury-Related Deaths .....	33
Motor Vehicle-Related.....	34
Drowning .....	38
Fire-Related .....	41
Asphyxia .....	44
• Intentional Injury-Related Deaths.....	45
Homicides .....	45
Suicides.....	49
• Firearm-Related Deaths .....	52
Race, Ethnicity and Disproportionate Deaths.....	55
History of Child Fatality Review .....	57
Appendices.....	59



## List of Figures and Tables

1. Preventability as Determined by Committees, 2006 Deaths
2. Deaths to Children Under Age 18 in Georgia - All Causes Based on Death Certificate, 2006
3. All Child Death Rates per 100,000 Children Age 0-17 by Race/Gender Categories, 2006
4. Leading Categories of Death by Age Group, Georgia, 2006
5. Causes of Death, All Reviewed Infant/Child Deaths, Georgia, 2006
6. Medical Deaths Reviewed by Review Criteria, 2006
7. Preventability, All Reviewed Infant/Child Deaths, Georgia, 2006
8. Preventability, All Causes, 2006
9. Preventability by Cause, Reviewed Deaths, 2006
10. Reviewed Deaths with Abuse/Neglect Findings, by Age, 2006
11. Causes of Death Among Reviewed Deaths with Abuse/Neglect Findings, 2006
12. Relationship of Perpetrator to Decedent in Reviewed Deaths with Abuse/Neglect Findings, 2006
13. Proportion of Deaths (NO Abuse/Neglect Identified) with Prior Agency Involvement, 2006
14. Proportion of Deaths (Abuse/Neglect Identified) with Prior Agency Involvement, 2006
15. Reviewed SIDS/SUID Deaths by Age in Months, 2006
16. Sleeping Position of Infants who Died of SIDS, 2006
17. Sleeping Position of Infants who Died of SUID, 2006
18. Location where Found for Infants who Died of SIDS, 2006
19. Location where Found for Infants who Died of SUID, 2006
20. Place of Death for Infants who Died of SIDS/SUID, 2006
21. Race/Gender Distribution of Reviewed SIDS and SUID Deaths, 2006
22. Reviewed Sleep-Related Infant Asphyxia Deaths, by Month of Age, 2006
23. Number of People Sleeping with Infant at Time of Death, 2006
24. Reviewed Unintentional Injury-Related Deaths by Cause, 2006
25. Reviewed Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths by Age, 2006
26. Reviewed Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths by Restraint Use and Age, 2006
27. Reviewed Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths by Race, Gender and Proportion, 2006
28. Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths by Position at Time of Injury, 2006
29. Reviewed Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths Involving Pedestrian Decedents by Age and Proportion, 2006
30. Motor Vehicle-Related Death Rates per 100,000 Teens Age 15-17, Three-Year Moving Average, 1994-2006
31. Reviewed Drowning Deaths by Age, 2006
32. Reviewed Drowning Deaths by Race, Gender and Proportion, 2006
33. Reviewed Deaths Due to Drowning in Natural Bodies of Water and Private Swimming Pools by Month of Occurrence, 2006
34. Drowning Death Rates per 100,000 Children Age 0-17, Three-Year Moving Average, 1994-2006
35. Reviewed Fire-Related Deaths by Age, 2006
36. Reviewed Fire-Related Deaths by Race, Gender and Proportion, 2006
37. Reviewed Fire-Related Deaths by Adequate Supervision and Proportion, 2006
38. Fire-Related Death Rates per 100,000 Children Age 0-17, Three-Year Moving Average, 1994-2006
39. Reviewed Asphyxia by Cause, 2006
40. Reviewed Homicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury, 2006
41. Reviewed Homicide Deaths by Age, 2006
42. Race/Gender Proportion for Reviewed Homicide Deaths, 2006
43. Number of Infant Homicide Deaths with Perpetrator Identified, 2006
44. Number of 1-4 year old Homicide Deaths with Perpetrator Identified, 2006
45. Number of 15-17 year old Homicide Deaths with Perpetrator Identified, 2006
46. Reviewed Suicide Deaths by Method of Death, 2006
47. Reviewed Suicide Deaths by Age, 2006
48. Race/Gender Proportion for Reviewed Suicide Deaths, 2006
49. Number of Reviewed Suicide Deaths with Risk Factors Identified, 2006
50. Reviewed Firearm-Related Deaths by Race and Age, 2006

- 
51. Reviewed Firearm-Related Deaths by Intent, 2006
  52. Reviewed Firearm-Related Deaths, Based on Location, 2006
  53. Reviewed Firearm-Related Deaths by Type of Firearm, 2006
  54. Deaths to Infants and Percent of Population in Georgia by Race and Gender, 2006 (Based on Death Certificates)
  55. Deaths to Children 1-17 and Percent of Population in Georgia by Race and Gender, 2006 (Based on Death Certificates)
  56. Hispanic Deaths by Age and Gender, 2006

## **Appendices**

- A. Criteria for Child Death Reviews in Georgia
- B. Child Fatality Review Timeframes and Responsibilities
- C.1 Total Child Fatalities Based on Death Certificate, 2006
- C.2 Total Reviewed Child Fatalities, 2006
- C.3 Reviewed Child Fatalities with Abuse/Neglect Findings, 2006
- C.4.A / C.4.B Preventability for Reviewed Deaths with Suspected or Confirmed Abuse or Neglect, 2006
- D. Number of Reviewable Deaths, 2006
- E. Child Fatality Reviews, By County, By Age Groups, 2006
- F. Glossary of Terms



## Preface

An uncertain future awaits Georgians in these difficult economic times. There are constant news reports on job losses, personal savings losses, and budget cuts to public programs, in our state, and across the country. There is speculation that the current economic crisis could mirror the recession of the early 1980s. During that time, spending on children's programs suffered the most, with a 5.2% decrease in real total social welfare spending. Spending on children's programs has only slightly increased since that time, although the states have enjoyed several periods of growth and expansion.

States have primary oversight for children's welfare programs, not the federal government, which tends to make these programs more vulnerable to economic downturns. In a lean economy, many state program budgets are cut, leading to a greater number of children living in poverty. Spending on children's preventive health care, including health insurance, is frequently subjected to the instability of state budgets. Recent "across-the-board" funding cuts to critical safety net programs could lead to an increase in the number of children lacking the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and preventive health care. While poverty and unemployment do not cause child maltreatment or neglect, the stress of living day to day under these conditions are risk factors for unhealthy pregnancies in women and for families not properly caring for their children. These are the times when children and families need more assistance, not less.

With so many families struggling just to provide food and keep their homes, how can we keep our focus on improving injury prevention and reducing child fatalities? A majority of child deaths in Georgia are the result of medical conditions. It is crucial to understand how to better protect children from preventable medical deaths while they go without medical coverage. A significant percentage of deaths occur among infants, so we must focus more of our attention on providing early and regular prenatal education to women, especially those who have difficulty accessing health care. We must also turn our attention to those direct service providers who work with pregnant women and families to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to continue delivering quality services in the community.

This year, the Office of Child Fatality Review has made significant changes to its structure in an effort to better serve the state. Through the addition of a Prevention Specialist, OCFR strengthens its efforts to provide dedicated support and guidance to communities developing local child fatality prevention projects. The merger of OCFR with the Office of the Child Advocate will facilitate a greater focus on research and program evaluation. A renewed sense of purpose among the CFR Panel brings a collaborative energy to the work of prevention. New partnerships with state and county-level agencies allow for OCFR to better understand the needs of families and children, and for communities to get more involved in the work of child fatality prevention.

It is not easy to find good news in this economic crisis about the future of children and families in Georgia, but we must persevere. These difficult times will bring out the best in all of us. The challenges that our state is facing will serve as a catalyst for people to get involved with the improvement of their communities – especially those who might not have considered the possibility before. OCFR strives to improve data collection, identify gaps in service, and train local committees on death scene investigation and fatality response. We are finding ways to work together and share our limited resources, creatively building bridges and strengthening partnerships. Individuals are motivated to help, and OCFR is working with many other agencies and organizations to provide outlets for interested communities and individuals to get involved. This economic crisis will make all of us stronger and more efficient as we protect the lives of children and families across Georgia.

## Executive Summary

The Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (Panel) publishes an annual report chronicling the tragic, preventable deaths of children in Georgia. Child deaths are identified through death certificate data provided by the Office of Vital Records within the Division of Public Health. Local child fatality review committees review only those deaths that are sudden, unexpected, or unexplained (“eligible”), and complete a standardized form detailing the circumstances of the deaths. That information is compiled and used in the Panel’s report. The Panel is charged with tracking the numbers and causes of child deaths as well as identifying and recommending prevention strategies that could reduce the number of child deaths.

This year, the Panel is providing a report detailing the circumstances of child deaths occurring in 2006. Considering aggregated child death data year to year is useful in revealing recurring patterns and indicating prevention gaps and opportunities. We encourage parents, communities, organizations, and policymakers to use these data to make life-saving decisions for children.

### Key Findings

Adjusted death certificate data from 2006 reported 1,825 child deaths in Georgia, of which 574 were reported as eligible for review. Child fatality review committees reviewed 459 (80%) of those deaths; however, the cause of death listed on death certificates and the cause of death determined by child fatality review committees sometimes differed due to cause of death coding systems for the death certificate data. Because child fatality review committees consider all aspects of the event to determine cause and manner of death, Vital Records sometimes uses the child fatality review data, which is believed to be more reliable, to adjust death certificate data in the state.

### FATAL CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

**Department of Family and Children Services** reported that 64 children in Georgia died as a result of substantiated abuse or neglect in 2006. Those deaths were investigated by DFCS, and did not include deaths that were handled by law enforcement or the courts without DFCS involvement. Thirty-six children died as a result of inadequate supervision or of other forms of parental neglect, and another 28 children died from physical abuse. Of the 64 children, 40 had no current or prior history with Child Protective Services; 24 were from families that had been investigated at some time prior to the child’s death.

**Child fatality review committees** determined that 116 child deaths resulted from both confirmed and suspected abuse/neglect (54 confirmed and 62 suspected). Children under the age of five accounted for 79% (92) of those abuse/neglect related deaths. Perpetrators were identified in 73 of the 116 abuse/neglect related deaths, as well as relationship of the perpetrator to the child. More than one perpetrator was identified in 13 child abuse/neglect deaths. Forty-nine percent (49%) of perpetrators in child abuse/neglect deaths were natural parents. Homicide was the cause of 26 confirmed abuse deaths.

### NATURAL

Death certificate data indicated a total of 1,393 children under the age of 18 died of natural causes (medical or SIDS). Infants accounted for the vast majority (1,115) of those deaths. The leading causes of infant deaths continued to be congenital anomalies, low birth weight, and prematurity. There were 150 SIDS deaths – a 20% increase since 2005 (125).

**Child fatality review committees** reviewed 245 deaths from natural causes (medical or SIDS/SUID). One hundred sixty-three (163) of those deaths were reported as SIDS or SUID. (SUID – Sudden Unexplained Infant Death - is a term used for a death that appears to be SIDS, but has other factors that *could* have contributed to the death.) Committees are required to review all SIDS/SUID deaths, as well as medical deaths that are unexpected or unattended by a physician. Medical deaths reviewed included conditions related to asthma, spinal, or heart-related complications.

### UNKNOWN

Death certificate data listed 51 child deaths that were determined to be of unknown cause. Thirty-one of those deaths were reported among infants. An unknown cause of death is reported on a death certificate when the information reported by the medical history and autopsy cannot conclusively determine what caused the death of the child.

**Child fatality review committees** reported 27 deaths due to unknown causes. Twelve of those deaths occurred among infants. An unknown cause of death is reported by review committees when the information gathered from the scene investigation, family circumstances, medical history and autopsy cannot conclusively determine what caused the death of the child.

## INJURIES

**Death certificate data** listed 381 deaths to have resulted from known injuries, but nine of those deaths listed an unknown intent. Among infant deaths, there were 48 known injury deaths, including deaths from homicides, motor vehicles, and asphyxia. There were 333 deaths in children ages 1 – 17 resulting from injuries, either intentional (inflicted) or unintentional (accidental).

### Unintentional Injuries

**Death certificate data** indicated that 77% (258) of all injuries in the 1 – 17 year age group resulting in death were unintentional (excludes intentional, unknown intent and unknown cause). The three leading single causes of unintentional injury-related deaths in this age group were:

- 147 motor vehicle incidents
- 37 drowning incidents
- 19 fire incidents

There was a one percent decrease in the number of deaths caused by known unintentional injuries to this age group from 261 in 2005. Motor vehicle-related deaths decreased slightly (from 149 in 2005), while fire-related deaths increased (from 13 in 2005). The number of drowning deaths remained the same from 2005.

There were 39 unintentional injury deaths to infants, and one injury death reported as unknown intent.

**Child fatality review committees** reviewed 213 deaths attributed to unintentional injuries among children age 1-17. Child fatality review data agreed with death certificate data on the three leading causes of death related to unintentional injury as seen below:

- 126 motor vehicle incidents
- 35 drowning incidents
- 19 fire incidents

### Intentional Injuries

**Death certificate data** indicated 67 children age 1-17 died from injuries intentionally inflicted by themselves or by others. In 2006, there were 44 homicides and 23 suicides (similar to 2005 data, in which there were 44 homicides and 24 suicides).

There were eight intentional injury deaths among infants.

**Child fatality review committees** reviewed 73 deaths to children age 1-17 from intentional causes – 47 homicides and 26 suicides.

## FIREARM DEATHS

**Death certificate data** indicated firearms were used in 41 child deaths. Twenty-five (25) of those firearm-related deaths were ruled homicides, and eight were suicides. In addition, there were five unintentional firearm-related deaths and three with unknown intent.

**Child fatality review committees** reviewed 38 firearm-related deaths. Eighty-seven percent (33) were intentional (23 homicides and 10 suicides). The type of firearm was identified in 35 of the 38 reviewed firearm-related deaths. Handguns were most frequently used (32 of the 35 deaths where type of firearm was identified).

### PREVENTABILITY

A primary function of the child fatality review process is to identify those deaths believed to be preventable. The issue of preventability was addressed in each of the 594 child deaths reviewed.

Child fatality review committees determined that 80% (476) of the 594 reviewed child deaths with preventability data were definitely or possibly preventable. Of the 116 reviewed abuse/neglect deaths, 112 were determined to be definitely or possibly preventable (97%).

### AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

**Child fatality review committees** reported that in 74 (64%) of the 116 child abuse/neglect related deaths, the child and/or family had prior involvement with at least one state or local agency. Committees are also asked to determine which of the total deaths reviewed with agency involvement could have been prevented and 18 deaths were identified. While not all of those 18 deaths had findings that identified abuse or neglect, eight of the 18 did have an abuse/neglect determination (“confirmed abuse” for four and “suspected neglect” for four).

## Accomplishments, Recommendations, and Goals of the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel 2005-2008

### CFR Accomplishments

1. Continued co-sponsorship of the annual conference on serious injury and child fatality with Department Family Children Services, Office of Child Advocate, and Georgia Bureau of Investigations
2. Initiated legislative recognition of county efforts through “Coroner of the Year”, and “County Committee of the Year” Senate resolutions
3. Published and distributed an updated “Child Fatality Review Policy and Procedures Manual” of best practices, also available online
4. Enhanced fatality surveillance and data collection with an improved online reporting tool
5. Delivered statewide training programs on the State Model Child Abuse Protocol
6. Continued partnerships providing training to committees and assistance to local prevention efforts, which included the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety, Georgia Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Public Health, and GBI
7. Continued support of child fatality investigation teams with a multi-disciplinary approach in a total of 26 judicial circuits

### On-going Legislative Recommendations

1. Require an autopsy, toxicology study, and complete skeletal x-ray (following established pediatric and radiological protocol) for every death of a child under the age of seven with the exception of children who are known to have died of a disease process while attended by a physician
2. In the Child Abuse Protocol annual report, the number of investigations using a multidisciplinary approach should be indicated
3. Expand the safe haven law to include abandonment protections for infants up to 90 days old, and anonymity for the mother

### On-going Agency Recommendations

1. DFCS: The Panel recommends that when a child dies due to parental or caretaker neglect or aggression, the Child Death/Serious Injury Committee be empowered to provide resources and support to counties for bereavement and prevention
2. Public Health: The Panel recommends that Vital Records provide monthly death certificate reports to OCFR to facilitate a timely review of child deaths in each county
3. Coroner and Medical Examiner’s Office: Expand funding for training on improved death scene investigations for any child death that is suspicious, unexpected, and/or unexplained, and timely autopsy reports
4. Department of Education: support infant care training and SIDS risk reduction into middle and high school curricula
5. Mental Health: Redirect a portion of crisis funding for children’s mental health services to devote more resources to preventive care, especially for those identified as “at risk”

### Recommendations That Have Been Implemented Statewide

1. DFCS and Public Health funded an expansion of home-based family support models that promote and enable appropriate parenting skills for prevention of child abuse and neglect (SafeCare and the Integrated Family Support programs)
2. The Legislature adopted national guidelines on pool safety (to require fences and gates in public and private swimming pools statewide) and fire safety (to require smoke detectors in all dwellings)
3. The Panel, with support from the CDC, collaborated with relevant organizations to develop a statewide child abuse/child injury prevention framework, which was presented to the Governor’s Office for consideration
4. Public Health implemented a statewide crib-matching campaign to promote education and training on safe infant sleep environments

## Information Sources and Inconsistencies

This annual report on calendar year 2006 infant and child fatalities in Georgia uses two related but independent sources of data – death certificate (DC) data collected by the Office of Vital Records and prepared by the Health Planning and Assessment Unit (HPAU), and the child fatality review data collected by the Office of Child Fatality Review. These two data sources do not always agree on the cause or manner of death. Child fatality review reports are the primary source of data for this report.

The death certificates provide the ICD-10 coding (International Classification of Diseases, Revision 10) for the cause of death, and are used to identify the set of “reviewable” infant and child deaths. For child fatality review purposes, the relevant ICD-10 codes include deaths due to unknown or undetermined cause, SIDS, and any death due to accident or violence. In addition, a medical examiner, coroner, or CFR committee may also determine that a death should be reviewed because of the circumstances of the death (e.g., the child was not under the care of a physician). Accordingly, the total number of reviewed deaths in a county may exceed the number of deaths identified as “reviewable” based on the death certificate.

Child fatality review reports detail the cause, manner and circumstance of death, supervision at time of death, prior history of abuse or neglect, others identified as causing or contributing to child deaths, and prior agency involvement. Reports also contain information regarding whether a death might have been prevented and what measures might be taken to lessen the likelihood of a similar death occurring in the future.

Although death certificate and child fatality review data do not always agree, the causes of death are generally consistent between the two sources. However, committees often have access to additional information, and may reach a different conclusion regarding the cause and/or manner of death. The system used in the coding of the causes of

death on the death certificate, the ordering of reported codes to select the underlying cause, and the collapse of codes into categories all contribute to error in the classification of the death certificate “cause” of death. One of the values of the CFR process is that it provides a check on the death certificate coding of cause.

The CFR process for the 2006 child deaths was complicated by processing delays experienced in the Vital Records system and data quality issues with the final 2006 death certificate file. The DC file is used to identify deaths that are required to be reviewed, and delays in that identification made it more challenging for the county CFR committees to gather information and conduct the reviews. One hundred fifteen (115) of 574 “reviewable” CY2006 deaths were not reviewed (in contrast, only five were not reviewed in 2004). There were also 43 reviewed deaths that could not be matched to a death certificate. This is a much larger number than usual (compared to 14 in 2004) and may reflect closing the 2006 DC file before all deaths had been entered into the system.

Five hundred fifty-one CFR reports were linked with a death certificate, and the causes of death for each linked pair were compared. The largest mismatch was 101 DC SIDS deaths that were determined by CFR committees to be sudden, unexplained infant deaths (SUID). However, there is no ICD-10 coding for SUID, (the CFR SUID determination indicates that a risk factor, such as bed-sharing and soft bedding, was identified in the documentation examined by the review committee). An additional 68 deaths had other/ different causes of death in the CFR and DC records.

Rates are not calculated for 2006 deaths due to the large number of deaths not reviewed. A rate calculated on the reviewed deaths would be inaccurate and skewed. Therefore, the *proportion* of deaths is presented throughout this report, in order to demonstrate the rate of deaths within the population of all reviewed deaths.



## Georgia Child Fatality Investigation Program

The Georgia Child Fatality Investigation Team (CFIT) Program, administered through the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel, was formed to promote the utilization of best practices in the area of the investigation of suspicious child deaths in Georgia. Recognizing the importance of an immediate and comprehensive response in such cases, experts around the country suggest the utilization of a multi-disciplinary team approach from the inception of such investigations. These teams utilize highly trained representatives from their own district attorney's offices, coroners, and/or medical examiners, local law enforcement agencies, and the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). These teams immediately respond and share information from the moment of notification of the child's death.

In 2006, there were 594 child deaths reviewed by child fatality review committees. Fifty-six of those deaths were determined to be homicides by CFR committees. Therefore, given that on average, at least one child a week is a victim of homicide in Georgia, the need for the best quality in investigations is apparent. The original judicial circuits involved in the pilot program included: Lookout Mountain, Middle, Douglas, Dougherty, Stone Mountain, Eastern, Rome, Northeastern, Alcovy, Southern, and Tifton. The following judicial circuits enrolled in the program between 2004 and 2008: Blue Ridge, Bell-Forsyth, Clarke, Rockdale, Gwinnett, Flint, Cobb, Clayton, Macon, Brunswick, Paulding, and Towaliga.

Beginning in 2006, the program emphasized working with existing teams to revitalize teams that had fallen victim to personnel turnover and attrition. In addition to the beginning training that was initially provided, the program

began to offer an advanced curriculum that included local issues. Each time the training is provided, the discussion is tailored to address problems with current or recent cases occurring within the jurisdiction.

In addition to training team members in 2008 from 14 of the enrolled jurisdictions, child abuse professionals from non-member jurisdictions also received this training under the auspices of the DFCS training program, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center child abuse course and the Building Successful Teams conference. Several jurisdictions availed themselves of the case consultation/assistance available through the program, receiving support in many different phases of child homicide cases, from autopsy to the preparation of criminal indictments. In many cases, the program director was able to serve as a liaison and facilitate dialog between the children's hospital, the medical examiner, DFCS, local law enforcement, and prosecution where communication had not yet been established or had broken down.

In 2007, the CFIT Program expanded to encourage and train jurisdictions to utilize a true multi-disciplinary approach in all child abuse investigations. In 2008, the merger of the Office of Child Fatality Review and the Office of the Child Advocate became an opportunity to expand the scope of the CFIT training program. In 2009, the program looks forward to launching a centralized multi-disciplinary training academy. Local teams will train in groups of three to five jurisdictions to enhance their local protocols, improve efforts as a team, and learn best practices in various areas of child abuse investigations - including sexual and physical abuse, child homicides, and neglect.

## Prevention

Among the 594 deaths that were reviewed in 2006, over 60% of both intentional and unintentional deaths were determined to be “Definitely Preventable” by the CFR committees and an additional 30% were “Possibly Preventable”. The committees reported that 126 (54%) of the 235 “Definitely Preventable” had at least one risk factor identified prior to the death; and there had been some community action prior to the death for 109 (87%) of those 126 deaths.

**Figure 1: Preventability as determined by committees by categories of death, 2006 (N=594)**

	Not at All	Maybe	Definitely
All Reviewed	117 19.7%	241 40.6%	235 39.6%
Unintentional Injuries	13 5.5%	72 30.4%	152 64.1%
Intentional Injuries	6 7.3%	24 29.3%	52 63.4%
Medical/SIDS/SUID/ Unknown	98 35.8%	145 52.9%	31 11.3%

Figure 1 shows preventability of deaths as determined by committees

In response to the high percentage of preventable child deaths each year, the Office of Child Fatality Review recently began an innovative program to support the implementation and maintenance of child fatality prevention programs statewide. While we have consistently encouraged local CFR committees to focus on prevention in their work of reviewing and reporting fatality cases, there was often confusion and uncertainty around the steps required to do so.

In 2007, local CFR committees were asked to develop a specific prevention plan which would be used to drive all child fatality prevention efforts in the county for the upcoming years. Each committee was asked to outline their strategy, define action steps, and identify resources to help them in their objectives. The prevention plans gave OCFR insight into the needs and available resources of

their communities. The project also allowed committees to network with each other and identify ways they could share resources while working toward the same goals. The prevention plans were revised and upgraded during the 2008 training season, and many committees have made significant progress since then.

We know that 30 counties and two judicial circuits want to direct their prevention attention to promoting infant safe sleep and reducing SIDS. Eight counties and two circuits are committed to improving child safety seat use in motor vehicles, while eleven counties, one circuit and one health district are choosing to focus their energies on teen driver safety. A handful of other counties want to focus on other injuries like drowning, gun safety, suicide, and farm injuries. Other issues that have been discussed in CFR prevention plans include newborn abandonment, poor birth outcomes, domestic violence and drug use. It is critical that we also address these types of social and developmental problems, because they can have a detrimental effect on the quality of life within a community, and can be directly linked to many child fatalities each year.

A barrier that is commonly identified in implementing a prevention program is lack of funding for personnel and program materials. OCFR is working to provide these necessary resources by applying for public and private program grants on behalf of the CFR committees. Several committees identified barriers such as a lack of awareness or participation in the community. OCFR is now working to mobilize community groups to provide in-kind support to the fatality prevention efforts, through parent organizations and service clubs. While speculating as to the attitudes of parents and families around the issue of fatality prevention, several committees indicated a need for focus groups to learn directly from parents their attitudes about the issues. OCFR has initiated focus group development in several counties, and is providing support and technical assistance for the data evaluation.

Prevention is an ongoing process, and requires the commitment of many individuals, agencies, and organizations. OCFR will continue to provide the highest quality data, training and technical assistance to all of our partners to achieve a reduction in the number of child deaths each year.

## Child Deaths in Georgia

In 2006, Georgia lost 1,825 children ages birth-17 years to deaths due to medical conditions and intentional or unintentional injuries. The number of child deaths in Georgia has declined over the past few years; however there was a slight increase in 2006. Previous year information indicated the following:

1,794 deaths in 2003  
1,760 deaths in 2004  
1,723 deaths in 2005  
1,825 deaths in 2006

The top three overall causes of death for individuals less than 18 years of age were medical, motor vehicle incidents, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Motor vehicle incidents continued to be the leading cause of death for children 15-17 years, with medical being the highest for all other age categories.

**Figure 2: Deaths to Children Under Age 18 in Georgia, Death Certificate, 2006 (N=1825)**

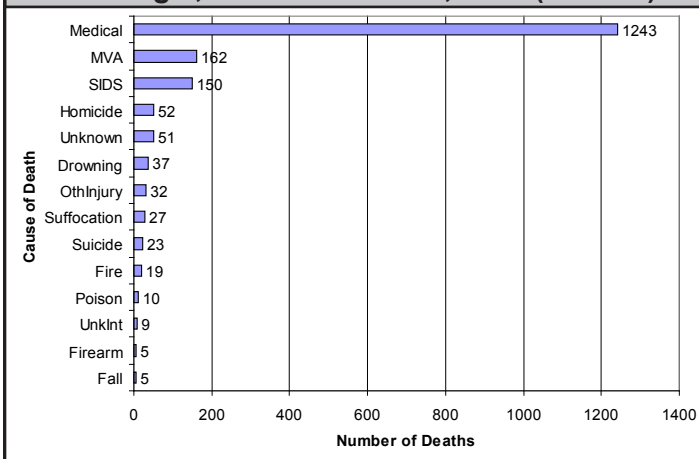


Figure 2 shows all child deaths by cause based on Georgia vital records

### Findings:

- The number of child deaths has increased by six percent since 2005 (1,723)
- Although two-thirds of all child deaths were due to medical causes, infants accounted for 78% of those deaths
- Some examples of infant medical deaths included complications of prematurity, low birth weight, and respiratory distress syndrome
- The second leading cause of death overall was motor vehicle incidents

**Figure 3: All Child Death Rates per 100,000 Children Age 0-17 by Race/Gender Categories, 2006 (N=1825)**

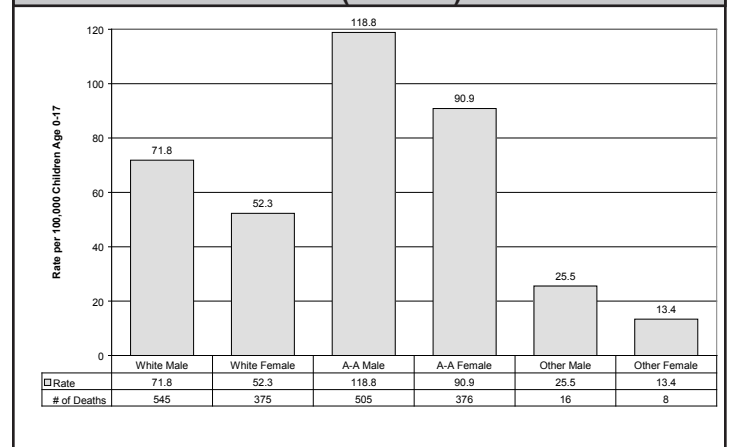


Figure 3 shows the rate and number of child deaths by race and gender groups

### Findings:

- Child deaths occurred disproportionately among African-Americans. The rate for African-American males is 1.7 times higher than that of White males
- Males are more likely to die than females. Within each racial category, the rate for males is higher than that of females
- African-American female death rate is 1.7 times higher than that of White females



**Figure 4: Leading Categories of Death by Age Group, Georgia, 2006**

Age Group in Years						
Rank	<1 1,194 (65.4%)	1-4 193 (10.6%)	5-9 92 (5.0%)	10-14 115 (6.3%)	15-17 231 (12.7%)	All Deaths <18 1,825 (100%)
1	Medical 965 (80.8%)	Medical 92 (47.7%)	Medical 45 (48.9%)	Medical 68 (59.1%)	Unintentional 110 (47.6%)	Medical 1243 (68.1%)
2	SIDS 150 (12.6%)	Unintentional 74 (38.3%)	Unintentional 37 (40.2%)	Unintentional 37 (32.2%)	Medical 73 (31.6%)	Unintentional 297 (16.3%)
3	Unintentional 39 (3.3%)	Intentional 16 (8.3%)	Intentional 4 (4.3%)	Intentional 6 (5.2%)	Intentional 41 (17.7%)	SIDS 150 (8.2%)
4	Unknown 31 (2.6%)	Unknown 10 (5.2%)	Unknown 3 (3.3%) Unknown Intent 3 (3.3%)	Unknown 3 (2.6%)	Unknown 4 (1.7%)	Intentional 75 (4.1%)
5	Intentional 8 (0.7%)	Unknown Intent 1 (0.5%)		Unknown Intent 1 (0.9%)	Unknown Intent 3 (1.3%)	Unknown 51 (2.8%)

Figure 4 shows the five most common categories of death for each age group, as well as the percent of all child deaths occurring within each age group

The total number of child fatalities based on death certificate data provides the following information:

#### *Infants*

- Sixty-six percent of all child deaths were to infants (less than one year old)
- Eighty-one percent of infant deaths were due to medical complications
- The second leading category of death for infants (13%) was SIDS

#### *Ages 1-4 (Early Childhood)*

- Eleven percent of all child deaths occurred to children between the ages of one and four years
- Majority of deaths were due to medical causes including, birth defects, respiratory diseases, and cancer (48%)
- The second leading category of death was due to unintentional injuries such as motor vehicle, drowning, and fire-related (38%)

#### *Ages 5-14 (Middle Childhood)*

- Eleven percent of all child deaths occurred to children between the ages of five and 14 years
- Majority of deaths were due to medical causes (55%) such as asthma and heart complications
- The second leading category of death was due to unintentional injuries such as motor vehicle, drowning, and fire-related (36%)

#### *Ages 15-17 (Later Adolescence)*

- Thirteen percent of all child deaths occurred to older teenagers
- Majority of deaths were related to unintentional injuries such as motor vehicle, drowning, and fire (48%)
- The second leading category of death resulted from medical conditions such as asthma and heart complications (32%)

## All 2006 Reviewed Deaths

A child's death is eligible for review when the death is unexpected, unexplained, suspicious, or attributed to unusual circumstances (for more detail on deaths eligible for review, please see Appendix A). Child medical deaths are deemed reviewable if unexpected, suspicious, or unattended by a physician (i.e., unexpected heart failure). These deaths are reviewed by child fatality review committees which are comprised of local professionals who convene for the purpose of analyzing all circumstances of child deaths. This review process utilizes a multi-faceted approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of each child's death. Child Fatality Review is a critical component for enhancing our ability to galvanize community efforts toward the reduction of preventable child deaths.

In 2006, 574 of the total 1,825 child deaths met the eligibility criteria for review based on death certificate data. Committees submitted reports for 80% (459) of those deaths. Committees reviewed an additional 135 deaths. A total of 594 deaths were reviewed. Complete

data on reviewed child deaths are available in Appendix C.2. The distribution of child deaths in Georgia is generally proportional to the county population.

- There were 12 counties with ten or more reviewable deaths in 2006. Those counties had 49% of the child population and accounted for 45% of all reviewable deaths. Those counties reviewed 77% (201) of their 260 reviewable deaths. They reviewed an additional 65 deaths
- There were 111 counties with less than ten reviewable deaths in 2006. Those counties accounted for 53% of all reviewable deaths and reviewed 82% (258) of their 314 reviewable deaths. They reviewed an additional 67 deaths
- Nine counties did not review any of their reviewable deaths. Of those, seven counties had one reviewable death, and two counties had two reviewable deaths
- Fourteen counties had no child fatalities in 2006, and 22 additional counties had no child fatalities that met criteria for review

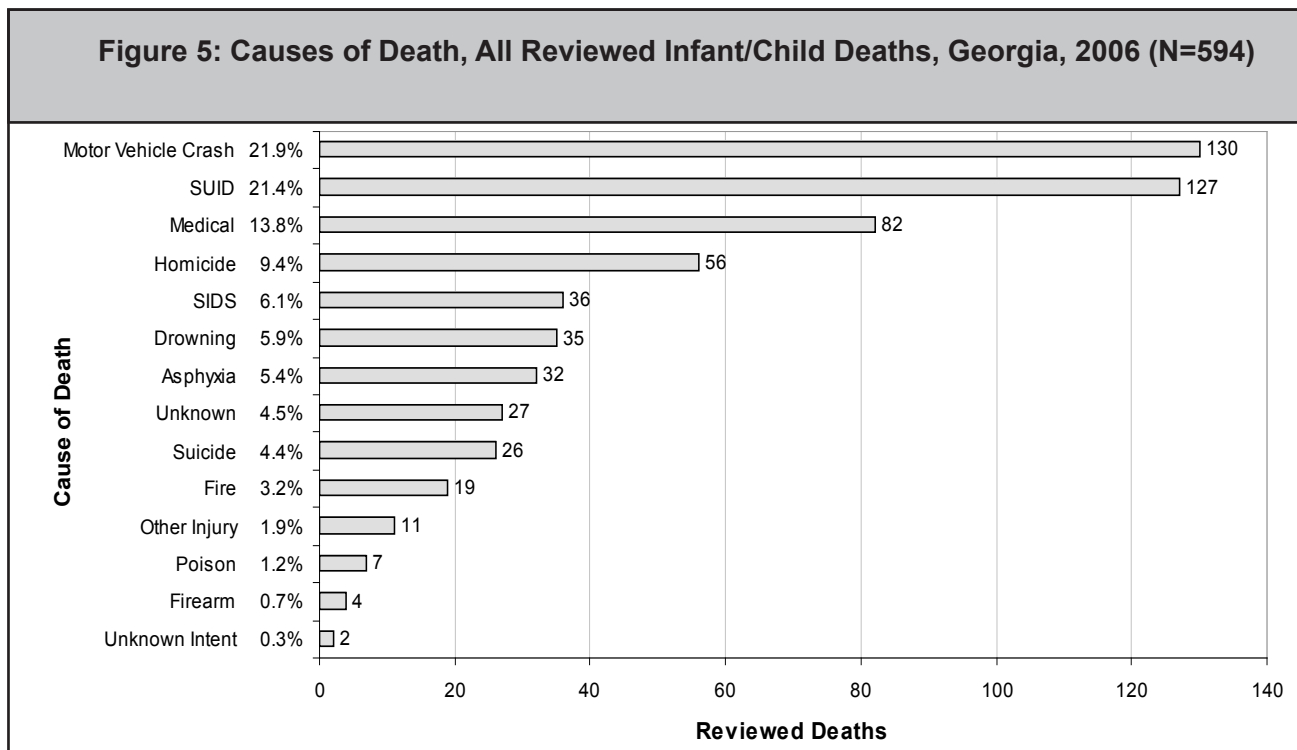


Figure 5 shows the cause of death for all 594 deaths reviewed by the child fatality review committees

### Findings:

- Motor vehicle-related incidents continued to account for the leading cause of reviewed child deaths (22%)
- There was a 63% decrease in the number of SIDS deaths reviewed (from 96 in 2005), and a corresponding increase in the number of SUID deaths. This increase in SUID deaths reviewed is likely due to an enhanced awareness and identification of the risk factors possibly contributing to infant deaths
- Unknown deaths are deaths for which there was no definite cause identified after a review of the scene investigation, clinical history, and/or autopsy findings.
- Other injury includes accidental blunt head trauma, electrocution, lightning, falls, and heat-related deaths

## All Reviewed Medical

Medical deaths are reviewable by child fatality review committees if the death occurs while unattended by a physician, occurs in a suspicious or unusual manner, or is unexpected (for more detail on deaths eligible for review,

please see Appendix A). There were 82 medical deaths reviewed by CFR committees based on these criteria. More than 80% of those children had a pre-existing medical condition, such as asthma, prematurity, spinal and/or heart complications.

**Figure 6: Medical Deaths Reviewed by Review Criteria, (N=82)**

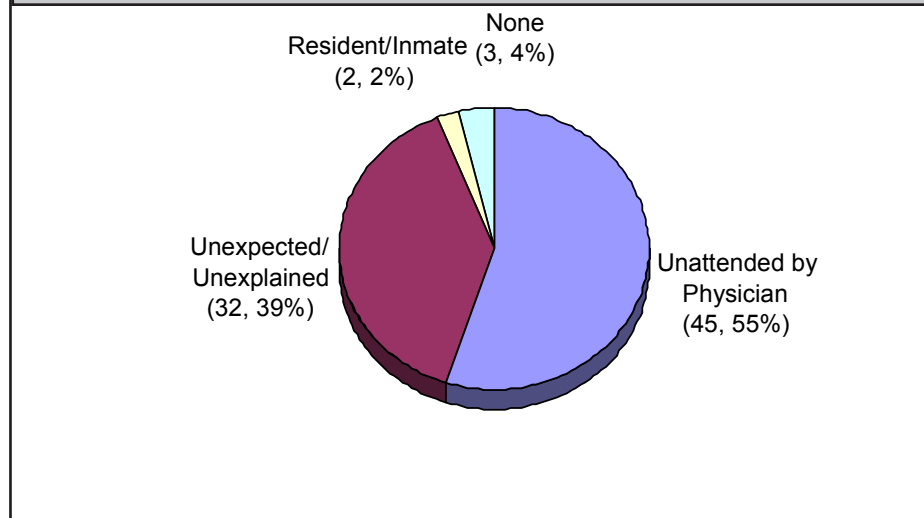


Figure 6 shows medical death reviewed based on criteria for review

### Findings:

- Thirty-two percent of the medical deaths were unexpected or unexplained
- Two decedents (10-14 years of age) were residents of a hospital
- Fifty-five percent of the medical reviewable deaths were unattended by a physician, (i.e., a child experienced death as a result of a medical condition outside of a medical facility/physician's care). Examples included viral and undiagnosed heart conditions

### Facts:

- According to the CDC, asthma is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism
- Based on the *School Health Profiles*, 51% of Georgia schools had one or more groups that guide and provide information for health topics in the school

Child was playing basketball and collapsed due to cardiac arrest

## Opportunities for Prevention:

### For Parents

- Ensure children have regular visits with a health-care provider to check for any illnesses or abnormalities in wellness and development

### For Community Leaders and Policy Makers

- Consider creating a study committee to research improvements to the current school sport physical requirements. Such a committee should evaluate improvement suggestions against funding options and solutions

### For Professionals

- Implementation of trainings to medical staff regarding childhood medical deaths and common conditions which have resulted in death over the past few years

#### Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth)

## Preventability

When CFR committees investigate a child death, they also identify the degree to which that death could have been prevented. They specifically examine the circumstances of the child and the child's family *before* the event, *during* the event, and *immediately after* the event, in an effort to

clearly recognize the level of intervention needed to prevent a similar death in the future. The review committees define "preventability" based on two criteria: if a death is identified through retrospective analysis to be foreseeable, or is the result of an absence of reasonable intervention.

Figure 7: Preventability, All Reviewed Infant/Child Deaths, 2006 (N=593)		
	Number	Percent
Definitely Preventable	235	39.6%
Possibly Preventable	241	40.6%
Not Preventable	117	19.7%

**Figure 7 shows the determination of preventability for all reviewed deaths (one reviewed death did not have preventability determination reported)**

#### Finding:

- As in previous years, 80% of reviewed deaths were reported to be "definitely preventable" or "possibly preventable" by the review committees

#### Fact:

- One study determined that, if all child deaths in the United States were reviewed from a prevention/needs assessment perspective, targeted and data-driven recommendations for prevention could be developed for each community, and potentially 38% of all child deaths that occur after the first month of life could be prevented (Pediatrics, 2002)

**Figure 8: Preventability, Unintentional and Intentional Injuries, 2006 (N=596)**

	Not at All	Possibly	Definitely
Unintentional Injuries	13	72	152
	5.5%	30.4%	64.1%
Intentional Injuries	6	24	52
	7.3%	29.3%	63.4%

Figure 8 shows the committee determination of preventability by intent (one reviewed death did not have preventability determination reported)

**Finding:**

- Among the 594 deaths that were reviewed in 2006, over 60% of both intentional and unintentional deaths were determined to be “Definitely Preventable” by the CFR committees and an additional 30% were “Possibly Preventable”

**Fact:**

- About one third of all unintentional childhood injury deaths in the US are preventable. Among the relevant characteristics: higher education level of parents, lower gun ownership, higher population density that implies shorter distances traveled by cars, a better developed emergency medical system, and the existence of several injury prevention programs (*Injury Prevention, 2004*)

**Figure 9: Preventability by Cause, Reviewed Deaths, 2006 (N=593)**

Cause of Death	Not at All	Possibly	Definitely
Medical	50	29	3
SIDS	19	17	0
SUID	25	78	24
Drowning	4	11	20
Fire	0	4	14
Firearm	1	0	3
Motor Vehicle	5	45	80
Other Injury	2	4	5
Poison	0	0	7
Asphyxia	1	8	23
Homicide	3	8	45
Suicide	3	16	7
Unknown Intent	0	1	1
Unknown	4	20	3

Figure 9 shows the preventability determination for each reviewed cause of death (one reviewed death did not have preventability determination reported)

**Findings:**

- Committees determined that 61% of medical deaths were not at all preventable
- There is inconsistency in the preventability determination for SUID, while SIDS is generally reported as “not preventable”

**Fact:**

- Most unintentional (accidental) and all intentional (inflicted) deaths are often considered to be preventable, using reasonable intervention procedures (e.g. educational, medical, social, behavioral, technological, or legal interventions)

While there are certain circumstances that are unforeseen and not reasonably preventable (i.e. certain medical situations), many injuries that are reviewed by CFR committees should be considered preventable based on the presence of awareness and education messages in the community. It is unlikely that any homicides, suicides, motor vehicle crashes, firearm or drowning deaths would be considered “not at all preventable”.

The committees reported that 126 (54%) of the 235 “Definitely Preventable” deaths had at least one risk factor identified prior to the death. There had been some community action prior to the death for 109 (87%) of those 126 deaths.

## Child Abuse and Neglect

Far too many children suffer at the hands of those entrusted to love, nurture, and care for them. Child abuse and neglect is a devastating epidemic that impacts not only the lives of maltreated children, but of everyone within our society.

According to Child Help USA, 80% of young adults who had been abused met the diagnostic criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder at the age of 21 (including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, & post-traumatic stress disorder). Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime. Fourteen percent of all men in prison and 37% of all women in prison in the United States were abused as children.

### ***What is included in the definition of “abuse and/or neglect”?***

Child maltreatment is defined as any act or failure to act resulting in the imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child (under the age of 18). Fatal child abuse may involve

repeated abuse over a period of time (e.g., battered child syndrome), or it may involve a single, impulsive incident (e.g., suffocating, or shaking an infant). In cases of fatal neglect, the child’s death results not from anything the caregiver does, but from a caregiver’s *failure to act*. The neglect may be chronic (e.g., extended malnourishment) or acute (e.g., an infant who drowns after being left unsupervised in the bathtub).

### ***How does Georgia compare with the U.S. average?***

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in 2006 an estimated 906,000 children were victims of abuse and/or neglect in the U.S. (a rate of 12.3 per 1,000). In Georgia, 22,779 children were victims of abuse and/or neglect (a rate of 9.9 per 1,000). (GA DHR). In 2006, The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) reported an estimated 1,530 child abuse and/or neglect fatalities (a rate of 2.1 per 100,000). In Georgia, DFCS reported 64 child abuse and/or neglect fatalities in 2006 (a rate of 2.8 per 100,000). However, CFR committees identified 116 fatalities with associated abuse and/or neglect (suspected or confirmed).

**Figure 10: Reviewed Deaths with Abuse/Neglect Findings, by Age, 2006 (N=116)**

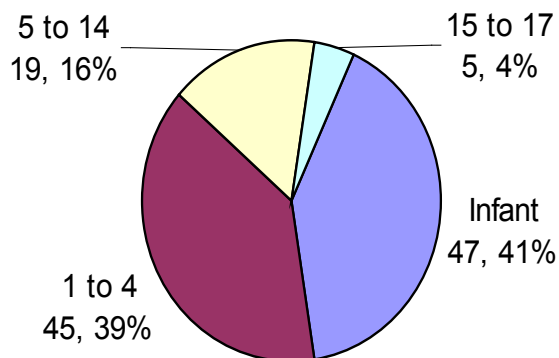


Figure 10 shows the percent of child abuse/neglect deaths for different age groups

**Findings:**

- Pre-school age children under five years of age comprised 80% of all abuse/neglect-related deaths in 2006
- The proportion of child abuse/neglect-related deaths decreased with age

**Fact:**

- Infants and younger children experience more abuse/neglect deaths because of their overall vulnerability and developmental stage, their dependency on caretakers for all personal needs, and their limited contact with mandated reporters

**Figure 11: Causes of Death Among Reviewed Deaths with Abuse/Neglect Findings, 2006, (N=238)**

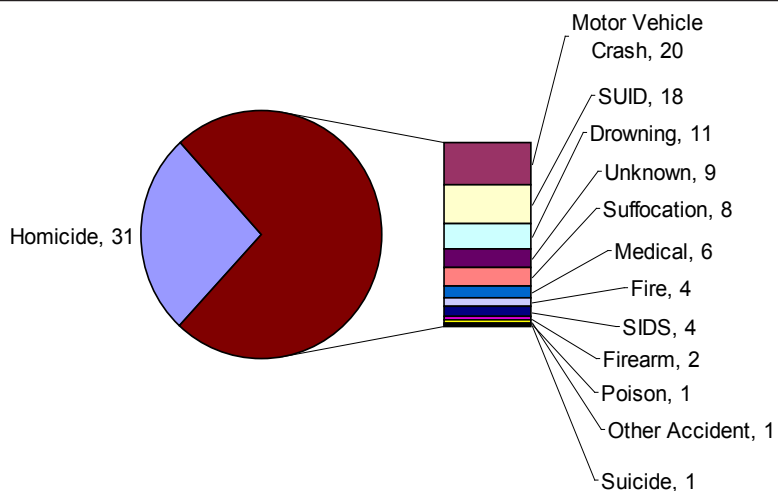


Figure 11 shows the causes of death when child abuse/neglect was suspected or confirmed

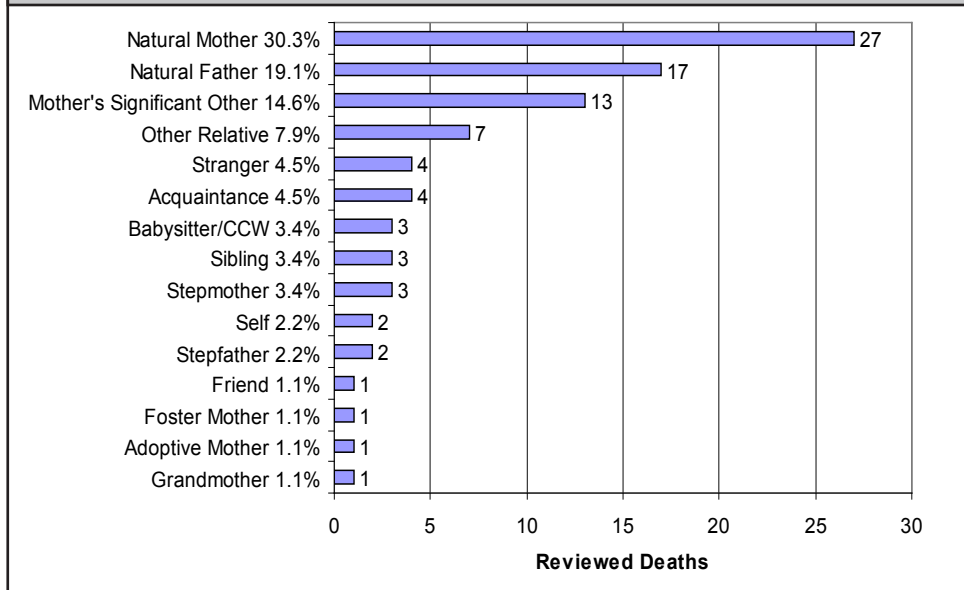
**Findings:**

- Twenty-seven percent of the 116 reviewed deaths with child abuse and neglect findings were homicides
- Total number of reviewed deaths with abuse or neglect findings has steadily declined over recent years from 166 in 2004 to 136 in 2005 to 116 in 2006

**Fact:**

- For infants under the age of one, studies indicate that the most common cause of fatal abuse is blunt head trauma which typically leaves no external signs of injury

**Figure 12: Reviewed Unintentional Injury-Related Deaths by Cause, 2006 (N=238)**



**Figure 12 shows the relationship of the perpetrator to the child in suspected or confirmed child abuse/neglect related deaths. Some child abuse/neglect related deaths involved more than one perpetrator**

#### Findings:

- Mothers represented the largest category of perpetrators (27) while fathers represented the second largest category (17). Mothers and fathers reversed leading roles when compared to 2005 data—fathers represented the largest category (28) while mothers represented (20) the second largest category
- The mother's significant other (e.g. boyfriend or paramour) represented the third largest category of perpetrators
- The "self" category refers to two suicides with abuse/neglect findings

#### Facts:

- A young child left with a male caregiver who lacks emotional attachment to him/her is at increased risk of abuse and/or neglect
- Most fatalities from physical abuse are caused by fathers and other male caretakers
- Mothers are most often held responsible for deaths resulting from child neglect
- Although there are a myriad of contributing risk factors commonly associated with child maltreatment, fatal abuse is interrelated with domestic violence, substance abuse, and poverty

#### Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

The concurrent incidence of domestic violence and child abuse within the same families is well-documented. The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect suggests that domestic violence may be the single major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities in this country (1995). Children from homes where domestic violence occurs are physically or sexually abused and/or seriously neglected at a rate 15 times the national average (McKay, 1994).



## **Alcohol, Substance Abuse, and Child Abuse**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 50 to 80 percent of all child abuse cases substantiated by Child Protective Services (CPS) involve some degree of substance abuse by the child's parents. Children in alcohol-abusing families were nearly four times more likely to be maltreated overall. They were almost five times more likely to be physically neglected and ten times more likely to be emotionally neglected than children in non-alcohol abusing families.

## **Poverty**

The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect conducted by Sedlak & Broadhurst found that family income was significantly related to incidence rates in nearly every category of maltreatment. Children whose families had annual incomes below \$15,000 were more than 22 times more likely to experience maltreatment, more than 44 times more likely to be neglected, and more than 22 times more likely to be seriously injured by maltreatment than families with incomes of \$30,000 or more. A number of problems associated with poverty may contribute to higher child maltreatment, including: transience in residence, poorer education, higher rates of substance abuse and emotional disorders, and less adequate support systems (U.S. Dept Health & Human Sciences).

Victim was killed by mother's boyfriend as a result of blunt force trauma to the head. In addition, there were multiple bruises on the child's body which were consistent with abuse

## **Opportunities for Prevention:**

### *For Parents*

- Participate in classes that teach effective coping strategies, developmental stages of children, and age-appropriate disciplinary practices
- Increase self-awareness to identify personal triggers and child behaviors that elicit anxiety and anger by understanding your individual response to stress
- Seek assistance and guidance from family members, friends, community members, and service providers

### *For Community Leaders and Policy Makers*

- Train hospital emergency room staff in identifying fatalities related to child abuse and responsibility to report to the appropriate agencies
- Provide comprehensive training on the mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect to local human service agencies, hospitals, and physicians
- Develop a networking system with neighborhood associations, community centers, and faith-based centers

### *For Professionals*

- Develop media campaigns to enlighten and inform the general public on known behaviors associated with child fatality, eg., violently shaking a child out of frustration
- Implement crisis nurseries to provide respite care for parents "on the edge" for a specified period of time, at no charge
- Provide intensive home visiting services to parents of at-risk infants and toddlers

### **Resources:**

#### **Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR)**

[www.dhr.georgia.gov](http://www.dhr.georgia.gov)

#### **Prevent Child Abuse Georgia**

[www.preventchildabusega.org](http://www.preventchildabusega.org)

#### **Child Help USA**

[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)

#### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Sciences**

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

## Prior Agency Involvement

Fifty-one percent (301) of the 594 CFR reports received for 2006 indicated that one or more community agencies had prior involvement with the deceased child and/or his/her family. The duration and degree of community agency

involvement varied depending on individual circumstances. Oftentimes, a child or family was involved with more than one agency.

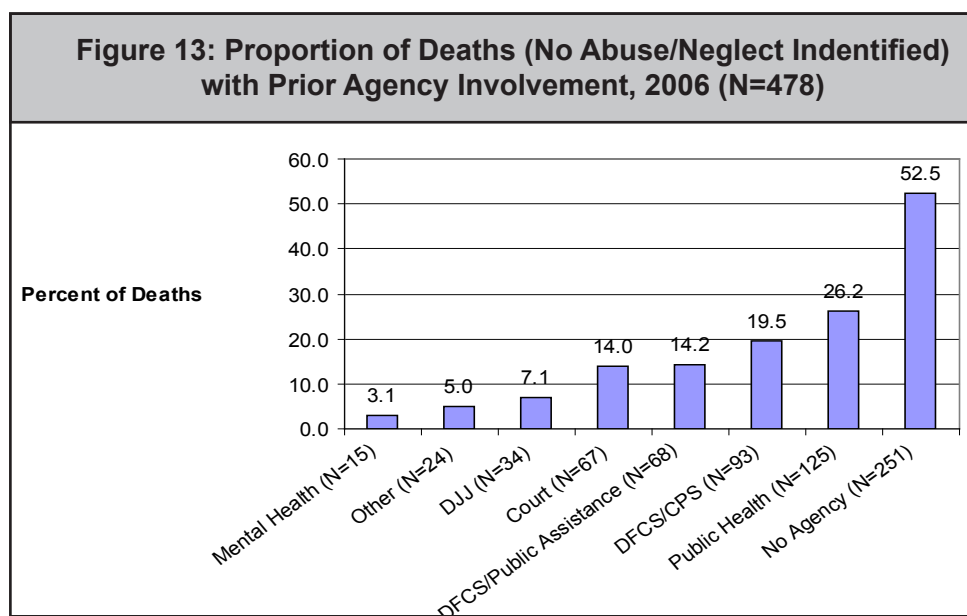


Figure 13 shows prior agency involvement for deceased children and their families without abuse or neglect findings. A significant number of children and/or their families were involved with more than one agency resulting in number of agency involvements exceeding number of deaths.

### Findings:

- Fifty-three percent of deaths without abuse/neglect findings had no prior agency involvement
- Public Health represents the agency most often involved with families (26%) without abuse/neglect findings

### Fact:

- Professionals who work with governmental and other public agencies are mandated to report suspected abuse and/or neglect

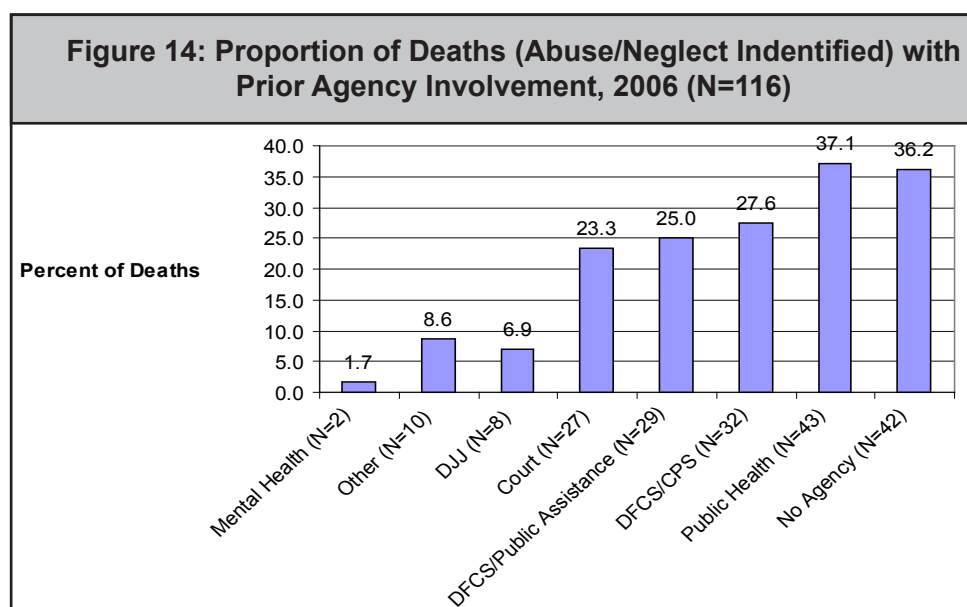


Figure 14 shows prior agency involvement for deceased children and their families with abuse or neglect findings. A significant number of children and/or their families were involved with more than one agency resulting in number of involvements exceeding number of deaths.

**Findings:**

- Sixty-four percent of children with abuse/neglect findings had prior involvement with at least one agency
- Thirty-six percent of children with abuse/neglect findings had no prior agency involvement

**Fact:**

- Mandated reporters are required to have specialized training for accurate identification of risk factors and signs of abuse/neglect

**Opportunities for Prevention:***For community leaders and policy makers*

- Educate the community about the importance of reporting child abuse/neglect
- Increase public awareness regarding the far reaching social and economic impact of child abuse/neglect

*For professionals*

- Participate in trainings, seminars, and workshops to learn how to recognize and report child abuse/neglect
- Collaborate with service providers and community advocates to promote child abuse/neglect reporting

## Sleep-Related Infant Deaths

Sleep-related deaths include all deaths to infants that occur while sleeping, but have no identifiable medical cause. They are the leading cause of reviewed deaths in Georgia for children up to one year of age. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 4,500 infants die each year with no obvious explanation. Almost all of these deaths occur during sleep.

***What is included in the definition of sleep-related infant death?***

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) is defined as the sudden death of an infant less than one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history. Other infant sleep-related deaths are defined as Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID), and appear to be SIDS, but have other factors present that could have contributed to the deaths. Sleep-related deaths may also result from sleep-related asphyxia (extreme decrease of oxygen in the body accompanied by an increase of carbon dioxide). Examples of sleep-related asphyxia include unintentional overlay by another, sleeping with head or face covered, or wedging.

Although many risk factors have been identified in

association with SIDS and other sleep-related deaths, a primary cause has not been determined. Research suggests a complex combination of physiology and environmental stressors that contribute to SIDS. A death should only be determined as SIDS after careful investigation so that all other possibilities can be ruled out. The process is expensive, and many counties do not conduct such thorough investigations.

***How does Georgia compare to the U.S.?***

Sleep-related infant deaths in Georgia are comparable to national data. In the United States, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the most common cause of death in infants between the ages of one month and one year, affecting nearly one out of every 2,000 live births. Most deaths occur between two to four months of age. Consistently higher rates are found in African-American and American Indian/Alaska Native children (two to three times the national average).

The National Centers for Health Statistics in 2005 determined the SIDS mortality rate was roughly one death for every 2,000 live births -- or 0.5 percent (CDC, 2006). In contrast, the infant mortality rate for all causes of death was 6.8 (per 1,000 live births).

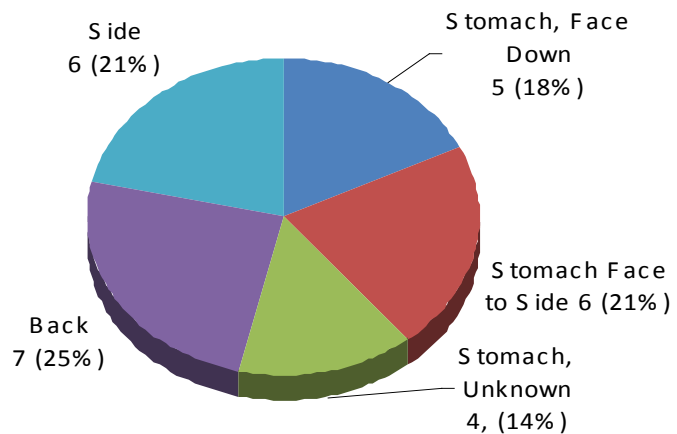
### Findings:

- Sleeping position was known and reported for 116 of those infants who died of SIDS or SUID; position was unknown and/or unreported for 47 of SIDS/SUID infants (29%)
- There were 59 SIDS/SUID deaths where the infants were found laying on their stomachs; in 34 deaths, the infants were found on their backs

### Facts:

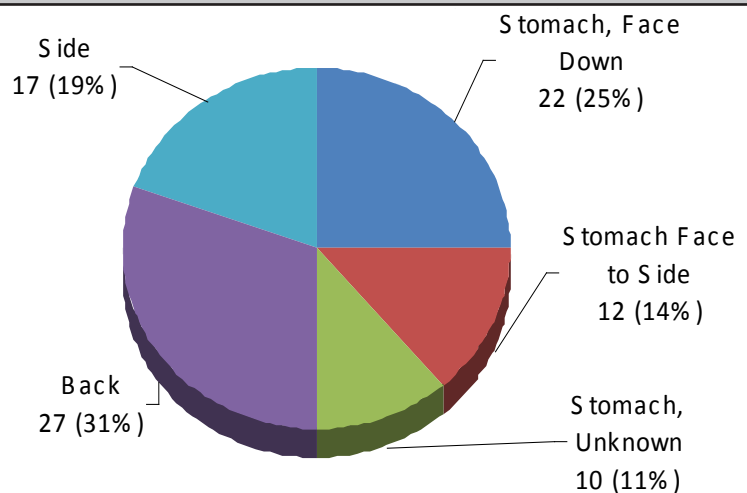
- Infants who are accustomed to sleeping on their backs are 18 times more likely to die from SIDS when put down to sleep on their stomachs
- A recent study in a special supplement to the journal Pediatrics revealed that at three months of age, 25% of parents were still not following recommendations to put their infants to sleep on their backs, and one-third of parents were sharing a bed with their infants at that age, contrary to the NICHD and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines
- Infants who sleep on their stomachs or sides face the biggest danger: They have twice the risk of dying from SIDS as infants who sleep on their backs. When an infant's face is turned toward the bedding, he's in a position to re-breathe the carbon dioxide he exhales, which limits the amount of oxygen he takes in

**Figure 15: Sleeping Position of Infants who Died of Reviewed SIDS, 2006 (N=28)**



**Figure 15 shows the reported sleeping position for those 28 infants who died of SIDS (when known)**

**Figure 16: Sleeping Position of Infants who Died of Reviewed SUID, 2006 (N=88)**



**Figure 16 shows the reported sleeping position for those 88 infants who died of SUID (when known)**

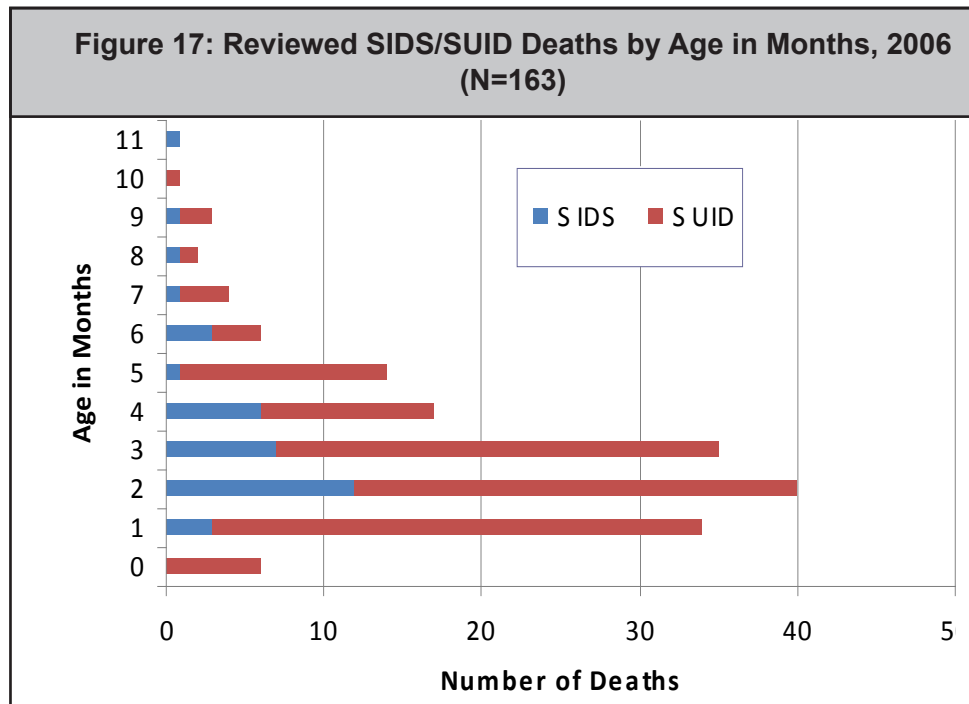


Figure 17 shows the age in months of reviewed deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) in 2006

#### Findings:

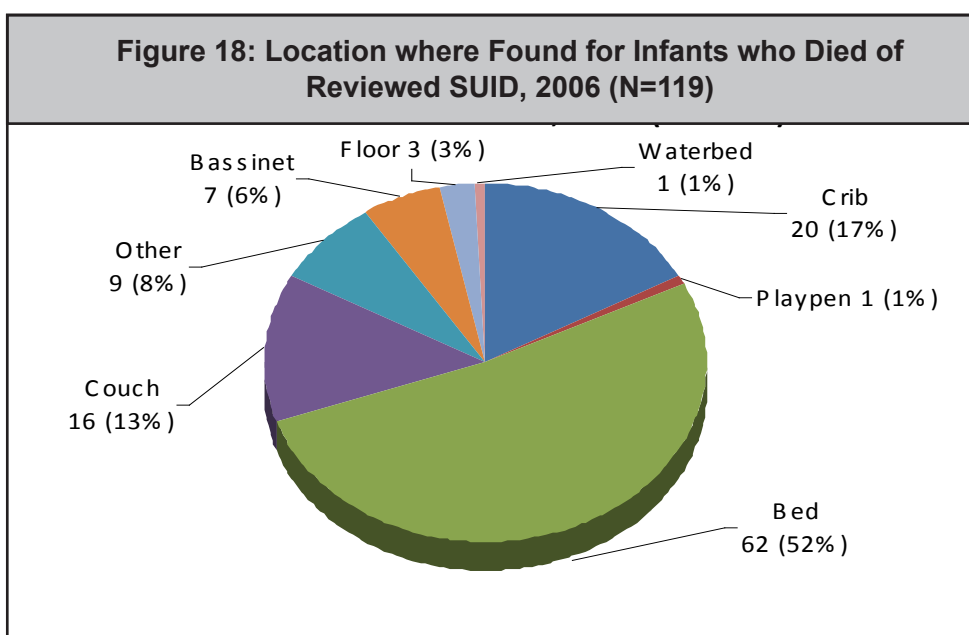
- Most SIDS /SUID deaths occurred to infants one to three months of age (n=109)
- Seventy-one percent of all SIDS/SUID occurred in infants younger than four months
- Only seven percent of all SIDS/SUID deaths occurred in infants older than six months

#### Fact:

- Generally, most infants who die from SIDS/SUID are between two and six months old. The risk of death declines dramatically after six months of age

### Findings:

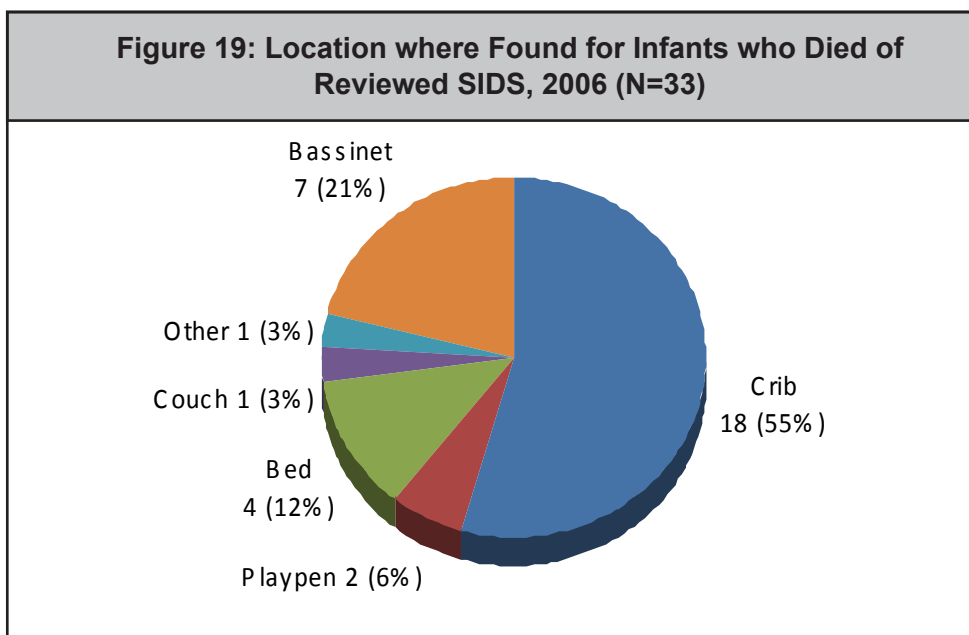
- Sleeping location was known and reported for 152 of those infants who died of SIDS or SUID; location was unknown and/or unreported for 11 of SIDS/SUID infants (seven percent)
- Of the 33 infants who died of SIDS, the most common location for sleep was a crib (55%)
- Fifty-two percent of the 119 SUID deaths occurred while the infant was in a bed
- An additional 11% of reviewed SIDS/SUID infant deaths occurred on couches



**Figure 18 shows the sleeping locations for the infants who died of Reviewed SUID (when known)**

### Facts:

- According to the AAP, the risk of SIDS is higher when bed sharing occurs with young infants. Also, the risk of SIDS seems to be particularly high when there are multiple bed sharers and also may be increased when the bed sharer has consumed alcohol or is overtired. It is extremely hazardous when adults sleep with an infant on a couch
- There is growing evidence that room sharing (infant sleeping in the parent's room) without bed sharing is associated with a reduced risk of SIDS



**Figure 19 shows the reported location of death for those infants who died of Reviewed SIDS (when known)**

### Findings:

- In 83% of deaths (n=134), the infant was sleeping at their own home
- Five deaths (3%) occurred in a child-care facility, and 20 occurred in another caregiver's home (12%)

### Facts:

- Many child care deaths have been associated with the prone sleep position, especially when the infant is not accustomed to being placed in that position. Unaccustomed prone sleep increases the risk of SIDS by as much as 18-fold. It is frequently a non-parental caregiver who places the infant in an unaccustomed prone position (AAP)
- Georgia's licensed child care centers are required to practice safe sleep for infants. Bright from the Start regulations state: "In order to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), staff shall put an infant to sleep on the infant's back unless the center has been provided a physician's written statement authorizing another sleep position for that particular infant" (O.C.G.A.20-1A-1 et.seq. and 50-13-4(a))

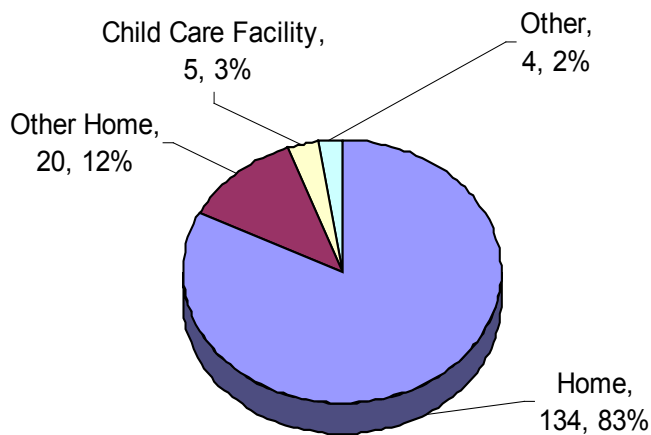
### Findings:

- SIDS occurred more often, and had a higher proportion, among White males
- SUID occurred almost equally, and displayed a similar proportion, among White males and females, and African-American males and females

### Facts:

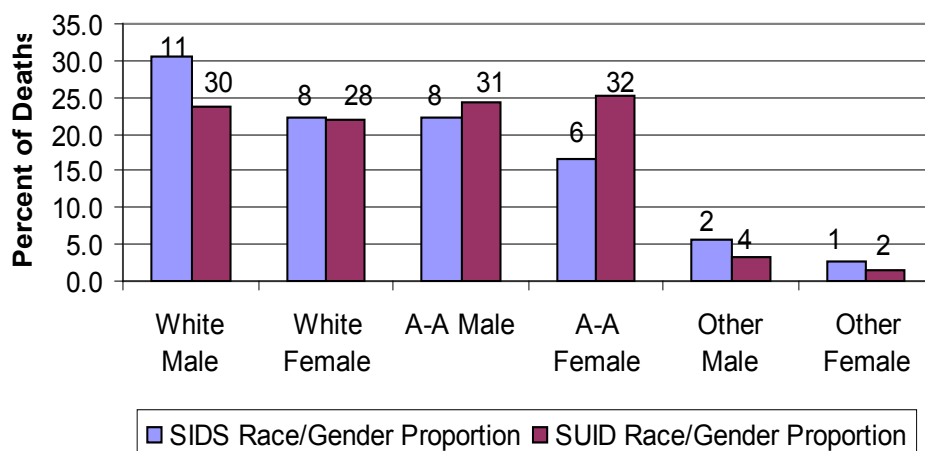
- Data from the Center for Health Statistics show that nationally the SIDS rate among African-American infants remains more than twice the rate of White infants
- According to the CDC, many SUID cases are not investigated, and when they are, cause-of-death data are not collected and reported consistently. Inaccurate classification of cause and manner of death hampers prevention efforts and researchers are unable to adequately monitor national trends, identify risk factors, or evaluate intervention programs

**Figure 20: Place of Death for Infants who Died of SIDS/SUID, 2006 (N=163)**



**Figure 20 shows the place of death for the 163 reviewed SIDS/SUID deaths in 2006**

**Figure 21: Race/Gender Distribution of Reviewed SIDS and SUID Deaths, 2006 (N=163)**



**Figure 21 shows the demographic numbers and proportions for the 163 reviewed SIDS and SUID deaths in 2006**

**Finding:**

- Fifty-five percent (11) of the children who died from sleep-related asphyxia were three months old or younger

**Fact:**

- Sixty percent of infant asphyxia occurs in the sleep environment (Safe Kids, 2005). Infants in particular are at greater risk for asphyxia because of their inability to lift their heads or remove themselves from tight places

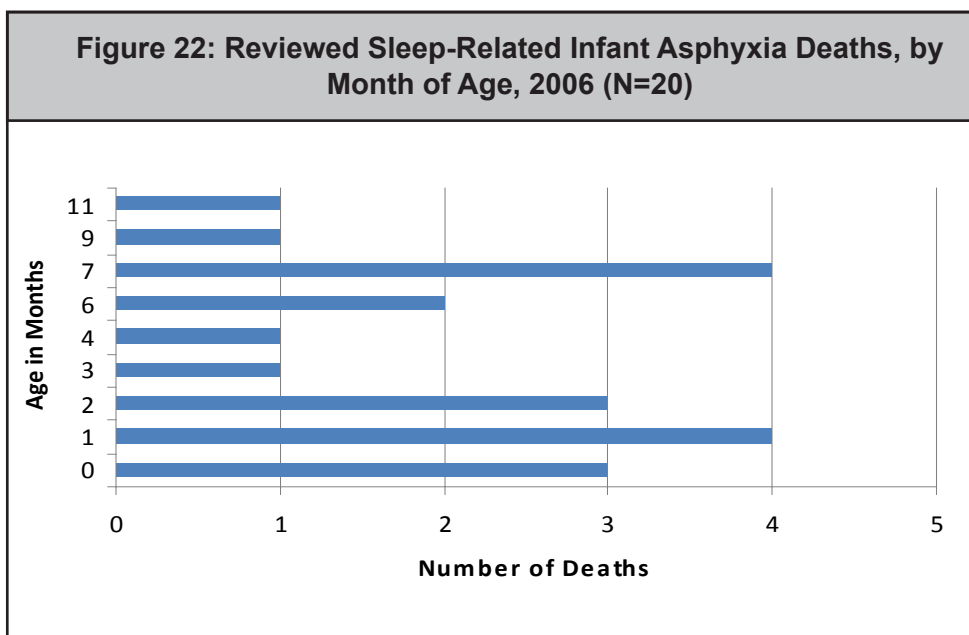


Figure 22 shows the age in months at death for the 20 infants with reviewed sleep-related asphyxia deaths in 2006

**Finding:**

- Almost three-fourths of the infants (70%) were sleeping with at least one other person at the time of death

**Fact:**

- Bed-sharing is particularly dangerous when the caregiver is overweight or under the influence of anything that might hamper a normal arousal response

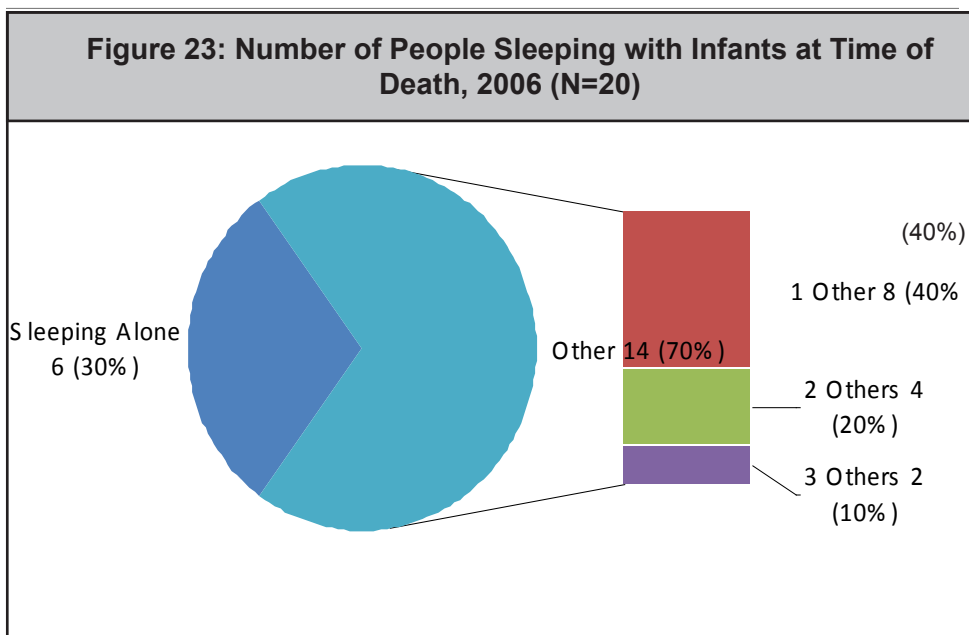


Figure 23 shows the number of people sleeping with the infant when the cause of death was asphyxia



## Statewide Opportunities for Prevention:

### *For Parents:*

- Get medical care early in pregnancy, preferably within the first three months, followed by regular checkups at the doctor's office or health clinic. Make every effort to maintain good nutrition and avoid stress. These measures can reduce the risk of premature birth, a major risk factor for SIDS
- Do not smoke during pregnancy: Maternal smoking during pregnancy has emerged as a major risk factor in almost every epidemiologic study of SIDS
- Breast-feed infants whenever possible. Breast milk decreases the occurrence of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. Studies show that breast-fed infants have a lower SIDS rate than formula-fed infants
- Thoroughly discuss infant sleep safety with all caregivers and child care providers. If you take your infant to daycare or leave him/her with a sitter, provide a copy of the safe sleep recommendations to them and make sure they follow all recommendations
- Avoid exposing the infant to people with respiratory infections. Avoid crowds. Carefully clean anything that comes in contact with the infant. Have people wash their hands before holding or playing with your infant. SIDS often occurs in association with relatively minor respiratory (mild cold) and gastrointestinal infections (vomiting and diarrhea)
- Place infants to sleep in an infant bed with a firm

48-day old infant, premature and with heart monitor, was visiting dad and co-slept with dad on couch and never woke up. Heart monitor was going off but dad claimed he couldn't hear it

mattress (not an adult bed, or a couch or chair). There should be nothing in the bed but the infant - no covers, no pillows, no bumper pads, no positioning devices and no toys. Soft mattresses and heavy covering are associated with the risk for SIDS

### *For Professionals and Policy-makers:*

- Support establishing a population-based SUID case registry that can facilitate the understanding of the root causes, rates, and trends of SUID; support facilitating the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data by implementing a surveillance and monitoring system based on thorough and complete death scene investigation data, clinical history, and autopsy findings
- Support research to find the cause for SIDS and SUID
- *First responders and coroners:* Improve public reporting of surveillance and descriptive epidemiology of SUID to better understand the risks and associations of SUID with race and gender

### *For Agencies and Community Leaders:*

- Train childbirth educators, lactation consultants, trainers for babysitter courses, WIC agencies, pediatricians, daycare providers, nurses and birth support staff to model SIDS risk-reduction techniques to ensure that families know how to reduce SIDS risk
- Encourage parents to keep the infant's crib in the parents' room until the infant is at least six months of age. Studies clearly show that infants are safest when their beds are close to their mothers

### **Resources:**

**American Academy of Pediatrics**

[www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org)

**National Safe Kids Campaign**

[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

**National Institute of Child Health and Human Development "Back to Sleep" Campaign**

[www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/sids.cfm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/sids.cfm)

**National SIDS and Infant Death Project Impact**

[www.sidsprojectimpact.com](http://www.sidsprojectimpact.com)

## Unintentional Injury-Related Deaths

Unintentional injuries caused the deaths of 238 children in 2006. Those types of injuries caused more deaths to children 1-17 years of age than any other reviewed category (e.g., medical or intentional injuries). Nationally, since 1987, there has been a 45% decrease in unintentional injury fatalities; yet despite this good news, they continue to be the leading category of death for American children (Safe Kids, 2008). CFR committees found 64% of all unintentional injury related deaths to be definitely preventable.

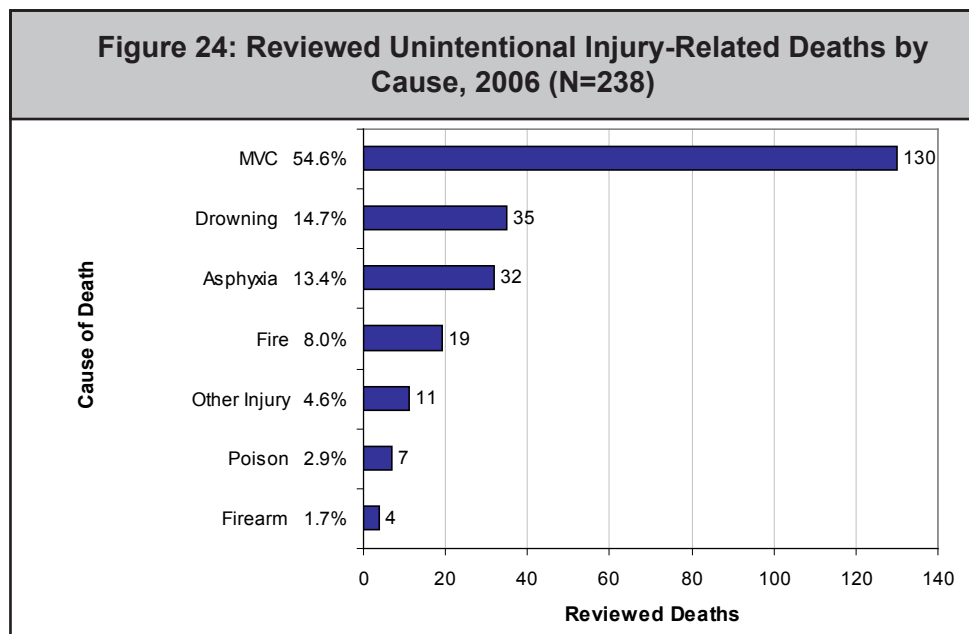
### ***What is an unintentional injury?***

Injury is damage to a person's body via mechanical, thermal, or chemical distribution. The intent of an injury is important to note as well. Unintentional injury is not deliberate, therefore these injuries (fatal or non fatal) are

preventable. This category includes those injuries described as unintended regardless of whether the injury was inflicted by oneself or by another person. It does not include deaths whose intent was labeled as unknown, as during certain case review, intent was not able to be determined by CFR committees.

### ***How does Georgia compare to the U.S. average?***

The top three causes of unintentional injury-related fatalities in Georgia are the same on a national front. Specifically, motor vehicle, drowning, and asphyxia are most prevalent. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, in 2005, the United States unintentional injury fatality child death rate (birth-17 years) was 11.15 per 100,000 children, while Georgia's was 12.91.



**Figure 24 shows unintentional injury deaths by mechanism**

### **Findings:**

- Motor vehicle-related deaths accounted for the majority (55%) of unintentional injury deaths
- Motor vehicle-related, drowning, and asphyxia have remained the top three causes of unintentional injury fatalities for two years

### **Fact:**

- CFR committees reviewed more unintentional injuries (40%) than intentional injuries (24%) or unexpected medical deaths (24%)

## Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries

Motor vehicle-related injuries are the number one cause of death for children over age one. Many factors contribute to this public health problem including improper restraint use (lack of seatbelts, car seats, booster seats, and premature graduation to a seat belt), driver error, as well as active supervision of young children near roadways. The Governor's Office of Highway Safety reports that the Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA) that went into effect on July 1, 1997 was responsible for a "44.5% decline in teenage speed-related crashes in 18 months" (not specific to deaths). During 2006, CFR committees identified 27 youth ages 15-17 years who died while operating a vehicle. Eight out of nine older teens who died while riding in the back seat were not wearing a seatbelt, when restraint use was known.

Additionally, Georgia continues to see pedestrian deaths increase each year, warranting the continuation of recently added programs such as *Safe Routes to School* and others where the Department of Transportation and the Governor's Office have been instrumental with local community grants. In pedestrian-related motor vehicle deaths, toddlers were

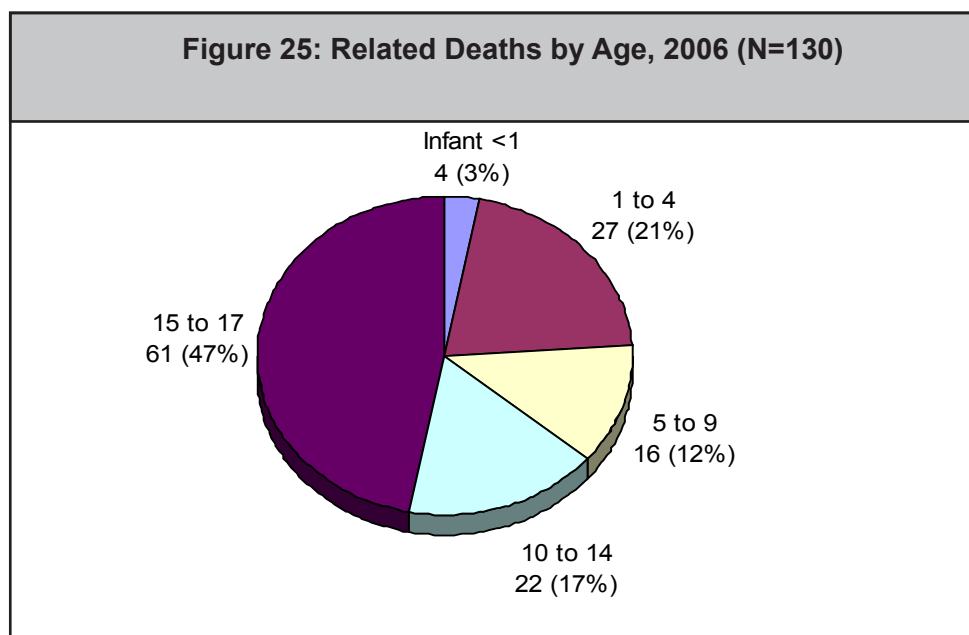
determined "not adequately supervised" 89% of the time, when supervision was reported. There were no pedestrian-related fatalities to children 5-9 years of age.

### ***What is included in the definition of motor vehicle-related death?***

Deaths attributed to motor vehicle-related incidents include the drivers and passengers of a vehicle, and occupants, riders or pedestrians impacted by any other form of transportation (bicycles, ATV, go-carts, motorized scooters, airplanes).

### ***How does GA compare with the U.S. average?***

On the national front, motor vehicle deaths are the leading cause of death to children ages 1-17 years. When parents were surveyed regarding their concerns and worries for their children, their top two concerns were motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian collisions (Safe Kids, 2008). According to NCIPC, the 2005 United States motor vehicle child death rate (birth-17 years) was 6.14 per 100,000 children while the CDC reported Georgia's rate was 7.00.



**Figure 25 shows the age breakdown of motor vehicle related deaths**

### **Findings:**

- Teenagers ages 15-17 years accounted for 47% of the 130 deaths
- Toddlers accounted for 21% of all motor vehicle deaths, and 59% of those pedestrian-related deaths

### **Fact:**

- In Georgia, if a child is riding unrestrained, the driver will receive a citation for each unrestrained passenger under 18 years of age

### Findings:

- There were 61 deaths among the 15-17 year old age group; 34% were reported to not wear their seatbelt (when restraint use was known and applicable)
- There were 38 deaths among the 5-14 year old age group; 67% were reported to not wear their seatbelt (when restraint use was known and applicable)

### Facts:

- Some death investigations reveal there is difficulty identifying if restraints were worn or not, leaving a high unknown category based on CFR committee reports
- Child restraint systems are extremely effective when properly installed and used in passenger cars. They reduce the risk of death by 71% for infants and 54% for children ages 1-4 years (Safe Kids, 2005)

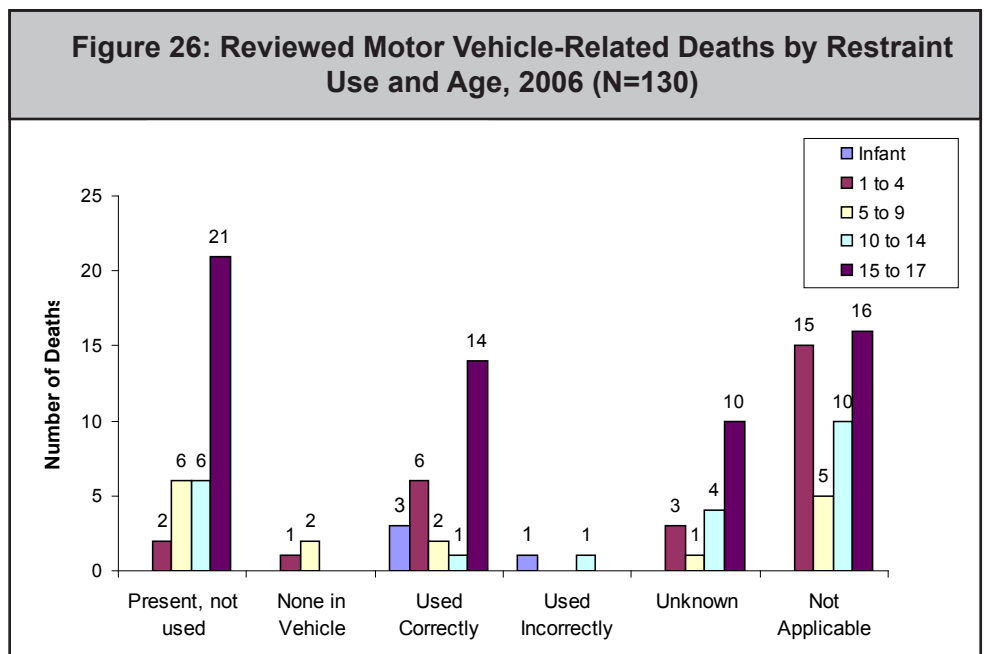


Figure 26 shows restraint use with age breakdown

### Findings:

- White children are at a higher risk (67%) than African-American children (22%) of dying in a motor vehicle-related crash
- White males continue to have the highest proportion of deaths
- Across all racial groups, motor vehicle-related deaths among males occurred more often than for females

### Facts:

- Nationally in 2006, it was reported that on any weekday, nearly once every two hours, a teen died in a traffic crash
- According to the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety, contributing factors for young driver deaths included: losing control, unsafe speed, wrong side of the road, and failure to yield

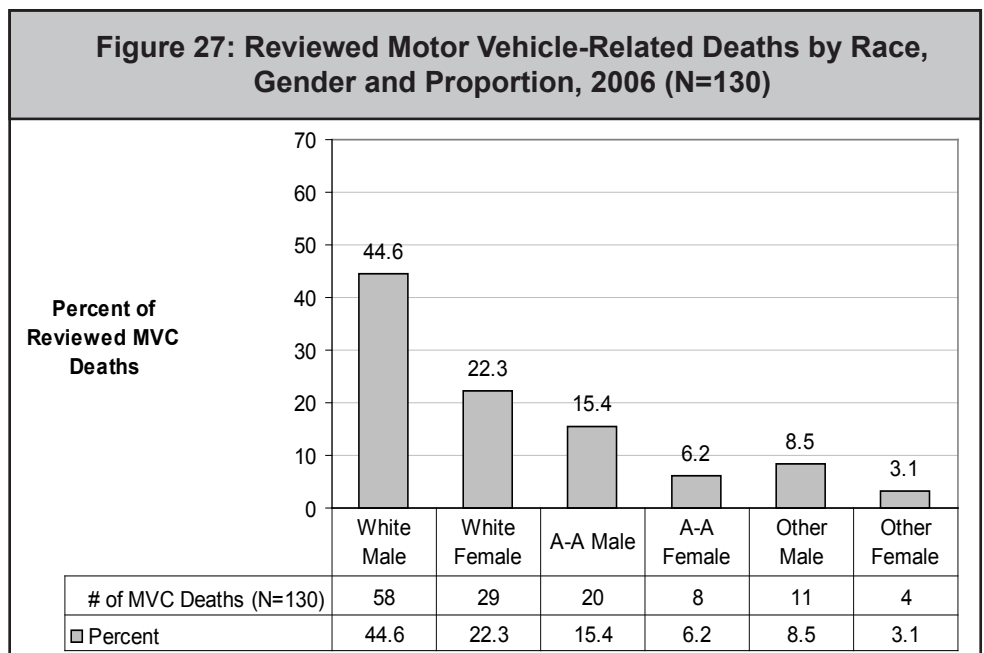


Figure 27 shows breakdown of motor vehicle deaths by Race, Gender and Proportion

### Findings:

- Of the backseat passengers who died, older teenagers (15-17 years) accounted for the highest percentage of deaths
- The most common position for children who died in motor vehicle-related injuries was either as the operator or back seat passenger
- Forty-two percent of all back seat passengers were reported as not wearing a seat belt

### Fact:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children younger than 13 years ride in the back seat

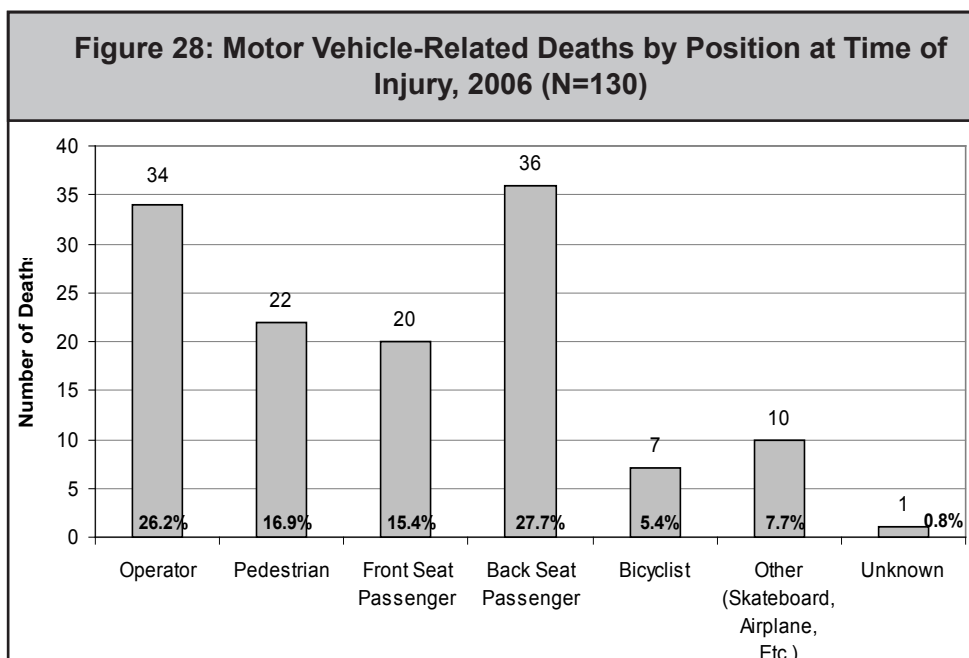


Figure 28 shows the position of the decedent at time of death

### Findings:

- Fifty-nine percent of pedestrian related fatalities involved toddlers
- Teenagers ages 15-17 years had the second highest percentage of pedestrian-related deaths

### Facts:

- Toddler deaths were attributed to being in a roadway unattended or in a driveway
- Pedestrian roadside safety education programs may influence children's behavior more than classroom education
- Pedestrian injury and death prevention programs must be multi-faceted with four factors that include the environment, vehicle, driver, and the supervisor (Schieber & Vegega, 2002)

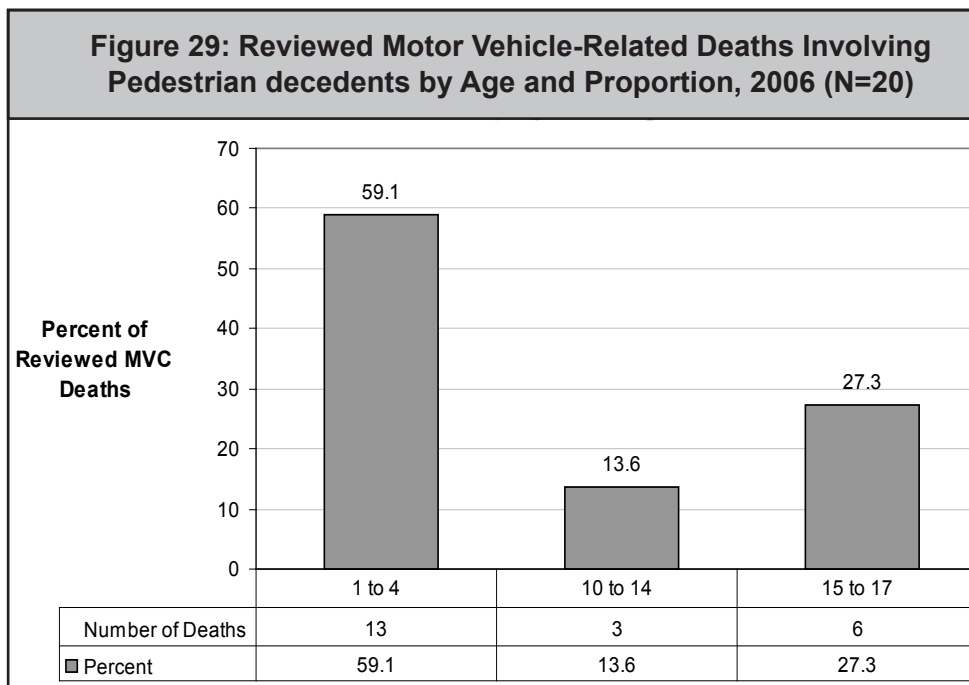


Figure 29 shows pedestrian deaths by age and proportion

17 y/o girl was operating a moped with an 11 y/o passenger and ran a red light; neither had helmets

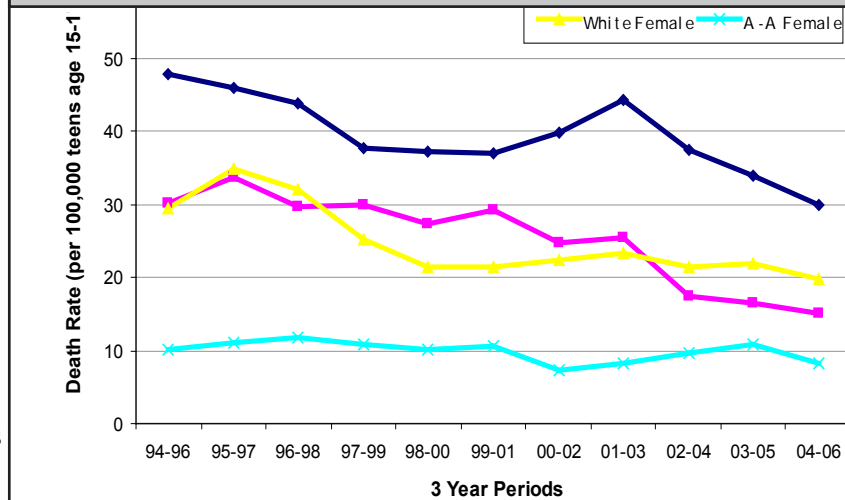
### Finding:

- There has been an overall decrease in motor vehicle-related deaths over the past five years

### Facts:

- In Georgia, 43 children ages one to nine years died in 2006 from motor vehicle-related injuries. The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration suggests that children grow up safe by following four steps:
  - Rear-facing car seats
  - Forward-facing car seats
  - Booster Seats
  - Seat Belts
- As of January 1, 2007, any 16 year old who obtains a Class D drivers license must have completed a driver education course and 40 hours of supervised driving

**Figure 30: Motor Vehicle-Related Deaths Rates per 100,000 Teens Age 15-17, Three-Year Moving Average, 1994-2006 (OASIS)**



**Figure 30 shows motor vehicle-related deaths since 1994**

### Opportunities for Prevention:

#### For Parents

- Support and demonstrate proper seat belt use on every ride
- Research and support the Graduated License program
- Set good examples in the vehicle by not speeding, talking on the cell phone, or eating while driving
- Set up a driver agreement with your teenager

#### For Young Drivers

- Do not consume alcohol or ride with someone who has
- Wear a seat belt every time you ride in a vehicle and enforce that passengers with you do the same
- Obey traffic rules and laws that govern everyone's safety

#### For Community Leaders and Policy-makers

- Support the work of groups such as the Young Adult Driver Task Team through the Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan (2007-2008)
- Support a progressive amendment to the current safety belt law by increasing the fine and points additions
- Support changes to the current child restraint law to increase booster seat use beyond six years of age

- Amend the current safety belt law to require safety belts be mandatory in pick-up trucks
- Continue to support and improve the Georgia Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act (TADRA)

#### Resources:

##### American Academy of Pediatrics

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

##### Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety

[www.gohs.state.ga.us](http://www.gohs.state.ga.us)

[www.gahighwaysafety.org](http://www.gahighwaysafety.org)

##### Georgia Young Adult Driver Task Team

<http://extension.caes.uga.edu/gtapi/>

##### National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)

Schieber RA, Vegega ME (editors) *Reducing Childhood Pedestrian Injuries: Proceedings of a Multidisciplinary Conference*. Atlanta, GA: CDC, NCIPC, 2002  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

##### Safe Kids USA

[www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)

[www.preventinjury.org](http://www.preventinjury.org)



## Drowning Deaths

Drowning continues to be the second leading cause of unintentional deaths to children in Georgia. Most drowning deaths occurred to the toddler age group (60%) with the majority of deaths occurring in private pools. Teenagers 15-17 years of age accounted for the second highest group with 100% of deaths occurring in natural bodies of water. According to the CDC, for every child who dies from drowning, another four receive emergency care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Of the 1-4 year-old age group, CFR committees identified 95% of the children did not have adequate supervision based on death scene investigation reports containing this information.

There are many ways to prevent fatal and nonfatal drowning including deliberate and non negotiable supervision, pool barrier regulations and enforcement, parental diligence regarding door alarms, and locked access to pool areas. The statistics continue to show the need for diligence in ensuring our youth learn to swim and understand how to rescue someone from drowning. Specificity in life saving and strong swimming skills can save lives. Additionally, more prevention efforts should be aimed near natural bodies

of water to include warning signs and life saving device stations (e.g., reach and throw poles and life jackets).

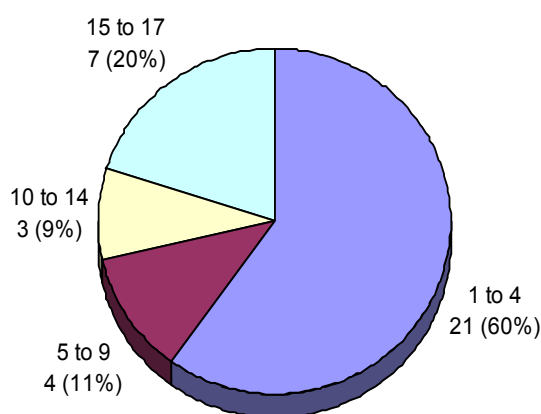
### *What is characterized as a drowning death?*

Drowning deaths occur from water-related submersion and asphyxia, and include deaths involving public and private swimming pools, natural open water (rivers, lakes, oceans, and ponds), bathtubs, and other bodies of water. Occasionally, other areas may include drainage ditches and septic tanks.

### *How does GA compare to the U.S. average?*

Across the United States, a swimming pool is the most common site for toddler drowning deaths, and males are four times more likely than females to die from unintentional drowning (CDC), which is the same for Georgia. Nationally, Southern states have the highest accidental drowning rates, while Western states are second highest. According to NCIPC, the 2005 United States' drowning child death rate was 1.33 per 100,000 children, while Georgia's was 1.74, in 2005.

**Figure 31: Reviewed Drowning Deaths by Age, 2006 (N=35)**



**Figure 31 shows drowning deaths by age categories**

### **Findings:**

- Sixty percent of reviewed drowning deaths occurred among children ages 1 to 4 years
- Twenty percent of reviewed drowning deaths occurred among children ages 15 to 17 years

### **Facts:**

- Drowning happens suddenly as children may slip into water very quickly without screaming or splashing around
- Active supervision is critical, especially for young children. According to Safe Kids (2008), a survey of parents in 2007 revealed the following:  
*“When parents of a child under age five are the caregiver, only 15 percent said they can always physically reach their child. Forty-five percent overall said they usually know where their child is but are not always able to see or reach the child.”*
- Young child drowning deaths are often linked to lack of adequate supervision in Georgia

**Finding:**

- Overall, males accounted for 83% of all the drowning deaths, with White males comprising 54%

**Fact:**

- Nationally, the CDC reports that drowning rates are lower in White children when compared with African-American, American Indian and Alaskan Native children

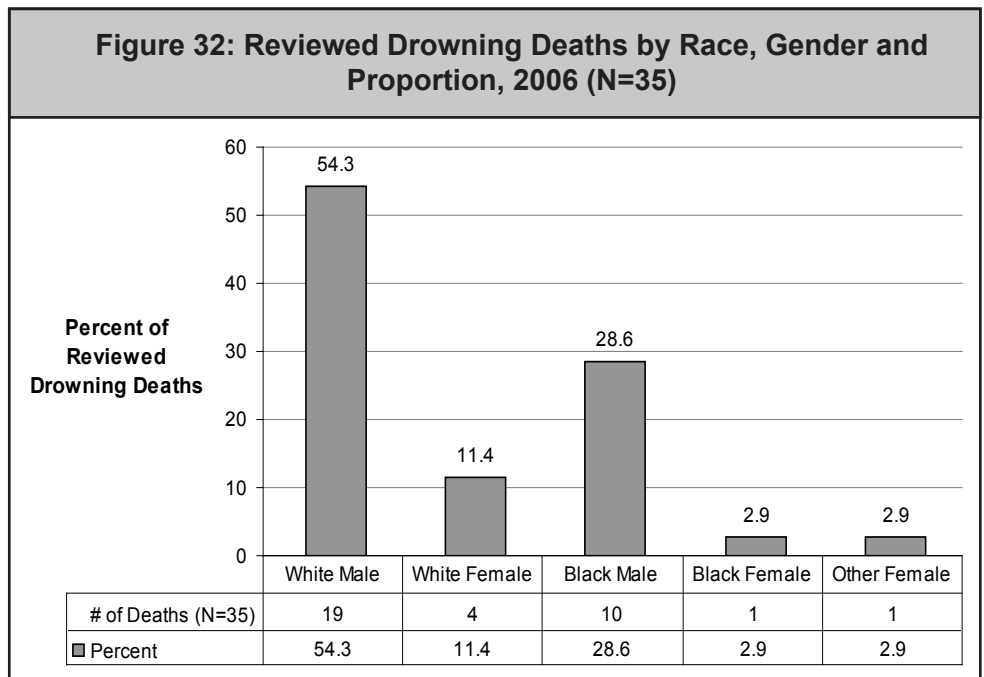


Figure 32 shows proportion of child drowning deaths by Race and Gender

**Findings:**

- For children ages 1-4 years, 62% died in private swimming pools
- Natural bodies of water were the location for 100% of the 15-17 year old drowning deaths
- There were no deaths in public swimming pools or bathtubs during 2006

**Facts:**

- Toddlers do not have the cognitive ability to understand consequences of deep water or swimming without a life jacket or Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- Arm floats or pool foam noodles are not life saving devices, yet some caregivers continue to use them on a regular basis
- Most young children who drowned in pools were last seen in the home, or had been out of sight less than five minutes

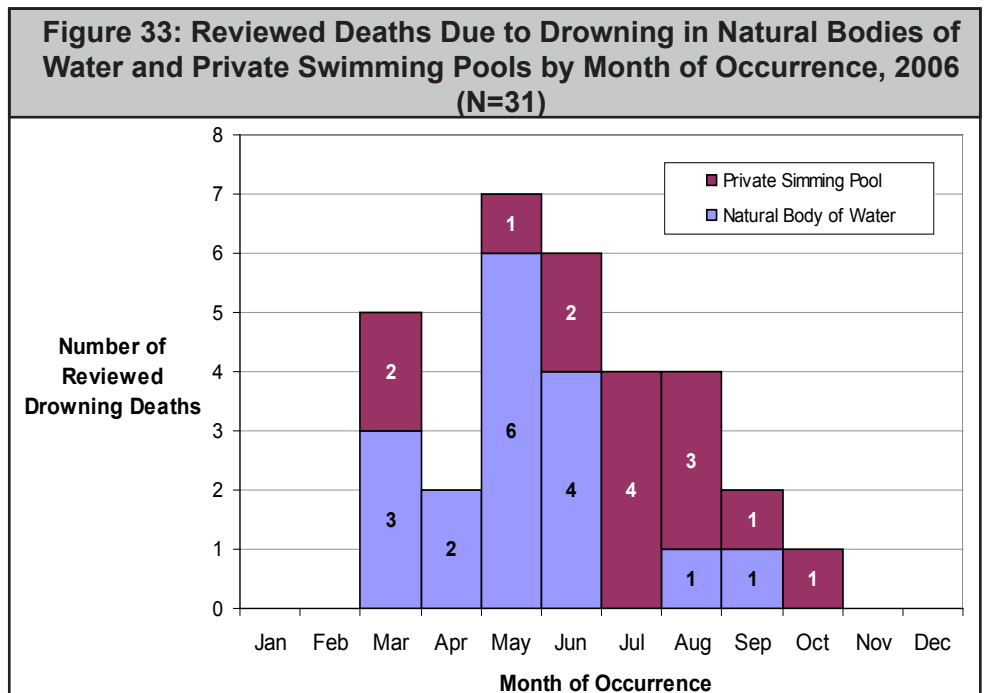


Figure 33 shows the number of deaths, month of occurrence, and location of drowning. Chart excludes four deaths occurring in other locations



## Findings:

- Overall, drowning death rates are decreasing
- The drowning death rate for African-American males and females has decreased significantly
- The drowning death rate for White males has increased slightly, while the drowning death rate for White females has remained the same

## Fact:

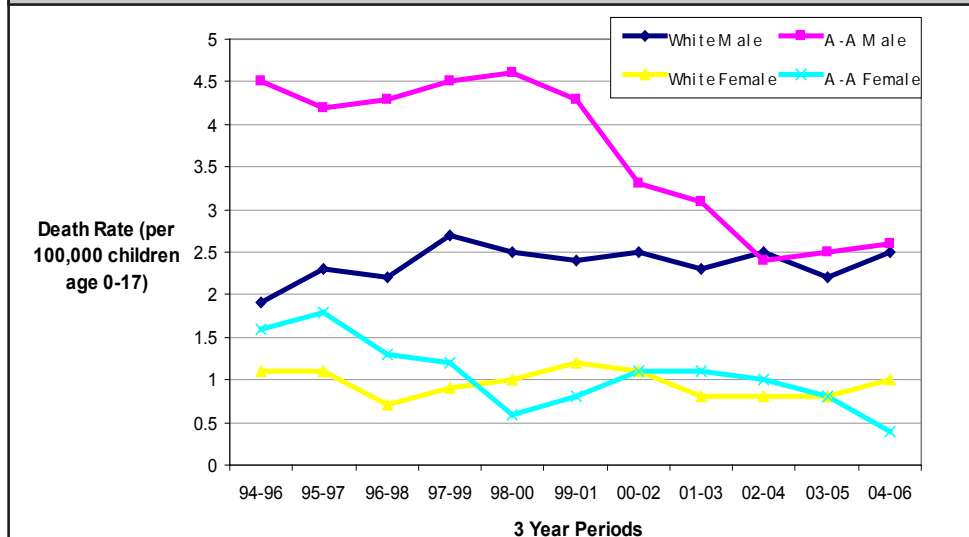
- Drowning remains the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths to children ages 1-14 years, based on CDC research

## Opportunities for Prevention:

### For parents

- Install a four-sided barrier around a private home pool with a four foot high vertical fence. Optimal barrier devices will separate the house and yard from the pool
- Never leave a child unsupervised around water. Children should not have immediate access to a water source without adult supervision. There is no substitute for diligent supervision
- Be familiar with other adults' perception of safety if they care for your child and they have a swimming pool or hot tub/spa
- Use layers of protection including active supervision, locked gates on all fencing, door alarms, and a safe pool environment where all the adults are aware of safety
- Do not drink alcohol while supervising children, especially around water
- Children should learn how to swim and personal water safety techniques
- Do not use arm floats/foam noodles as a measure of security in the water. Use Coast Guard approved PFDs (CDC, 2008)

**Figure 34: Drowning Death Rates per 100,000 Children Age 0-17, Three-Year Moving Average, 1994-2006 (Based on OASIS Data)**



**Figure 34 reveals drowning death trends since 1994**

### For community leaders and policy makers

- Consider sponsoring community-wide swimming lessons/water safety instruction for children of all ages, but mostly for adolescents
- Empower, implement and enforce local ordinances requiring four-sided isolation fencing with self-closing, self-latching gates for private pools across the state. In January 2007, the state of Georgia adopted the international building code, Appendix G, requiring all private pools to have barrier devices. Enforcement of such codes is up to the local authorities to implement

### For professionals

- Raise awareness of safety devices to help parents keep the home environment safe such as: door alarms for outside entrance, safety gates, toilet cover locks, door knob covers
- Support and raise awareness for reduced cost or free swimming lessons for youth
- Improve safety awareness at neighborhood pools and apartment/hotel pools so that all may be aware of the issue

Mother thought father was watching child and father thought mother was. Child had wandered into neighbor's backyard, jumped into pool and drowned

## Resources:

### CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/ncipc/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/)

### National Drowning Prevention Alliance

[www.ndpa.org](http://www.ndpa.org)

### Safe Kids USA

[www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)

### U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

## Fire-Related Deaths

Fire-related deaths are the fourth leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths in Georgia. There were 19 reviewed fire-related child deaths in 2006. Since 2004 (when there were 40 reviewed fire deaths), fire-related deaths have continued to remain lower than in subsequent years reported.

The most common fire structure was wood frame (53%) and source was more often matches/lighters when known. Committees found 78% of fire deaths to be definitely preventable and 22% to be possibly preventable. In 2002, the CDC reported fire deaths to children to be the third leading cause of accidental death. Child fatality review data shows fire-related deaths as the fourth leading cause of unintentional deaths to children in Georgia.

Nationally, fire-related injuries or deaths are not perceived as a major problem, according to the United States Fire Administration (USFA). Across the United States, residential structures are inferior to the public building technology available. The USFA reports that the majority of fires occur in residential areas, where the knowledge of sprinkler systems and fire containment is not “widely used” like that in public facilities (USFA, 2007). The USFA

suggests that safety built into homes and practicing safety behaviors is where we “fall short” (USFA, 2007). Across the U.S., the majority of fire deaths are caused by arson and smoking.

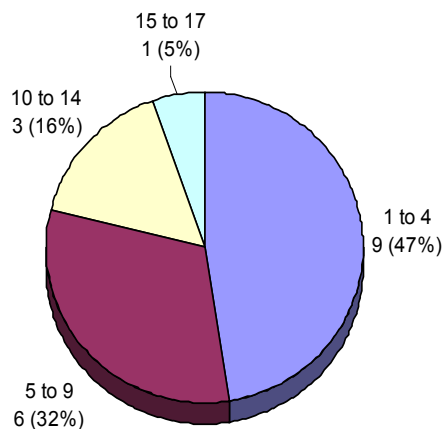
### *What is included in the definition of fire-related death?*

A fire-related death is one resulting from fire or burn injuries sustained in a fire, and includes deaths from smoke inhalation.

### *How does GA compare with the U.S. average?*

Fire deaths across the United States have declined by 20% since 1995; however, the fire death rate continues to be the fourth highest in the world according to the World Fire Statistic Centre. The annual costs associated with natural disasters are only a fraction of those associated with fires. Georgia’s fire death rate in 2004 was 19.9 while the national rate was 13.6 (per million population). The USFA reported in 2007 that most of the southern states continued to have a fire death rate of 20 or more per million population. Georgia was not listed as one of the highest Southeastern states and our rate continues to decline. According to NCIPC, the United State’s residential fire-related child death rate was 0.64 per 100,000, while Georgia’s was 0.58, in 2005.

**Figure 35: Reviewed Fire-Related Deaths by Age, 2006 (N=19)**



**Figure 35 shows fire-related deaths by age and proportion**

### **Findings:**

- Toddlers account for the majority of child deaths due to fire
- Children ages 5-9 years account for the second highest age group

### **Facts:**

- In the United States, children under the age of five are “more than twice as likely to die from a residential fire than the rest of the country’s population” (USFA, 2003)
- A resident’s risk of death from fire is cut in half with at least one working smoke alarm

**Finding:**

- A higher percentage of fire-related deaths occurred among African-American children

**Fact:**

- In the U.S., African-Americans have higher fire-related death rates than the rest of the population

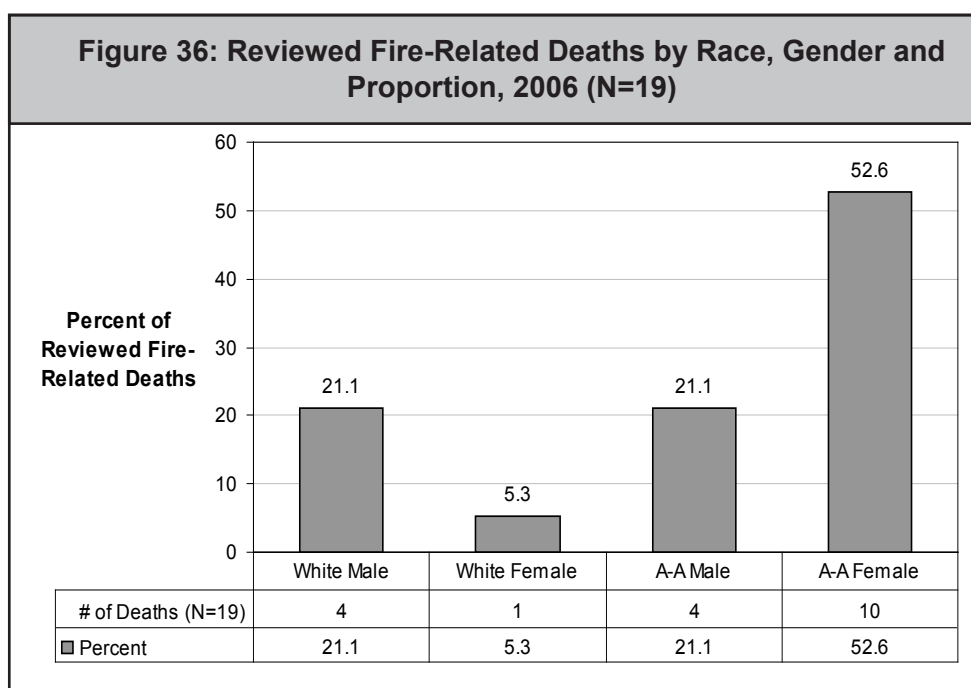


Figure 36 shows proportions of fire deaths by Race and Gender

**Finding:**

- Fifty-three percent of children were determined to be supervised adequately at the time of the death

**Fact:**

- Active supervision of children around matches, lighters, open flames, and space heaters is critical for overall injury prevention

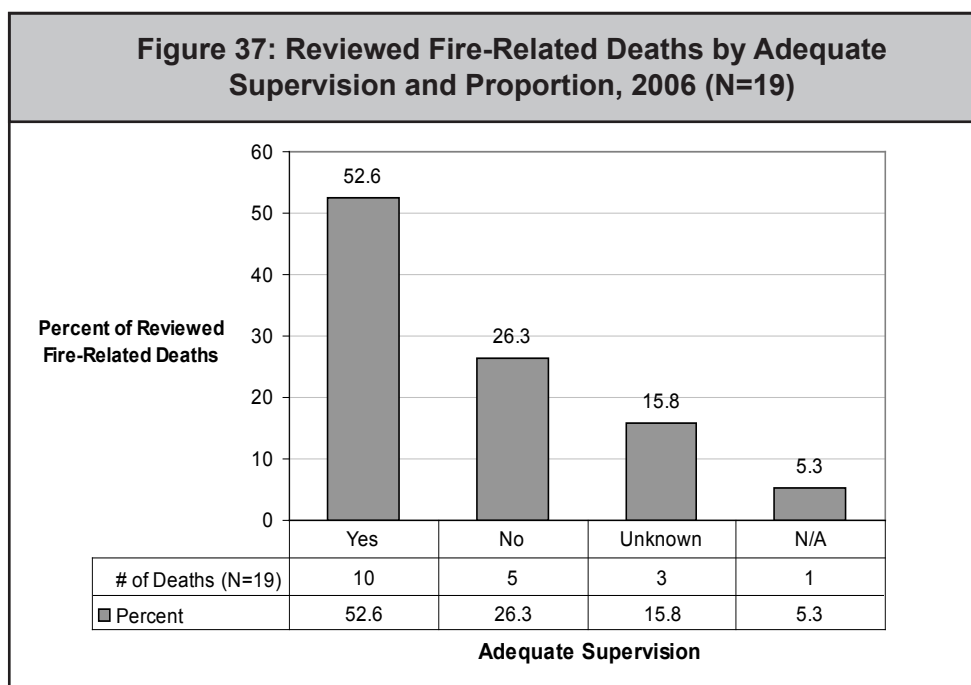


Figure 37 shows fire-related deaths by level of supervision

Mom worked the night shift and was napping in a room. Decedent and brother were in their bedroom playing with trigger lighter and caught some wrapping paper on fire

**Figure 38: Fire-Related Death Rates per 100,000 Children Age 0-17, Three-Year Moving Average, 1994-2006 (Based on OASIS Data)**

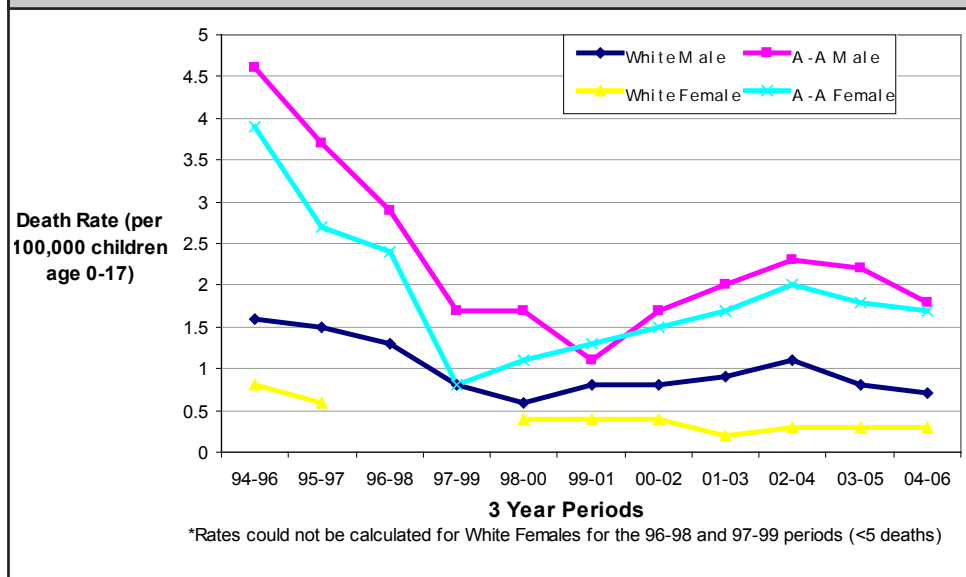


Figure 38 shows fire-related deaths since 1994

#### Findings:

- Fire deaths have shown an overall decline for all race/gender groups since 1994
- The average fire-related fatality rate for African-American males and females was less than two per 100,000 children in 2006, still more than twice as high as the average rates for White males and females

#### Fact:

- Through a partnership with the CDC, Georgia's Department of Human Resources reported that smoke alarms were provided to local fire departments for distribution across the state. Over the past five years, more than 20,000 detectors have been distributed, potentially saving 100 lives (GA DHR, 2006)

#### Opportunities for Prevention:

##### *For parents*

- Prepare and practice a fire escape route include teaching children: "once outside, stay outside"
- Have at least two working smoke alarms, one on every floor of the home if possible
- Decrease risk factors for possible fires including: alcohol consumption, smoking, especially in the bed, and fire activities during the winter months
- Educate older siblings to inform an adult if a young child has matches or lighters

##### *For community leaders and policy makers*

- Encourage local fire marshals to enforce home safety regulations for all types of dwellings
- Continue to provide funding sources for smoke detectors
- Provide funding for portable fire extinguishers

##### *For professionals*

- Continue to work with local fire departments and support smoke alarm distribution awareness programs

#### Resources:

##### **Georgia Department of Human Resources**

<http://health.state.ga.us/programs/injuryprevention/firesafety.asp>

##### **U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Data Center**

[www.usfa.dhs.gov/](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/)

[www.usfaparents.gov/](http://www.usfaparents.gov/)

## Asphyxia Deaths

Unintentional asphyxia claims more infant lives each year than any other age group, occurring mostly during sleep. During 2006, there were 32 asphyxia deaths from children ages birth-17 years. In this section, the emphasis is on children older than age one (n=12), as infant asphyxia is discussed in the sleep-related death section. Toddlers accounted for 67% of asphyxia deaths for children ages 1-17 years, with food being the primary cause.

### What is included in the definition of unintentional-related asphyxia?

Asphyxia occurs when there is an extreme decrease of oxygen in the body, accompanied by an increase in carbon dioxide, and usually caused by an interruption of breathing or suffocation. These types of death are definitely

#### Findings:

- There were 12 asphyxia deaths among children ages 1-17 years; the majority were attributed to items in the mouth (i.e., choking)
- Unintentional hangings were reported in three children between the ages of 4 and 17 years old
- Asphyxia caused by food was determined only in the toddler age group. Items included a grape, pretzel, popcorn, and candy

#### Fact:

- Households with older children in the family may increase the risk of choking in young children because toys with small parts may be more accessible

### Opportunities for Prevention:

#### For Parents

- Warn children about the “choking game” activity, because often they are unaware of the extreme lethal consequences
- Consider talking to your child’s friend’s parents, if you suspect your child has been experimenting with asphyxiation
- Keep small objects out of reach of toddlers and teach children not to run or play with food or small toys

#### For Community Leaders and Policy Makers

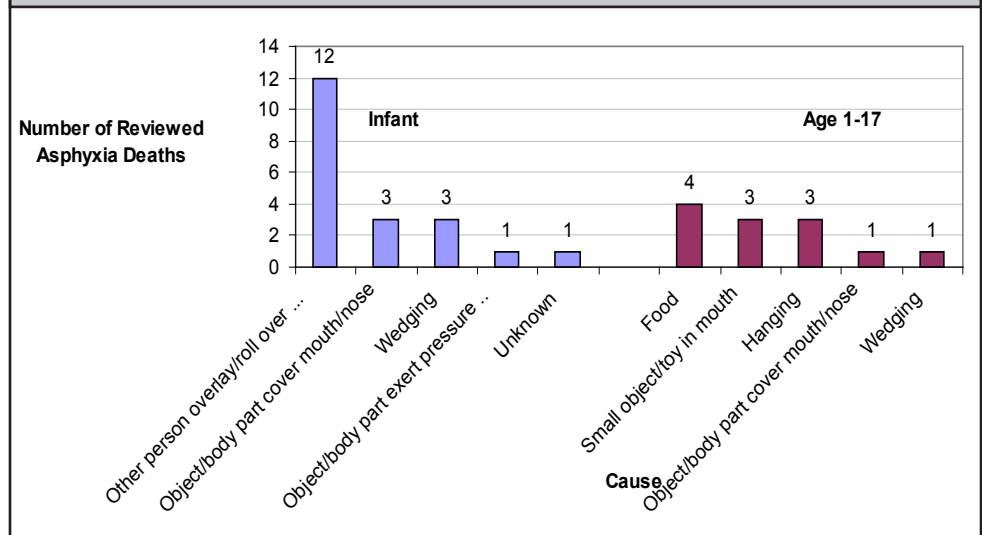
- Educate parents about warning signs associated with

preventable and can be decreased through education of all age groups and proper adult supervision

### How does GA compare with the U.S. average?

According to NCIPC, the United States unintentional asphyxia child death rate was 1.39 per 100,000 children, while Georgia’s was 1.32 in 2005. Safe Kids reports that choking is a common cause of toy-related deaths and children are at risk from “hidden hazards” in the home. Asphyxia may also occur when children are running or playing while eating or if they are involved with activities such as the “choking game,” where breathing is cut off momentarily to achieve a “high” without the effects of drugs or alcohol.

**Figure 39: Reviewed Asphyxia Deaths by Cause and Infant vs. Non-Infant, 2006 (N=32)**



**Figure 39 shows asphyxia deaths by cause, separating infant from other ages**

asphyxiation games

- Talk to children and adults who work with children regarding the consequences of choking games

#### For Professionals

- Engage schools with the DARE curriculum
- Implement and complete an official GASP trainer certified program

#### Resources:

##### Games Adolescents Shouldn't Play

[www.stop-the-choking-game.com](http://www.stop-the-choking-game.com)

##### Safe Kids USA

[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

## Intentional Injury-Related Deaths

Most child fatalities stem from medical causes or are the result of unintentional circumstances. However, every year a substantial number of children die as a result of intentional injuries. Intentional injuries are those which are purposely inflicted either by oneself or by another person. It also includes a willful, wanton, or reckless disregard for the

safety of others during the course of action (for example, a child killed by a stray bullet).

Intentional injuries are separated into two major categories: Homicide and Suicide. In 2006, local committees reviewed 56 child homicides and 26 child suicides. When compared to 2005 data, there was a slight increase in both categories: child homicides (50), child suicides (20).

### Homicide

According to global studies, the United States has the highest child homicide rate among developed countries. Additionally, in the U.S. homicide is the only major cause of childhood death that has increased in incidence during the past 30 years. While deaths of children resulting from accidents, congenital defects, and infectious diseases were declining, child homicides were increasing. More children 0-4 years of age in the U.S. die from homicide than from infectious diseases or cancer, and homicide claims the lives of more teenagers than any cause other than motor vehicle accidents (U.S. Census Bureau).

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence has reported that funding for violence “after the fact” (e.g., prisons) is higher than for a preemptive system to prevent violence in our communities. Basically, more money

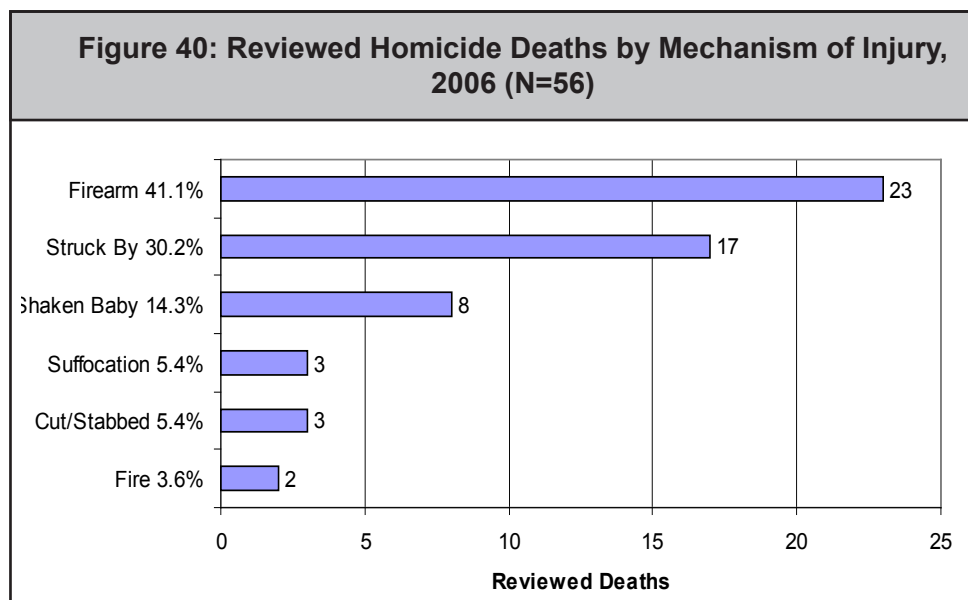
is allocated to *reacting* to national violence than is to *preventing* this public health problem. It is imperative that we reverse this trend in order to effectively address the devastating impact of violence in our society.

#### *What is the included in the definition of homicide?*

Homicide occurs when a person purposely, knowingly, recklessly, or negligently causes the death of another.

#### *How does Georgia compare with the U.S. average?*

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the U.S. child homicide rate was 2.53 per 100,000, while Georgia’s child homicide rate was 2.11 in 2005. This is a significant decrease in Georgia when compared to the state rate of 3.29 in 2004.



**Figure 40 shows the mechanism of injury for the 56 children whose deaths were homicides in 2006**

#### Findings:

- Firearms were determined to be involved in 23 (41%) of the 56 homicide deaths
- Seventeen homicide deaths (30%) were attributed to violent force or impact resulting from being struck by an object or a weapon of some sort



**Fact:**

- The homicides of young children are among the most difficult to document because they often resemble deaths that are unintentional and other causes. For example, a child who has been thrown or intentionally dropped may have injuries similar to those of one who died from an unintentional fall

**Findings:**

- Thirty-eight percent of reviewed child homicides occurred among 15-17 year olds
- Thirty-four percent of reviewed homicides occurred among 1-4 year olds

**Fact:**

- Homicide incidence among children significantly decrease between ages 5-14, particularly after reaching school age

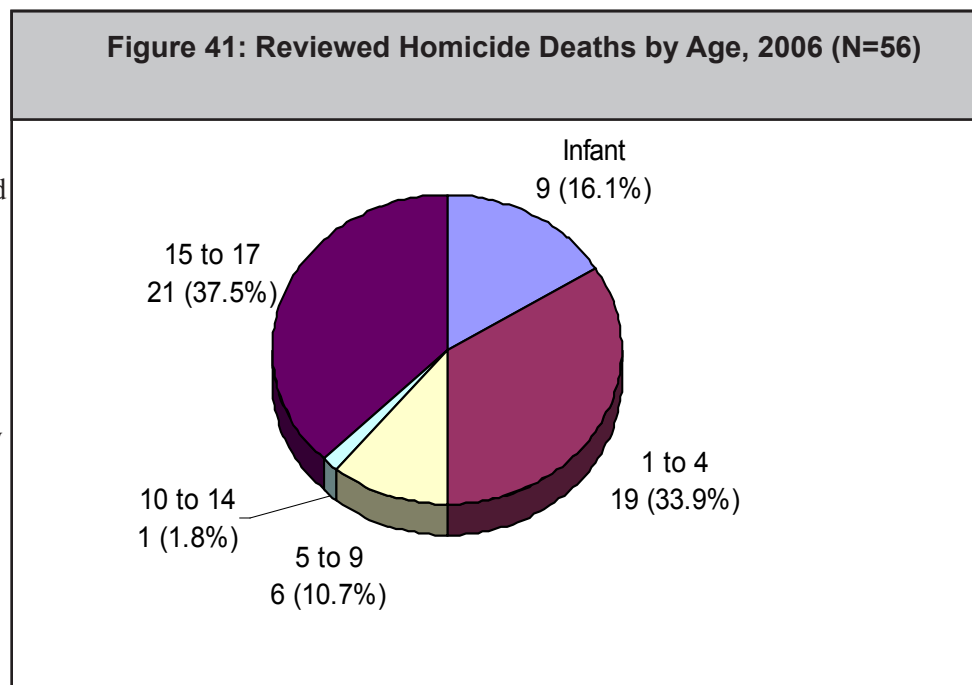


Figure 41 shows the number of deaths by age category for the 56 children whose deaths were homicides in 2006

**Findings:**

- African-American males continued to be the highest-risk group for homicides representing almost half (45%) of all homicide deaths
- The number and proportion of homicide deaths between African-American females and White males were equal

**Fact:**

- Studies indicate a disproportionate rise in the risk of homicide for non-White youth

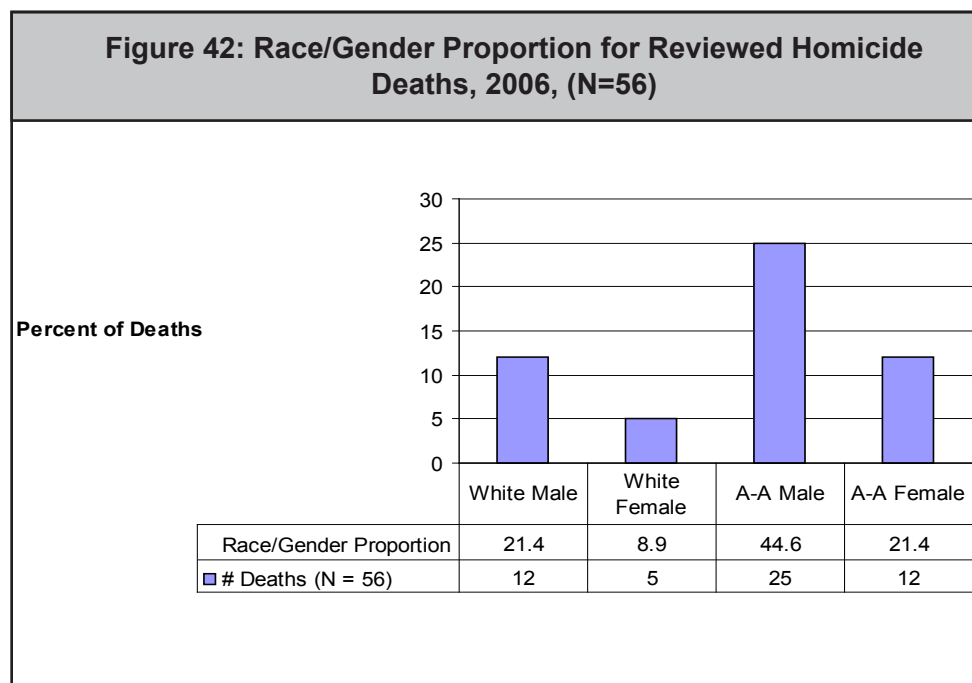


Figure 42 shows race and gender proportions for the 56 children whose deaths were homicides in 2006

### Findings:

- Natural fathers are identified as perpetrators in three of the nine infant homicides
- Head of household data suggest that the fathers who perpetrated these homicides lived in the home with the child at the time of death

### Fact:

- The majority of fatal injury deaths among infants is due to abusive head trauma, also known as Shaken Baby/ Shaken Impact Syndrome, which occurs when an infant is violently shaken or thrown against a hard surface

**Figure 43: Number of Infant Homicide Deaths with Perpetrator Identified, 2006 (N=9)**

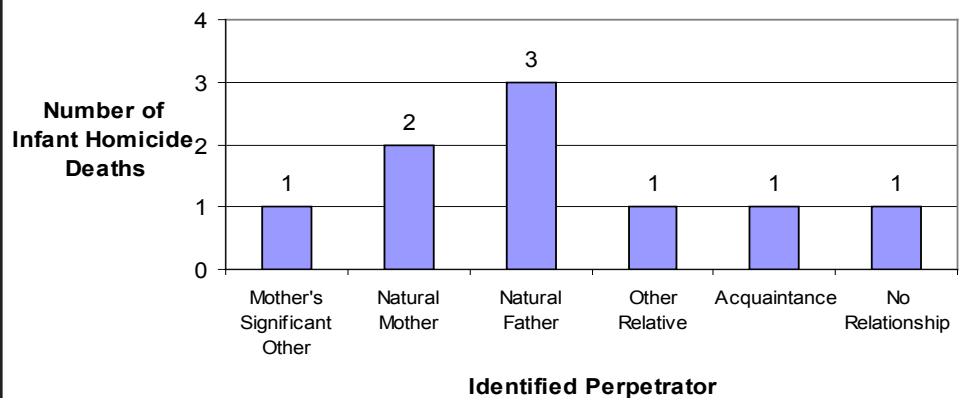


Figure 43 depicts identified perpetrator in infant homicides

### Findings:

- Mothers' significant others were identified as perpetrators in seven of the nineteen homicides of 1-4 year olds
- Natural fathers were identified as perpetrators in six of the nineteen homicides of 1-4 year olds

### Fact:

- A significant number of homicides involving young children are labeled "altruistic killings." Between 15 percent and 30 percent of homicides of children under age ten are related to adult suicides. The parent decides to commit suicide, and can't bear to leave the child behind (UCI, 1999)

**Figure 44: Reviewed Homicide Deaths by Age, 2006 (N=56)**

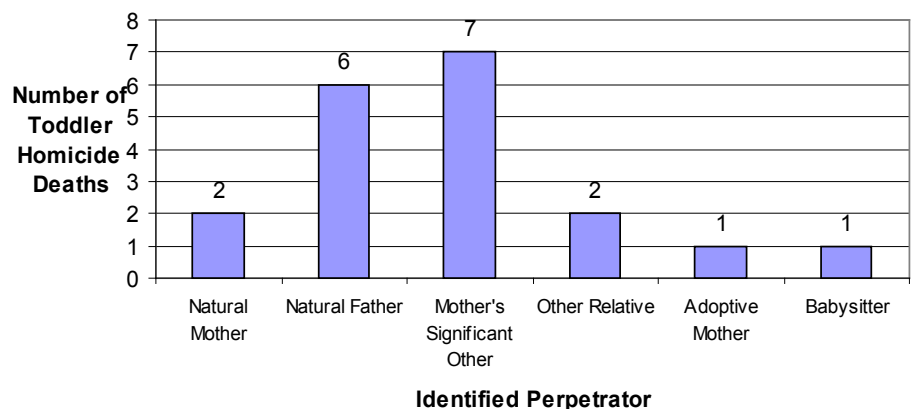


Figure 44 depicts identified perpetrators for toddler homicides



### Findings:

- Unlike homicides of children under age 12, relatively few teen homicides are committed by relatives
- A high percentage of teen homicides are perpetrated by other teens

### Fact:

- The dramatic increase in the number of older teen homicides has been attributed to various factors, including the rise in child poverty, expansion of gang activity, prevalent drug use, and increased accessibility of firearms (OJJDP, 2001)

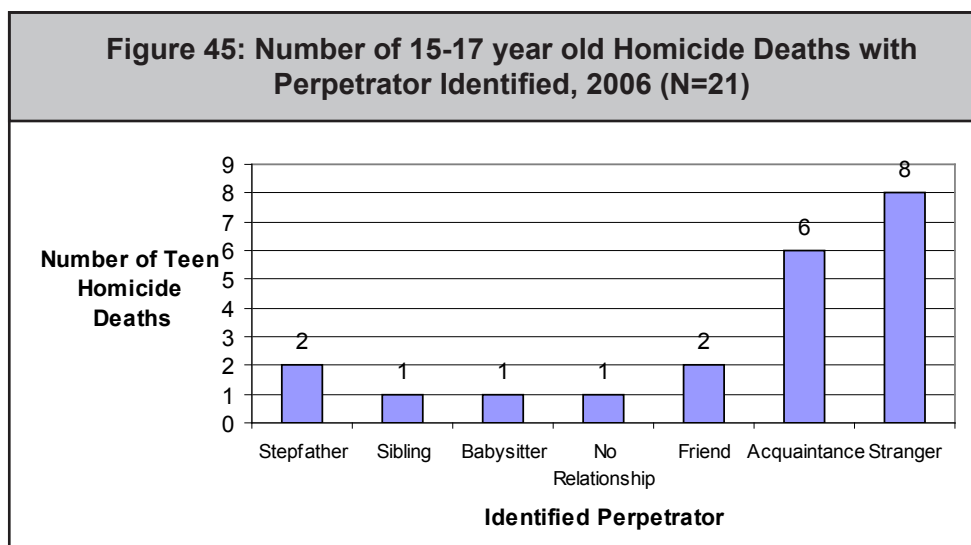


Figure 45 depicts identified perpetrator for older teenager homicides

### Opportunities for Prevention

#### For Parents

- Increase self-awareness by recognizing personal stressors, anxieties, and triggers
- Seek assistance when feeling overwhelmed or stressed
- Reduce access to lethal weapons by securing firearms

#### For community leaders and policy makers

- Create incentives for parents to attain pre and post-natal parent training programs to avail them with the knowledge and skills to appropriately respond to child-related stressors
- Establish strong, positive community support networks that are comprised of faith-based entities, neighborhood associations, and local service agencies
- Increase public awareness of the warning signs of child maltreatment and encourage community members to report child maltreatment to child protective service agencies

#### For professionals

- Provide respite care to assist parents and caregivers who are overwrought with stress
- Increase support for violence prevention programs
- Promote firearm safety to ensure that guns are secured and inaccessible to children and youth
- Implement in-school and after-school programs designed to engage young child and teens in positive activities
- Link young parents with parent mentors for the purpose of developing and maintaining relationships rooted in modeling impulse control, anger and stress management, and other positive parenting behaviors

#### Resources:

**National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC)**

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/>

**National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center**

<http://www.safeyouth.org/>

The parents were engaged in a domestic altercation. The mother fled the home and the father killed the children and himself.

## Suicide

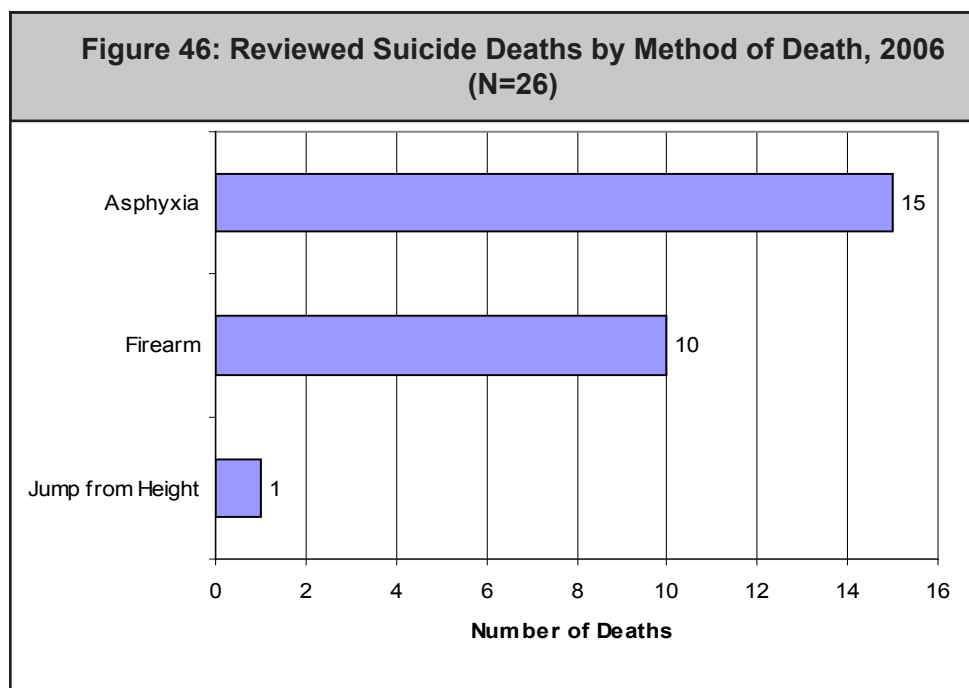
In the United States, suicide is the third leading cause of death for teens, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), surpassed only by unintentional injuries and homicide. Young children have a much lower incidence of suicide. The CDC also reports that about four children out of every 500,000 below the age of 12 commit suicide annually, according to the CDC. Commonly, teen and adult suicides begin with an idea, proceed with a plan, and end with action. Conversely, child suicide is more likely to be spontaneous and less connected to psychiatric disorders or aggression. Instead of hanging, cutting, or using a firearm, children tend to kill themselves by doing things their parents have warned them against, such as running into traffic or jumping out of a window. This makes it very difficult to distinguish between suicide and unintentional injuries. Consequently, this calls for a more extensive investigation by highly trained professionals to ensure accurate death coding.

### *What is included in the definition of Suicide?*

Suicide is the act of voluntary and intentional self-harm (by asphyxia/suffocation, cutting, poisoning, firearms or falls), which results in death.

### *How does Georgia compare with the U.S. average?*

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the child death rate from suicide in Georgia (0.95) is comparable to the U.S. child suicide death rate (1.39) in 2005. Both have remained relatively constant over the past two decades. In 2006, there were 26 child suicides in Georgia which is a slight increase compared to 20 child suicides in 2005. Georgia's suicide death rates have fluctuated over the past few years with 30 child suicides in 2003, decreasing to 26 child suicides in 2004.



**Figure 46 shows the mechanism of death for the 26 children who committed suicide in 2006**

### **Findings:**

- The highest number of child suicide deaths was due to asphyxia/suffocation by hanging (15)
- Firearms were determined to be involved in ten (38%) of the 26 suicide deaths which is comparable to 2005

### **Fact:**

- The risk of suicide increases dramatically when children have access to firearms at home, and nearly 60% of all suicides in the United States are committed with a gun (Kids Health 2008)

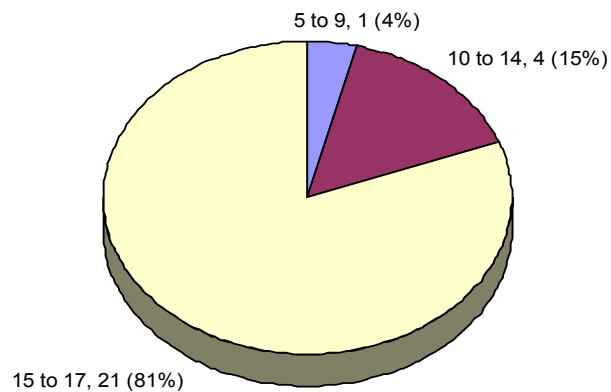
### Findings:

- Twenty-six suicide deaths occurred among older teens, an increase from 14 (70%) in 2005
- There were five suicide deaths among 10-14 year olds which has decreased (from six in 2005 and nine in 2004)

### Fact:

- Experts estimate that 20-25% of teens admit to thinking about suicide at some point in their lives

**Figure 47: Reviewed Suicide Deaths by Age, 2006 (N=26)**



**Figure 47 shows the age breakdown for the 26 children who committed suicide in 2006**

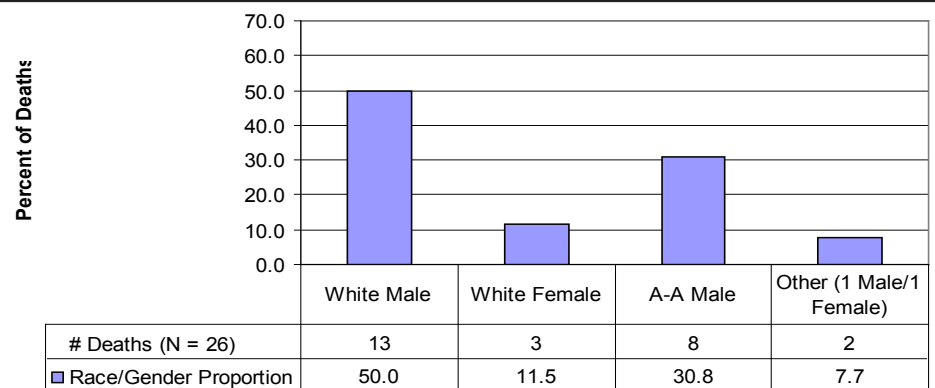
### Findings:

- White males had the highest proportion of suicide deaths
- There were no reviewed suicides for African-American females

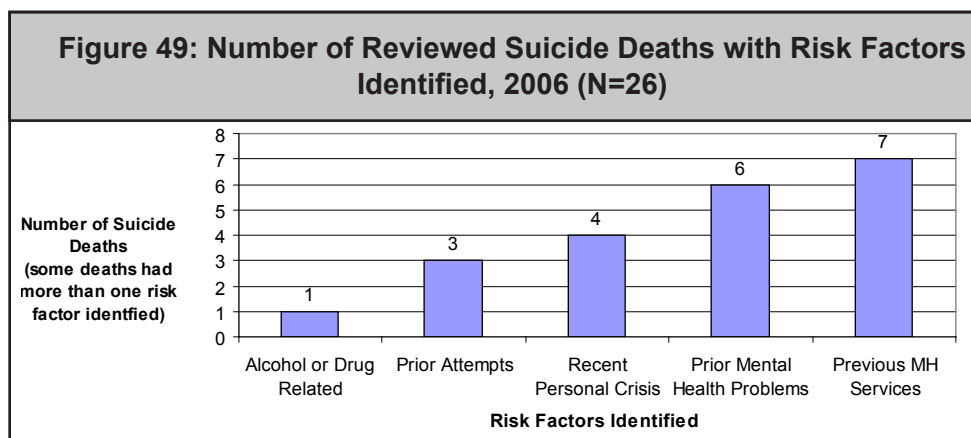
### Fact:

- White males are four times more likely to commit suicide than other race/gender groups, but White females are more likely to attempt suicide

**Figure 48: Race/Gender Proportion for Reviewed Suicide Deaths, 2006 (N=26)**



**Figure 48 shows the number and proportion of reviewed suicides by Race and Gender**



**Figure 49 shows other contributing risk factors that were identified for reviewed suicide deaths (there were some suicide deaths with multiple risk factors reported, so the total number shown is higher than the number of suicide deaths)**

#### Findings:

- In three of the four deaths where the victim had a recent personal crisis, they had also talked of suicide
- In each of the three cases where the victim had a prior suicide attempt, they had also received mental health services
- Only one suicide was determined to be alcohol or drug-related

#### Fact:

- Approximately one-third of teenage suicide victims have made a previous suicide attempt in the past

#### Opportunities for Prevention

##### *For Parents*

- Recognize the risk factors and warning signs for suicide
- Develop and maintain an open, understanding parent-child relationship that fosters communication and trust
- Closely monitor children for changes in behavior e.g., loss of interest in favorite things
- Seek professional help when signs of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts have been detected

##### *For community leaders and policy makers*

- Promote youth suicide campaigns within local communities
- Provide suicide prevention and intervention training for school personnel, service providers, and parents

##### *For professionals*

- Provide support services so that youth feel comfortable seeking help coping with stress, depression, and/or suicidal thoughts
- Educate parents about the seriousness of youth suicide and the importance of recognizing behavioral indicators of suicide

#### Resources:

##### **Georgia Suicide Prevention Plan**

<http://georgiasuicidepreventionplan.org/>

##### **The National Suicide Hotline**

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

##### **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Victim was reprimanded by his grandmother and became upset. He said that he was going to hang himself. He went into the house and hung himself on a rope swing.

## Firearm-Related Deaths

During 2006, firearms claimed the lives of 38 children in Georgia, with older teens represented in 71% of the deaths and younger children (ages one to nine), represented in 21% of the deaths. Males accounted for 89% of firearm-related deaths, with 55% of those African-American males. At the time of death, 68% of all firearm-related deaths occurred either at the child's home or at someone else's home.

### *What is included in the definition of firearms?*

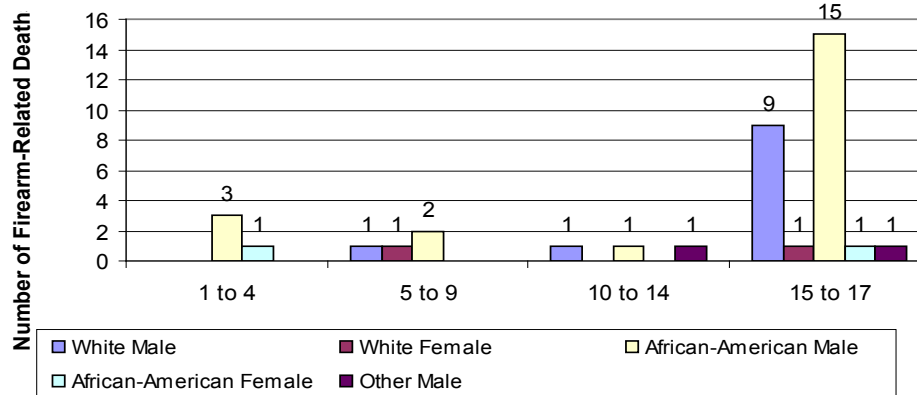
A firearm is any weapon that fires a high-velocity projectile, and includes rifles, pistols, revolvers, shotguns, handguns, and BB guns.

### *How does GA compare with the U.S. average?*

According to NCIPC, the national child death rate due to firearms in 2005 was 2.03, per 100,000 children, while Georgia's rate was 1.80 in 2005. Nationally, more than 75%

of guns used in youth suicide were found in the decedent's residence or another home. In Georgia, ten percent of youth suicides with a firearm occurred in another home and 90% occurred in the decedent's residence. Georgia is among five other Southern states with one of the weakest Child Access Prevention Laws in the nation (LCAV, 2008). Some states institute legislation that imposes criminal liability for negligent storage of a firearm and/or if a child gained access to the firearm regardless of injury or death. Georgia's CAP law prohibits persons from intentionally, knowingly, and/or recklessly providing handguns to children under 18 years and holds parents liable when "they know of a substantial risk that the minor will use the firearm to commit a crime" (LCAV, 2008) (O.C.G.A. 16-11-101.1). Georgia does not have legislation specific to a minimum age for rifles or shotguns.

**Figure 50: Reviewed Firearm-Related Deaths by Age and Race, 2006 (N=38)**



**Figure 50 shows age and race breakdown of firearm-related deaths**

### **Findings:**

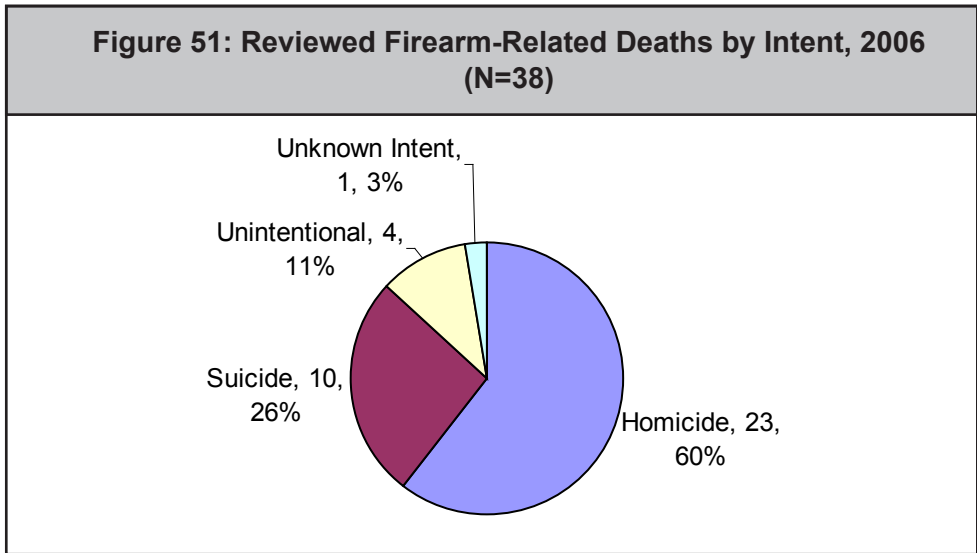
- African-American males represented the majority of firearm-related deaths (55%)
- Males outnumber females in firearm-related deaths, representing 89% of this category
- Ten youth committed suicide with a firearm (one was 10-14 years, nine were 15-17 years)
- Males of other races/ethnicities accounted for less than one percent of firearm-related deaths

### **Fact:**

- Based on information from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (CDC, 2000), male teens are more likely to possess firearms and nine percent of male students reported carrying a gun at least once during the past 30 days preceding the survey

**Findings:**

- Homicides account for the largest category of firearm-related deaths
- Unintentional firearm-related deaths have decreased from 2004 by 75%. There were 11 unintentional firearm deaths to children in 2004
- CFR committees reported teenagers 15-17 years accounted for 74% of homicide by firearm and only two deaths were known to be related to a gang - 24% were unknown for gangs



**Figure 51 shows reported intention of firearm-related deaths**

**Facts:**

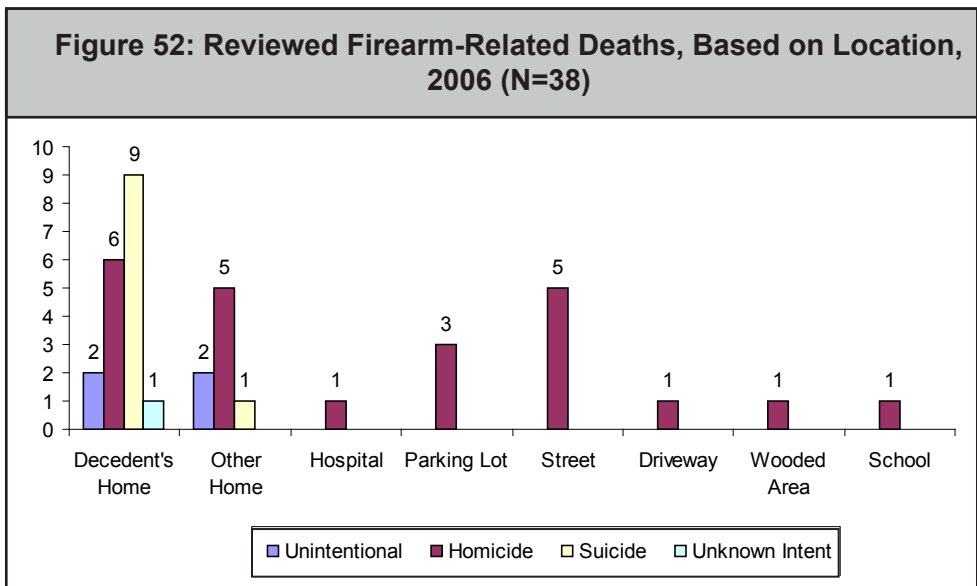
- Gangs have emerged since the 1980s and there is a direct relationship between gangs and violence, which can impose greater drug use, delinquency rates, and violent offenses in communities (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2008)
- CFR committees found youth with prior state agency involvement accounted for 70% of homicide with a gun
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends children under age 16 not use a BB gun or pellet gun
- The National Child Safety Lock Act of 2005 requires that as of April 2006, firearms should be sold with a safety locking device or secure gun storage. Across the nation, this applies to “any licensed importer, manufacturer, dealer to sell, deliver, or transfer any handgun to any person, other than another licensee” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006).

**Findings:**

- More firearm-related deaths occurred in the decedent’s own residence
- Ninety percent of youth suicides occurred in their own home
- Twenty-six percent of homicides with a firearm occurred in the decedent’s home

**Facts:**

- In the U.S., 35% of homes with children under 18 years have firearms
- Firearm deaths occur primarily because of children having access to a firearm. More firearm deaths occur at a residence (66%) than anywhere else



**Figure 52 shows the reported location of decedent at time of death**

### Finding:

- Handguns were used in 84% of the firearm-related deaths

### Facts:

- More than 50% of U.S. homes have one or more firearms in an unlocked location and 43% have unlocked firearms (meaning loaded, without a trigger or other safety lock mechanism (AJPH, 2000))
- In Georgia, more firearm deaths are due to handguns, which are specifically addressed in Georgia's law regarding child access to handguns

### Opportunities for Prevention:

#### *For parents*

- Enroll youth in hunter education classes that support and promote the safe use of firearms at all times
- Remind youth how to transport guns safely while hunting or engaging in hunting sports
- Children may come in contact with a gun at a neighbor's house. It is important parents and caregivers teach children what to do if a gun is found at another home
- Store firearms responsibly, utilizing a safety locking device and/or secure storage

#### *For community leaders and policy makers*

- Support hunting education classes that teach youth respect and safety for all types of guns
- Develop school based firearm safety education classes to demonstrate how to reduce the risk of firearm deaths
- Consider support of improvements in the current Child Access Prevention Law to improve negligence penalties for inadequate firearm storage

#### *For professionals*

- Promote and train gun owners the use of firearm safety devices and how to keep them locked
- Teach conflict resolution skills to youth involved in state agency programs

### Resources:

#### **American Journal of Public Health**

[www.ajph.org/](http://www.ajph.org/)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[www.cdc.gov/ncipc/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/)

#### **Legal Community against Violence**

[www.lcav.org](http://www.lcav.org)

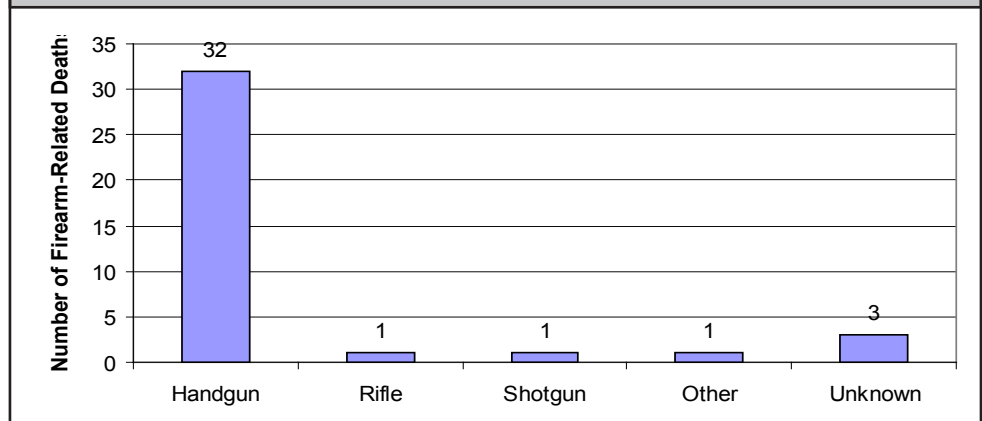
#### **National Child Safety Lock Act 2005**

<http://chilfsafetylockact.com/>

#### **University of Colorado's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence**

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv>

**Figure 53: Reviewed Firearm-Related Deaths by Type of Firearm, 2006 (N=38)**



**Figure 53 shows type of firearm used in reviewed firearm-related deaths**

Decedent was involved in a card game with a large group of people. An altercation broke out and the decedent was shot



## Race, Ethnicity, and Disproportionate Deaths

In 2006, there were 73.7 million children under age 18 in the United States (25% of the U.S. population). This represents an increase in the child population of more than 50 percent since 1950. By the year 2030, that number is expected to grow to 85.7 million. The 2006 estimated population in Georgia was 9,342,080. The number of children in Georgia under age 18 was 2,291,227 representing approximately 25% of the total population of the state. Racial and ethnic diversity is greater in the adolescent population than in the U.S. population as a whole, and diversity among adolescents is increasing.

Georgia population estimates from 2006 suggest that African-American male children (age 0-17) made up about 17% of the child population, but 28% of all child deaths. In contrast, White males made up about 31% of the child population, and a proportional 30% of all child deaths. African-American females made up about 17% of the child population and 21% of all child deaths. White females were 29% of the child population, but 21% of all child deaths. Hispanic males made up five percent of the child population and a proportional five percent of all child deaths. Hispanic females also made up five percent of the child population but only two percent of all child deaths. Other racial and ethnic groups were combined (including Asian and American Indian/Alaska Natives) and males in this group made up three percent of the child population in 2006 and one percent of all child deaths. Females in this group made up two percent of the child population and less than one percent of all child deaths. This data suggest that certain subgroups of the population are significantly more (i.e. African-American males) or less (i.e. White females) vulnerable to fatalities when compared to the population as a whole. For this reason, it is important to note the specific

### Finding:

- The percent of death are higher among males than females for both races, and the gender-specific differences (percent ratios) are slightly greater among White infants

### Fact:

- The racial gap in infant mortality is nearly identical for medical and external causes of death, with the overall rate of infant mortality among African-Americans about 2.2 times higher than Whites

circumstances that lead to identified racial disparities in child fatalities.

There are certain circumstances that are presented in other sections of this report that highlight the racial disparities seen in child fatalities—for example, infant mortality, homicide, and suicide. In 2006, infant mortality among African-Americans occurred at a rate of 14.1 deaths per 1,000 live births. This is more than twice the national average of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births. Additionally, infants born to African-American mothers are more than twice as likely to die in the first year of life as White infants -- 13.73 African-American infant deaths per 1,000 live births compared to 5.73 among Whites (Children's Defense Fund).

Suicide data show that Hispanic and White non-Hispanic adolescents were more likely than African-American non-Hispanic adolescents to have seriously considered suicide. African-American and Hispanic females have the lowest rates of suicide completion. Among 15-19 year old males, American Indians/Alaska Natives have the highest suicide rate - two to four times the rate of any other ethnic/racial group. Among adolescents age 15-19, males are five times more likely than females to become homicide victims. For young African-American males, homicide is the leading cause of death (Act for Youth, 2008).

There are a myriad of factors contributing to disparities among racial/ethnic populations. During these difficult times of economic turbulence, many of the disparities highlighted will worsen as the need for assistance will dramatically increase. Therefore, a collaborative approach to addressing these disparities should be implemented in an effort to mobilize communities to enhance the lives of our children and their families.

**Figure 54: Deaths to Infants and Percent of Population in Georgia by Race and Gender, 2006 (Based on Death Certificates)**

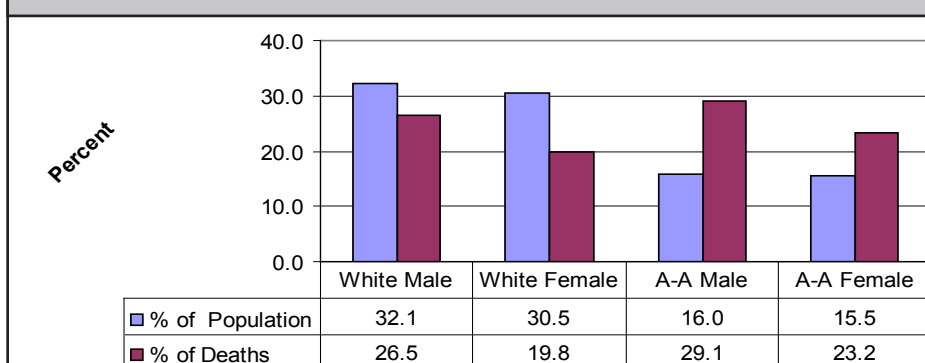


Figure 54 shows the number of deaths to infants and percent of the population by race and gender



**Finding:**

- The racial disparities are not as pronounced for the 1-17 year old age group. Males are more likely to die than females, and the gender difference is greater among White youth than African-American youth

**Fact:**

- Age and race differences in adolescent death rates vary by cause of death, but child death rates have dropped dramatically since 1980

**Finding:**

- The number of deaths among Hispanic males is significantly higher in the infant population than any other age group

**Opportunities for Prevention:***For Parents*

- Learn about the importance of maintaining pre-natal health
- Seek information regarding effective parenting methods to ensure overall healthy child development

*For Community Leaders and Policy Makers*

- Develop and implement strategies for educating the community about racial/ethnic disparities
- Provide diversity training to service providers and community advocates

*For Professionals*

- Educate parents about the importance of maintaining healthy lifestyles
- Collaborate with community advocates to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity

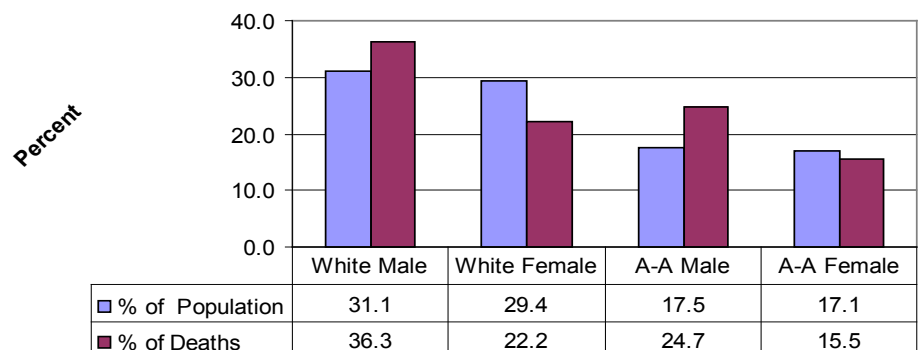
**Figure 55: Deaths to Children 1-17 and Percent of Population in Georgia by Race and Gender, 2006 (Based on Death Certificates)**

Figure 55 shows the number of deaths to children age 1 -17 and percent of population by race and gender

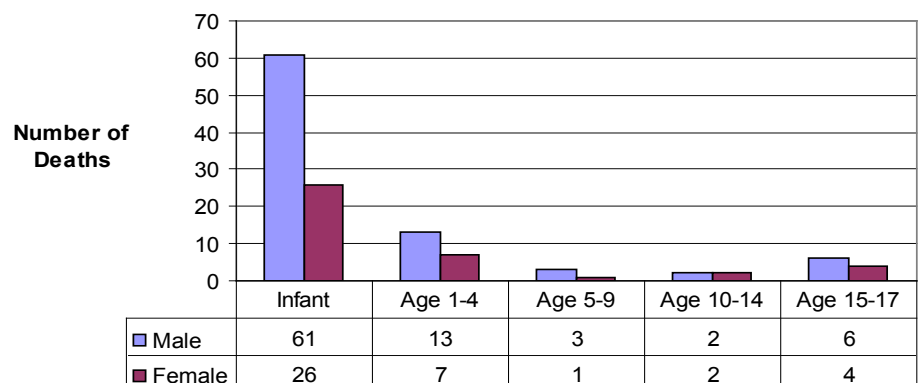
**Figure 56: Hispanic Deaths by Age and Gender, 2006 (N=125)**

Figure 56 shows the number of deaths among Hispanic children by age and gender

**Resources:****Act for Youth**

[www.actforyouth.org](http://www.actforyouth.org)

**Children's Defense Fund**

[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

**United States Department of Health and Human Services**

[www.os.dhs.gov](http://www.os.dhs.gov)

## History of Child Fatality Review in Georgia

### 1990 - 1993

Legislation established the Statewide Child Fatality Review Panel with responsibilities for compiling statistics on child fatalities and making recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly based on the data. It established local county protocol committees and directed that they develop county-based written protocols for the investigation of alleged child abuse and neglect cases. Statutory amendments were adapted to:

- Establish a separate child fatality review committee in each county and determine procedures for conducting reviews and completing reports
- Require the Panel to:
  - Submit an annual report documenting the prevalence and circumstances of all child fatalities with special emphasis on deaths associated with child abuse
  - Recommend measures to reduce child fatalities to the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives
  - Establish a protocol for the review of policies, procedures and operations of the Division of Family and Children Services for child abuse cases

### 1996 - 1998

- The Panel established the Office of Child Fatality Review with a full-time director to administer the activities of the Panel
- Researchers from Emory University and Georgia State University conducted an evaluation of the child fatality review process. The evaluation concluded that there were policy, procedure and funding issues that limited the effectiveness of the review process. Recommendations for improvement were made to the General Assembly
- Statutory amendments were adopted to:
  - Identify agencies required to be represented on child fatality review committees, and establish penalties for non-participation
  - Require that all child deaths be reported to the county coroner/medical examiner

### 1999 - 2001

- Child death investigation teams were initially developed in four judicial circuits as a pilot project, with six additional teams later added. Teams assumed responsibility for conducting death scene investigations of child deaths that met established criteria within their judicial circuit
- Statutory amendments were adopted which resulted in the Code section governing the Child Fatality Review Panel, child fatality review committees, and child abuse protocol committees being completely rewritten. This was an attempt to provide greater clarity and a more comprehensive, concise format
- The Panel's budget was increased

### 2002 – 2005

- The Panel published and distributed a child fatality review protocol manual to all county committee members
- Statutory amendments were adopted which resulted in the following:
  - Appointment of District Attorneys to serve as chairpersons of local committees in their circuits
  - Authority of the Superior Court Judge on the Panel to issue an order requiring the participation of mandated agencies on local child fatality review committees. Failure to comply would be cause for contempt
  - Authority of the Panel to compel the production of documents or the attendance of witnesses pursuant to a subpoena
  - Director of the Division of Mental Health added as a member of the Panel
- Funding was secured and an on-line reporting system was established for both the child fatality review report and the coroner/medical examiner report
- A collaboration was established between the Office of Child Fatality Review and the National Center for Child Death Review
- The Georgia Child Fatality Investigation Program was established through a partnership between OCFR, DFCS and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. A director was hired to advance a multi-disciplinary approach to child death investigation through development and training of local teams.
- A Statewide Model Child Abuse Protocol was developed and distributed to all Protocol committee members

- A Prevention Advocate was added, by policy, to all child fatality review committees. Statewide training was conducted for all prevention advocate members
- A quarterly newsletter was created and distributed. The newsletter is sent to all child fatality review members and contains useful information about the process as well as prevention
- Annual awards were established for the Child Fatality Review Coroner of the Year and Child Fatality Review County Committee of the Year. Awards are presented at the annual Child Fatality and Serious Injury Conference sponsored by the Panel, DHR, GBI and the Office of the Child Advocate
- A sub-committee of the Panel (including several outside agencies) was formed to begin working on a Statewide Prevention Plan

## **2006-2008**

- The Child Fatality Review committee protocol was revised and updated to reflect best practices. The Protocol was presented to all county committee members and is also available online
- The Panel subcommittee on prevention completed the Statewide Child Fatality Prevention Framework. The Framework was presented to the Governor's Office and other agency partners
- An annual award was established for the Outstanding Investigator/Team of the Year for death investigation cases.
- The CFIT Program expanded to address all types of multi-disciplinary child abuse investigations, including sex abuse, physical abuse and neglect as well as homicides
- The Panel added a Prevention Specialist staff position to assist the local efforts in child fatality prevention
- Annual CFR Coroner of the Year and CFR Committee of the Year winners were recognized by the Georgia Senate honoring their work
- The Office of Child Fatality Review merged with the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children

## APPENDICES

### CRITERIA FOR CHILD DEATH REVIEWS

Child Fatality Review Teams are required to review the deaths of all children under the age of 18 that meet the criteria for a coroner/medical examiner's investigation.

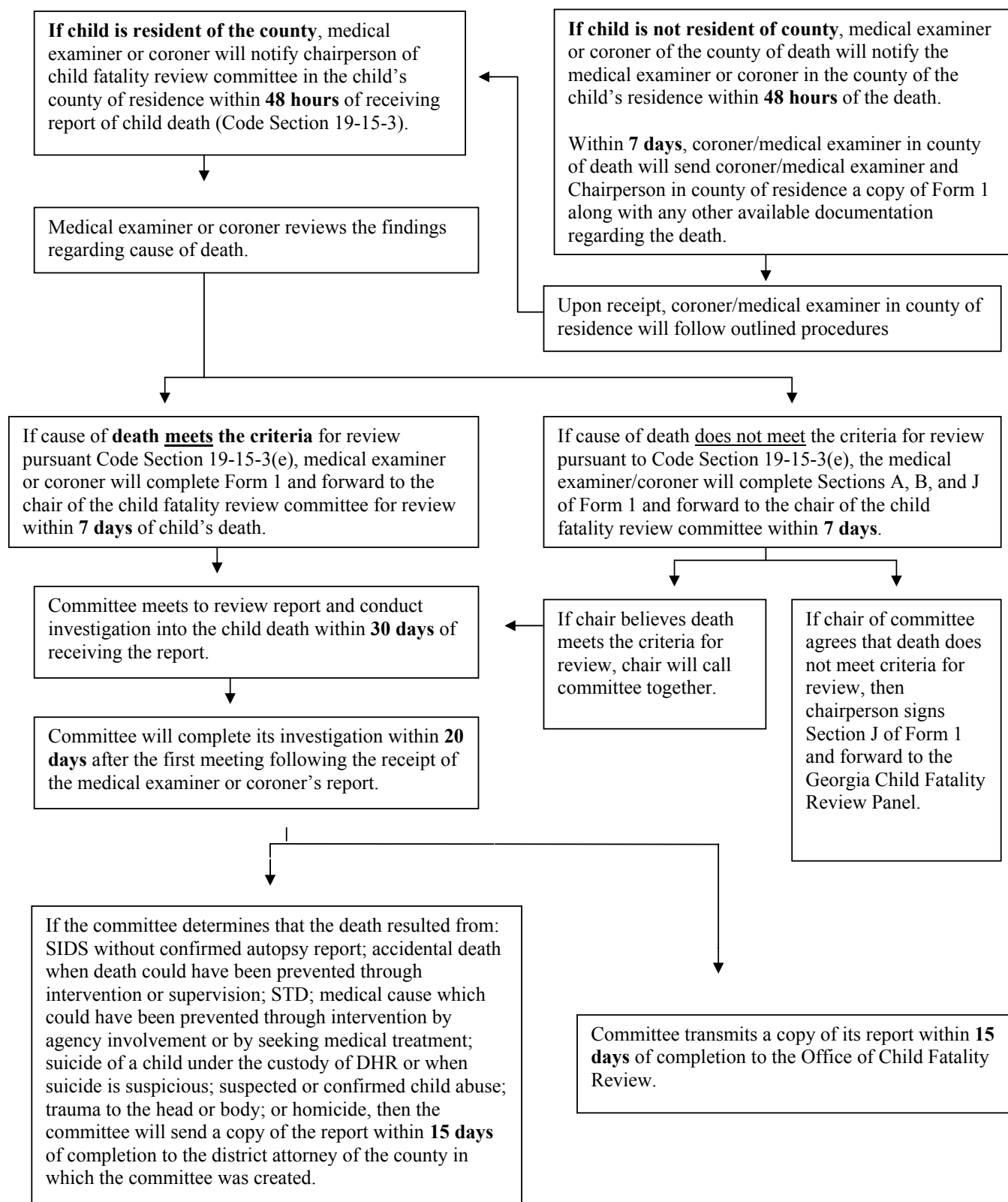
#### **“Eligible” Deaths or Deaths to be Reviewed by Child Fatality Review Teams**

The death of a child under the age of 18 must be reviewed when the death is *suspicious, unusual, or unexpected*. Included in this definition are incidents when a child dies:

1. as a result of violence
2. by suicide
3. by a casualty (i.e. car crash, fire)
4. suddenly when in apparent good health
5. when unattended by a physician
6. in any suspicious or unusual manner, especially if under 16 years of age
7. after birth but before seven years of age if the death is unexpected or unexplained
8. while an inmate of a state hospital or a state, county, or city penal institution
9. as a result of a death penalty execution

## APPENDIX B

### Child Fatality Review Team Timeframes and Responsibilities



**APPENDIX C1 -Total Child Fatalities Based on Death Certificate (N=1,825)**

Infant (Age<1)	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Fall	1	1		1			3
	Firearm		1					1
	Homicide	1	1	4	2			8
	Medical	251	186	290	226	9	3	965
	MVA	4	4	6	1			15
	OthInjury	1		2	1			4
	Poison	2						2
	SIDS	38	35	37	40			150
	Suffocation	6		2	5	1		14
	Unknown Intent	1						1
	Unknown	11	7	8	2	1	2	31
	Total	316	235	349	278	11	5	1194
Age 1 to 4	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	15	5	2				22
	Fire	3		4	3			10
	Firearm			1				1
	Homicide	2	2	7	5			16
	Medical	24	28	18	20	1	1	92
	MVA	13	7	7	1			28
	OthInjury	3			2			5
	Poison				1			1
	Suffocation	1	2	4				7
	Unknown Intent			1				1
	Unknown	3	3		4			10
	Total	64	47	44	36	1	1	193
Age 5 to 14	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	2		3				5
	Fall		1					1
	Fire		1	1	7			9
	Firearm	2						2
	Homicide	1	1	3	1			6
	Medical	32	23	34	24			113
	MVA	19	9	5	7	1		41
	OthInjury	7	3	1				11
	Poison	1						1
	Suffocation	1	1	1	1			4
	Suicide	2	1	1				4
	Unknown Intent			3	1			4
	Unknown	2	3		1			6
	Total	69	43	52	42	1	0	207
Age 15 to 17	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	3		7				10
	Fall	1						1
	Firearm			1				1
	Homicide	5	1	13	3			22
	Medical	21	19	17	15		1	73
	MVA	41	19	14	2	2		78
	OthInjury	6	3	2			1	12
	Poison	4	2					6
	Suffocation	1				1		2
	Suicide	11	4	4				19
	Unknown Intent	2		1				3
	Unknown	1	2	1				4
	Total	96	50	60	20	3	2	231

## APPENDIX C2 -Total Reviewed Child Fatalities (N=594)

Infant (Age<1)	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Homicide	1	1	3	3	1		9
	Medical	4	3	9	8	6		30
	MVA		1	2		1		4
	OthInjury			1				1
	SIDS	11	8	9	6	2	1	37
	Suffocation	4		5	7	4		20
	SUID	30	28	30	32	4	2	126
	Unknown	3	3	2	3		1	12
	Total	53	44	61	59	18	4	239
Age 1 to 4	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	16	3	1			1	21
	Fire	3		3	3			9
	Firearm			2				2
	Homicide	4	2	6	6		1	19
	Medical	3	4	4	6			17
	MVA	10	6	5	2	4		27
	OthInjury	1	1	1				3
	Suffocation	2	2	3	1			8
	Unknown	2	2	3	5	1		13
	Total	41	20	28	23	5	2	119
Age 5 to 14	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	2	1	3	1			7
	Fire		1	1	7			9
	Firearm		1			1		2
	Homicide	2	1	3	1			7
	Medical	4	3	8	6			21
	MVA	19	7	5	4	1	2	38
	OthInjury	2					1	3
	Poison	1						1
	Suffocation	1		2				3
	Suicide	2		3				5
	Unknown Intent				1			1
	Unknown		1					1
	Total	33	15	25	20	2	3	98
Age 15 to 17	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	A-A Male	A-A Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	1		6				7
	Fire	1						1
	Homicide	5	1	13	2			21
	Medical	2	2	6	4			14
	MVA	29	15	8	2	5	2	61
	OthInjury	2	1	1				4
	Poison	4	2					6
	Suffocation	1						1
	Suicide	11	3	5		1	1	21
	Unknown Intent	1						1
	Unknown		1					1
	Total	57	25	39	8	6	3	138



### APPENDIX C3 - Reviewed Child Fatalities with Abuse/Neglect Findings (N=116)

Infant (<1)	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Homicide	1	1	4	2	1		9
	Medical				2			2
	MVA		2	1				3
	OthInjury			1				1
	SIDS	1		3				4
	Suffocation	2		2	2	1		7
	SUID	3	3	6	5	1		18
	Unknown	1	1	2			1	5
	Total	8	7	19	11	3	1	49
Age 1 to 4	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning	9	1					10
	Fire	2		1				3
	Firearm			2				2
	Homicide	3	3	5	5			16
	Medical	1						1
	MVA	4		3				7
	Suffocation	1						1
	Unknown		2	2				4
	Total	20	6	13	5	0	0	44
Age 5 to 14	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Drowning			1				1
	Fire		1					1
	Homicide		1	2	1			4
	Medical				2			2
	MVA	3	3	2	2			10
	Poison	1						1
	Total	4	5	5	5	0	0	19
Age 15 to 17	Cause of Death	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total
	Homicide		1	1				2
	Medical		1					1
	Suicide	1						1
	Total	1	2	1	0	0	0	4

**APPENDIX C.4.A - Preventability for Reviewed Deaths with Suspected or Confirmed Abuse or Neglect (N=115)**

	Preventability			
Cause of Death	Not at All	Possibly	Definitely	Missing
Drowning		2	9	
Fire			3	1
Firearm			2	
Homicide	1	2	28	
Medical	2	3	1	
MVA		8	12	
OthInjury			1	
Poison			1	
SIDS		4		
Suffocation			8	
Suicide		1		
SUID		10	8	
Unknown		7	2	
Total	3	37	75	1

**APPENDIX C.4.B - Preventability for Reviewed Deaths with No Suspected or Confirmed Abuse or Neglect (N=478)**

	Preventability		
Cause of Death	Not at All	Possibly	Definitely
Drowning	4	9	11
Fire		4	11
Firearm	1		1
Homicide	2	6	17
Medical	48	26	2
MVA	5	37	68
OthInjury	2	4	4
Poison			6
SIDS	19	14	
Suffocation	1	8	15
Suicide	3	15	7
SUID	25	67	16
UnkInt		1	1
Unknown	4	13	1
Total	114	204	160

## APPENDIX D

### Number of Reviewable Deaths 2006



## 2006 Child Fatality Reviews, By County, By Age Groups

Appendix G presents county level data for the Child Fatality Review process in 2006. The data are presented for four age groups (infants less than one year old, children from 1 to 4 years of age, children 5 to 14, and teenagers 15 to 17 years). Four numbers are provided for each age group:

**Total Deaths:** The total number of deaths (all causes) for that age group. This number is generally based on Georgia death certificate data and only includes deaths to Georgia residents under the age of 18. This includes deaths of Georgia residents that occurred in other states and were reported back to Georgia Vital Records, but it does not include deaths of out-of-state residents that occurred in Georgia. The review committee of the child's county of residence has the responsibility of reviewing deaths. However, the residence determined by the committee may not match the residence reported on the death certificate. If the review committees identified any deaths that occurred to residents of other states and were coded as Georgia residents on the death certificates, then those deaths are not included in the child death statistics presented in this report.

**Reviewable Deaths:** The number of SIDS/SUID, unintentional, or violence-related deaths (reviewable deaths) according to the death certificate classifications. Although other deaths due to medical or natural causes may be eligible for review according to OCGA 19-15-3(e), SIDS deaths are explicitly required to be reviewed, and unintentional/violence related deaths should be reviewed as "sudden or unexpected deaths." Thus, this number represents a minimum number of deaths that should be reviewed. This is a subset of total deaths.

The death certificate is not a "perfect" determinant of reviewable deaths. For example, a death certificate may be filed with "R99" (undetermined) for the cause of death. The review committee may have autopsy or toxicology information that identifies a specific cause. If that is a medical cause, the review committee may not complete a review.

**Reviewable Deaths Reviewed:** The number of SIDS/SUID, unintentional, or violence-related deaths that were reviewed. This number is a measure of how well a county identified and reviewed the minimum number of appropriate deaths. This is a subset of the total "reviewable" deaths. However, there are several sources of error (or inconsistencies) in the county-level tables. The CFR committee may have access to additional information regarding the death, and the committee may reach a different conclusion regarding the cause of death.

**Total Deaths Reviewed:** This is the total number of child deaths in 2006 for which a Child Fatality Review Report was submitted. It includes deaths due to natural causes (other than SIDS) in addition to those deaths that were identified as eligible for review. This reflects the work of the committee within the county of residence identified from the death certificates.

One hundred fifteen (115) of 574 "reviewable" CY2006 deaths were not reviewed (in contrast, only five were not reviewed in 2004). There were also 43 reviewed deaths that could not be matched to a death certificate.

County	All Deaths						All Reviewable Deaths						Reviewable Deaths Reviewed						All Deaths Reviewed					
	<1	1-4	5-14	15-17	Total		<1	1-4	5-14	15-17	Total		<1	1-4	5-14	15-17	Total		<1	1-4	5-14	15-17	Total	To-tal
Appling	4		0	2	6		2		0	2	4		2		0	1	3		2		0	1	3	3
Atkinson	1		0		1		1		0		1		1		0		1		1		0		1	1
Bacon	1	1	0		2			1	0		1			1	0		1			1	0		1	1
Baker	1	1	0		2		1	1	0		2		1	1	0		2		1	1	0		2	2
Baldwin	3	2	1		6			2	0		2			1	0		1			1	1		2	2
Banks	2		2	1	5		2		1	1	4		2		1		3		2		2		4	4
Barrow	4	1	1	1	7		3		0	1	4		3		0	1	4		4	1	0	1	6	6
Bartow	10	2	0	4	16		1		0	1	2		1		0	1	2		3	3	0	1	7	7
Ben Hill	3		0		3		1		0		1		1		0		1		1		0		1	1
Berrien	3		1	1	5		2		1	1	4		2		1	1	4		2		1	1	4	4
Bibb	34	1	9	3	47		6		4	1	11		5		2		7		5		2		7	7
Bleckley		1	2		3				2		2				2		2			1	2		3	3
Brantley	1	1	0		2				0		0				0		0				0		0	0
Brooks	4		1		5				0		0				0		0				0		0	0
Bryan	1	1	2	1	5				0	1	1				0		0				0		0	0
Bulloch	4	2	2	1	9		1	1	2	1	5		1	1	2	1	5			2	2	1	5	5
Burke	6	2	2		10		2	2	1		5		2	2	1		5		3	2	2		7	7
Butts	4		1	1	6		2		0	1	3		2		0		2		2		0		2	2
Calhoun	1		0		1				0		0				0		0		1		0		1	1
Camden	5	3	1	1	10		2	2	0	1	5		2	2	0	1	5		3	2	0	1	6	6
Candler	1		0	1	2				0	1	1				0	1	1				0	1	1	1
Carroll	12	2	1	6	21		5	1	1	2	9		5	1	1	2	9		6	1	1	4	12	12
Catoosa	4	2	0	2	8		3	1	0	1	5		1	1	0	1	3		1	1	0	1	3	3
Charlton	4	1	0		5		1	1	0		2		1	1	0		2		1	1	0		2	2
Chatham	52	3	6	8	69		6	1	1	5	13		5	1	1	5	12		12	3	3	7	25	25
Chattahoochee	3		0		3				0		0				0		0				0		0	0
Chattooga	1		1	3	5				1	2	3				1	2	3				1	2	3	3
Cherokee	9	1	5	4	19		3		1	3	7		3		1	3	7		2		2	4	8	8
Clarke	7	2	0	1	10		1	1	0	1	3		1	1	0		2		4	1	0		5	5
Clay	1		0		1		1		0		1				0		0				0		0	0
Clayton	43	6	5	8	62		9	2	4	3	18		8	2	2	3	15		11	3	2	5	21	21
Clinch			0		0				0		0				0		0				0		0	0

County	All Deaths									All Reviewable Deaths									Reviewable Deaths Reviewed									All Deaths Reviewed								
	88	14	9	9	120	13	6	5	9	33	10	6	4	9	29	14	10	5	9	38																
Cobb																																				
Coffee	10	2	0	1	13	1	2	0		3	1	2	0		3	3	2	0		5																
Colquitt	7	1	1	3	12	2		0	3	5	2		0	3	5	1	1	0	4	6																
Columbia	11	5	1	2	19	3		0	1	4	3		0		3	3	1	0		4																
Cook	6		0	2	8	2		0	2	4	2		0	2	4	2		0	2	4																
Coweta	9		3	1	13	1		2	1	4	1		2	1	4	2		2	1	5																
Crawford			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0																
Crisp	4	1	0	1	6	2	1	0		3	2	1	0		3	2	1	0		3																
Dade			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0																
Dawson			0	1	1			0	1	1			0	1	1			0	1	1																
Decatur	2	1	1		4		1	0		1		1	0		1		1	1		2																
DeKalb	76	20	16	17	129	14	11	9	14	48	11	7	7	9	34	14	9	9	12	44																
Dodge	3		0	1	4	1		0		1	1		0		1	1		0	1	2																
Dooley	1		0	1	2			0	1	1			0	1	1			0	1	1																
Dougherty	18		1	2	21	2		1	1	4	2		1		3	5		1		6																
Douglas	12	4	5	4	25	5	4	1	2	12	4	4	1	2	11	4	4	1	3	12																
Early	2		1		3			1		1			1		1			1		1																
Echols			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0																
Effingham	8	2	1	1	12	3	2	0		5	1	2	0		3	1	2	0		3																
Elbert	2		2		4			2		2			2		2	1		3		4																
Emanuel	4	1	1	4	10		1	1	2	4		1	1	2	4		1	1	2	4																
Evans	1		0		1			0		0			0		0			0		0																
Fannin		1	2		3		1	1		2		1	1		2		1	1		2																
Fayette	2		1	2	5			0	2	2			0	2	2			1	2	3																
Floyd	18	4	2	2	26	5	3	1	2	11	4	3	1	1	9	5	3	1	1	10																
Forsyth	8	3	4	4	19		2	1	4	7		2	1	4	7		3	1	4	8																
Franklin	2		0		2	1		0		1	1		0		1	1		0		1																
Fulton	96	18	15	17	146	19	8	4	12	43	9	4	2	7	22	10	8	3	8	29																
Gilmer	4	1	1	1	7	2		1		3	1		1		2	2		1		3																
Glascok			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0																
Glynn	11	4	2	1	18		3	1		4		3	1		4		3	1		4																
Gordon	8	1	2	1	12	3	1	2	1	7	1	1	2		4	2	1	2		5																
Grady	2		1		3	1		1		2	1		1		2	1		1		2																
Greene	3		0	2	5	1		0	1	2	1		0	1	2	2		0	2	4																

County	All Deaths							All Reviewable Deaths							Reviewable Deaths Reviewed							All Deaths Reviewed						
	78	10	20	19	127	7	3	10	13	33	7	3	5	10	25	11	3	6	11	31								
Gwinnett	5	1	1		7	3	1	1		5	3		0		3	3		0		3								
Habersham	21	2	1	5	29	1	2	0	5	8		1	0	2	3		1	1	2	4								
Hall	2		0	1	3	1		0	1	2	1		0		1	1		0		1								
Hancock	4		1		5	2		0		2	2		0		2	2		0		2								
Haralson		1	0	1	2		1	0		1		1	0		1		1	0	1	2								
Harris	2		2	1	5			1	1	2			1		1			1		1								
Hart	2		0		2			0		0			0		0			0		0								
Heard	12	4	4	6	26	2	2	1	1	6	2	2	1	1	6	2	2	2	2	8								
Henry	18	3	2	4	27	2	2	2	2	8	2	2	1	2	7	3	2	1	2	8								
Houston	2		0		2	1		0		1			0		0			0		0								
Irwin	10	3	2	1	16		3	2	1	6		3	2		5		3	2		5								
Jackson	1		0		1			0		0			0		0			0		0								
Jasper	3		0		3	2		0		2	1		0		1	1		0		1								
Jeff Davis	4	1	0		5			0		0			0		0		0	0		0								
Jefferson	4		1		5			1		1			1		1	1		1		2								
Jenkins	1		0		1			0		0			0		0			0		0								
Johnson	4	1	1	2	8	2		0	2	4	2		0	2	4	2		0	2	4								
Jones	4		2		6	1		0		1	1		0		1	1		0		1								
Lamar	1		2		3					2			2		2			2		2								
Lanier	7	1	1	2	11	2	1	0	2	5	2	1	0		3	2	1	0		3								
Laurens	5		0	3	8	1		0	3	4	1		0	3	4	1		0	3	4								
Lee	14	2	1	1	18	1	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	3	1	2	0	1	4								
Liberty			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0								
Lincoln	4		3		7			2		2			2		2			3		3								
Long	20	1	6	1	28	3		0		3	3		0		3	4		0		4								
Lowndes	1		1	1	3			1	1	2			1	1	2			1	1	2								
Lumpkin	3		0	1	4			0	1	1			0		0			0		0								
Macon	3		0		3			0		0			0		0			0		0								
Madison	1		0	1	2			0	1	1			0		0			0		0								
Marion	4	1	0	1	6	1	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	3								
McDuffie			1	1	2				1	2				1	2			1	1	2								
McIntosh	1		0	2	3			0		0			0		0			0		1								
Meriwether			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0								
Miller			0		0			0		0			0		0			0		0								

County	All Deaths					All Reviewable Deaths					Reviewable Deaths Reviewed					All Deaths Reviewed				
Mitchell	2		0		2				0					0						0
Monroe	6		0		6		2		0		2			0		2				2
Montgomery	2		0	1	3		1		0	1				0	1				0	1
Morgan	1		0	1	2				0	1				0				1		1
Murray	4		1	1	6		3		1	1		3		1		4		3		4
Muscogee	46	4	3	2	55		6	1	2	2		6	1	1	2	10	12	1	1	2
Newton	20	2	2	3	27		2		0	1		2		0	1	3	3		1	1
Oconee	1		1		2				1	1				1		1			1	1
Oglethorpe			1		1				0					0						0
Paulding	18	6	1	5	30		4	5	0	3		4	5	0	3	12	4	6	1	2
Peach	5		2	1	8				1	1				1	1	2			1	1
Pickens	1		0	1	2		1		0	1				0		0			0	0
Pierce	5		0	2	7				0	1				0	1	1			0	1
Pike	3		0		3				0					0		0			0	0
Polk	4	1	2	1	8		1		2	2				2		2			2	2
Pulaski	1		1		2		1		0			1		0		1		1		2
Putnam	1		0		1				0	0				0		0			0	0
Quitman			0		0				0					0		0			0	0
Rabun			0		0				0					0		0			0	0
Randolph	1		0		1				0					0		0			0	0
Richmond	40	4	6	5	55		6	4	1	4		6	4	1	4	15	8	4	4	20
Rockdale	15		1	2	18		2		1	2		1		0	2	3	2		0	2
Schley			0		0				0					0		0			0	0
Screven	3	1	0		4		2	1	0			1		0		1	1		0	1
Seminole			0		0				0					0		0			0	0
Spalding	10		5		15		3		2			1		2		3	1		2	1
Stephens	2		0		2				0					0		0			0	0
Stewart	1	1	0		2				0					0		0			0	0
Sumter	4		2	1	7		1		0			1		0		1	2		1	3
Talbot	1	1	0		2				0					0		0		1	0	1
Taliaferro			0		0				0					0		0			0	0
Tattall	7	1	3	2	13		3		0	1		2		0	1	3	2		0	1
Taylor		2	0		2			1	0				1	0		1		1	0	1
Telfair	6		0	1	7				0	1				0		0	1		0	1



County	All Deaths				All Reviewable Deaths				Reviewable Deaths Reviewed				All Deaths Reviewed			
Terrell	3		0		3	1		0	1		0	1	1		0	1
Thomas	8		0	1	9	1		0	1		0	1	2		0	2
Tift	7	1	0	1	9	1		0	1		0	1	2		0	3
Toombs	4	1	0	1	6		1	0	1		0		0		0	0
Towns			0		0			0			0		0		0	0
Treutlen	2		0		2	2		0	2		0	2	2		0	2
Troup	7	3	2	1	13	2		2	2		2	4	2		2	5
Turner	1	1	1	1	4			1	1		1	1			1	1
Twiggs	1		0		1	1		0	1		0	1	1		0	1
Union	4	1	0		5	1	1	0		1	0	1	1		0	1
Upson	4		0		4	1		0	1		0	1	2		0	2
Walker	10	1	3	2	16	4		0	1		0	1	3		0	4
Walton	6		1	2	9	1		0	1		0	1	2		0	3
Ware	6		1	2	9			1	1		1	1	2		1	2
Warren	1		0		1			0			0		0		0	0
Washington	1		1	1	3			0	1		0	1	1		0	1
Wayne	6	2	0		8		2	0		2	0		2		3	3
Webster	1		0		1			0			0		0		0	0
Wheeler			0	1	1			0	1		0	1	1		0	1
White	3	2	0	1	6	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	4		0	5
Whitfield	14	6	0	3	23	1	2	0	2	1	0	2	3		0	6
Wilcox	2	2	0		4	1	1	0		1	0		2		0	3
Wilkes			0		0			0			0		0		0	0
Wilkinson	1		0	1	2			0			0		0		0	0
Worth	4	1	0	1	6	1		0		1			1		0	1
Totals					1825								459			594
Percent Reviewable Deaths Reviewed = 80.0																

## Glossary of Terms

**AA** - African American

**Asphyxia** - the extreme condition caused by lack of oxygen and excess of carbon dioxide in the blood, produced by interference with respiration or insufficient oxygen in the air; suffocation.

**Child Abuse and Neglect** – an act, or failure to act, on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in serious physical or emotional harm, sexual exploitation, or death of a child

**Child Abuse Protocol Committee** - County level representatives from the office of the sheriff, county department of family and children services, office of the district attorney, juvenile court, magistrate court, county board of education, office of the chief of police, office of the chief of police of the largest municipality in county, and office of the coroner or medical examiner.

The committee is charged with developing local protocols to investigate and prosecute alleged cases of child abuse

**Child Fatality Review Report** - A standardized form required for collecting data on child fatalities meeting the criteria for review by child fatality review committees

**Child Fatality Review Committee** - County level representatives from the office of the coroner or medical examiner, county department of family and children services, public health department, juvenile court, office of the district attorney, law enforcement, and mental health, and prevention advocate

**Drowning Deaths** – Deaths that occur from water-related submersion and suffocation

**Eligible Death** - Death meeting the criteria for review including death resulting from SIDS, unintentional injuries, intentional injuries, medical conditions when unattended by a physician, while the child was an inmate or resident of a hospital or penal institution, or any manner that is suspicious or unusual

**Firearms** – any weapon that fires a high-velocity projectile, and includes rifles, pistols, revolvers, shotguns, handguns, and BB guns

**Fire-Related Death** – Death resulting from fire or burn-related injuries sustained in a fire, and includes deaths from smoke inhalation

**Form 1** - A standardized form required for collecting data on all child fatalities by coroners or medical examiners

**Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel** - An appointed body of 17 representatives that oversees the county child fatality review process, reports to the governor annually on the incidence of child deaths, and recommends prevention measures based on the data

**Homicide** – A death caused by the intentional actions of another person

**Injury** - Refers to any force whether it be physical, chemical (poisoning), thermal (fire), or electrical that resulted in death

**Intentional** - Refers to the act that resulted in death being one that was deliberate, willful, or planned. It includes homicide and suicide

**Medical Cause** - Refers to death resulting from a natural cause other than SIDS.

**Motor Vehicle-Related Death** – incidents that include the occupants of a vehicle, pedestrians struck by motor vehicles, bicycles, and occupants or riders of any other form of transportation (ATV, go-carts, etc.)

**Natural Cause** - Refers to death resulting from an inherent, existing condition. Natural causes include congenital anomalies, diseases of the nervous system, diseases of the respiratory system, other medical causes and SIDS

**“Other” Race** - Refers to those of Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American origin

**“Other Injury” as Category of Death** - Includes deaths from electrocution, heat-related injury, or the like (unless otherwise indicated)

**Perpetrator** - Person(s) who committed an act that resulted in the death of a child

**Preventable Death** - One in which with retrospective analysis it is determined that a reasonable intervention could have prevented the death. Interventions include medical, social, educational, legal, technological, or psychological actions

**Reviewed Death** - Death which has been reviewed by a local child fatality review committee and a completed Child Fatality Review Report has been submitted to the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel

**Risk Factor** - Refers to persons, things, events, etc. that put an individual at an increased likelihood of dying

**Sleep-Related Infant Death** – all deaths to infants that occur while sleeping but have no medical cause. Included are SIDS, SUID, and all suffocation/asphyxia deaths resulting from a sleep environment

**Suicide** – Deaths that occur from the intentional taking of one’s own life

**Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** - The sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene and review of the clinical history. In this report, SIDS is not considered a “medical” cause of death

**Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID)** - is a category used by child fatality review committees for deaths that appear to be SIDS but have other risk factors present that could have contributed to the infant’s death

**Trend** - Refers to changes occurring in the number and distribution of child deaths. In this report, the actual number of deaths for each cause is relatively small for the purpose of statistical analysis, which causes some uncertainty in estimating the risk of death

**Unintentional** - Refers to an action that resulted in death which was not deliberate, willful, or planned

