

2009

# Summary of Findings from the 2009 Child Death Review Annual Report

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# Summary of Findings from the 2009 Child Death Review Annual Report

The 2009 Annual Report of Child Deaths in Clark County, Nevada provides data regarding all infant, child, and fetal (over 20 weeks gestation) deaths occurring in Clark County in 2009. This represents the second year that the Child Death Review Team in Clark County reviewed 100% of the child deaths referred to the team by the Clark County Office of the Coroner/Medical Examiner; this includes all natural deaths, as well as all accidents, homicides, suicides, and undetermined cases. The team also reviewed all fetal deaths over 20 weeks gestation.

## Overall 2009 Child Death Statistics

### Manners of Death in 2009

- 283 cases reviewed in 2009 (9% decrease from 311 cases in 2008)
- 185 Natural (decrease of 8.4% from 202 in 2008)
- 57 Accidents (decrease of 12.3% from 65 cases in 2008, still higher than 53 cases in 2006)
- 4 Suicide (same as in 2008, but down from 12 in 2007)
- 17 Homicide (Decrease of 19% from 21 in 2008)
- 18 Undetermined (increase of one case from 2007 (n=17), same as number in 2006 and 2008)

### Causes of Death in 2009

- Decrease in motor vehicle incidents from 20 in 2008 to 16 in 2009
- SIDS decreased from 3 cases in 2008 to 2 cases in 2009
- Suicides remained the same at 4 cases in 2009
- Cases of blunt force trauma in 2009 remained the same as in 2008 with 5 cases
- Decrease in death caused by weapons from 17 in 2008 to 14 in 2009 and a decrease in suffocation/strangulation deaths from 17 in 2008 to 13 in 2009.
- Drowning up by one case (10 in 2008, 11 in 2009)
- Poisoning/Overdose cases increased again from 4 in 2007, to 12 in 2008, up to 16 in 2009

## 2009 Child Deaths by Manner of Death – Additional Details and Recommendations for Prevention

**Natural** – There were 185 natural deaths reviewed in 2009. 40.5% of these deaths were due to complications of prematurity, followed by congenital defect (27%) and chronic illness (13%). 77.8% of natural deaths were children less than one year of age. The mother's age was available in 92% of the prematurity deaths (n=75), and 21.3% of the mothers were 20 years of age or younger. We continued to see a decrease in the number of SIDS deaths in 2009 from 6 in 2007 down to 3 in 2008, then 2 in 2009.

### Recommendations:

- Continue to improve data collection and research on child deaths related to prematurity.
- Improve access and outreach for adequate prenatal care, particularly for young women.
- Improve parent education about proper management of common chronic illnesses in children.

**Accident-** Accidental deaths accounted for 20.1% (57 cases) of child deaths in 2009. The leading cause of accidental death included motor vehicle accidents (MVA) at 26.3%, followed by accidental overdose at 22.8% and drowning and suffocation at 19.3% each. Similar to the previous year, in 2009, nearly all (72.7%) of the drowning victims in Clark County were between the ages of one and four years and 72.7% of all victims drowned in a pool or spa. In 2009 nearly all accidental suffocations (n=10) were children less than one year of age and all of those cases occurred in a sleeping environment. For the second time in four years, overdose was a leading cause of accidental death (n=13). 46.1% of overdose deaths involved the use of opiate prescription pain killers.

### Recommendations:

- Continue prevention efforts aimed at improving motor vehicle safety, especially messaging about proper restraints for children and youth.
- Focus on changing regulations to bring older pools up to current standards for barriers to accessing the pool including, fences, gates, alarms, etc.
- Improve/Expand culturally sensitive outreach and education efforts regarding safe sleep environments for infants.
- Focus outreach and education efforts about the danger of recreational use of prescription drugs and well as investigate possible policy changes to better control these medications to prevent their recreational use by children/youth.

**Homicide-** In 2009 6% (17 cases) of child deaths were categorized as homicides. This is a decrease from 21 deaths in 2008 but an increase from 15 deaths in 2007. In 2009 children ages 1-4 years and youth 15-17 years were the most frequent age groups at 35.3% each. Homicides are categorized as either "firearm" homicides or "non-firearm" homicides, and in 2009 there were more non-

*This report was commissioned by the Clark County Manager's Office and is available at the NICRP website <http://nic.unlv.edu>*

firearm homicides (n=11) than firearm homicides (n=6). For firearm homicides (n=6) the data show that 50% of the victims had a prior juvenile justice history, and that only one of these incidents was suspected to be gang related. For non-firearm deaths (n=11), 81.8% were a result of child abuse (n=9) and in half of those cases (n=5) the perpetrator was the mother's boyfriend. Nearly one third (n=3) of the decedent's families had a history of involvement with the child welfare system.

Recommendations:

- Firearm Homicides: Prevention/Intervention programs should target minority youth, especially African American and Hispanic populations. These groups continue to be over represented among youth homicides in 2009.
- Non Firearm Homicides: Prevention efforts should focus on developing a network of services within our community to reach out to families at risk. Additionally, providing parenting/stress management training to adult caregivers in the home other than biological parents could also help reduce the risk of abuse.

**Suicide** –Suicide was the cause of 1.4% (4 cases) of child deaths in Clark County which represents a sharp decrease from 2007 when there were 12 suicide deaths, but is the same number as in 2008. 75% (3 cases) of the decedents had talked about suicide prior to their death, and in one case the decedent had made a previous attempt.

Recommendations:

- In 2009 suicides were youth ages 12-17 years indicating that prevention messages should target both middle and high school students.
- Expand existing firearm safety campaigns to include messages about preventing means for suicide. In 2009, three of the four suicide cases involved firearms
- Expand and promote gatekeeper training for anyone working with youth to recognize the signs/symptoms of suicidal ideation.

**Undetermined** – 6.4% (18 cases) of child deaths were undetermined, which is the same number as in 2008. This ruling is used by the Coroner's office when information regarding the circumstances of the death make it difficult for the medical examiner to make a distinct determination about the manner of the death. 14 of these 18 cases (77.8%) were infants less than 1 year of age. 2009 showed an increase in undetermined deaths for African American children rising to 27.8% of all undetermined deaths from 22.2% in 2008. In 13 of the 14 cases of children less than one year the child died in a sleeping environment, and was sleeping with another person (parent, sibling or both).

### **Summary of Child Welfare History for all 2009 Child Deaths**

The team records whether a child or their family has ever had any involvement with the Department of Family Services (DFS).

- 63 of the 283 cases reviewed had some family history of involvement with CPS – this is the highest count in the past 4 years.
- In 8 cases the child/family had an open case with CPS at the time of the child's death.
- In 1 case the child was in foster/shelter care at the time of their death.
- In 2009 there were 18 substantiated death allegations of abuse or neglect.
- Of the 18 substantiated allegations (6.4% of all child deaths in Clark County), 8 were ruled accidents, while 6 were ruled homicides, In 10 of these cases the child or a sibling had prior history with CPS.

### **2009 CDR Team Prevention Activities**

- In 2009 the team added members from the Henderson Fire Department and North Las Vegas Fire Department as well as the UMC Pediatric Trauma Program.
- In 2009 the team invited the Baby's Bounty president and founder to attend the meeting to discuss her program. Following that discussion the team was able to provide Baby's Bounty with safe sleep brochures to be included in all diaper bags they supply to new mothers.
- In 2009 NICRP also presented the findings to the Clark County Commission, Henderson City Council, and a councilwoman with the City of North Las Vegas. Zip code specific data were also provided to the City of Las Vegas for review.
- The team's coordinator was invited to attend a one day CDC Appleseed Project Workshop on Drowning Prevention. As a result of this meeting representatives from the Southern Nevada Health District's Drowning Prevention Program were invited to talk to the CDR team about the data that they track on fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents to help improve agency collaboration and data collection.
- The NICRP used information from the review meetings and its 2008 Child Death Report to create a "Child Safety Booklet" for parents in Clark County. This booklet is organized by age group and provides prevention information and statistics for parents to keep their children safe from accidental injuries. The booklet is currently under review and may possibly be used as a part of other County wide injury prevention efforts.

*This report was commissioned by the Clark County Manager's Office and is available at the NICRP website <http://nic.unlv.edu>*