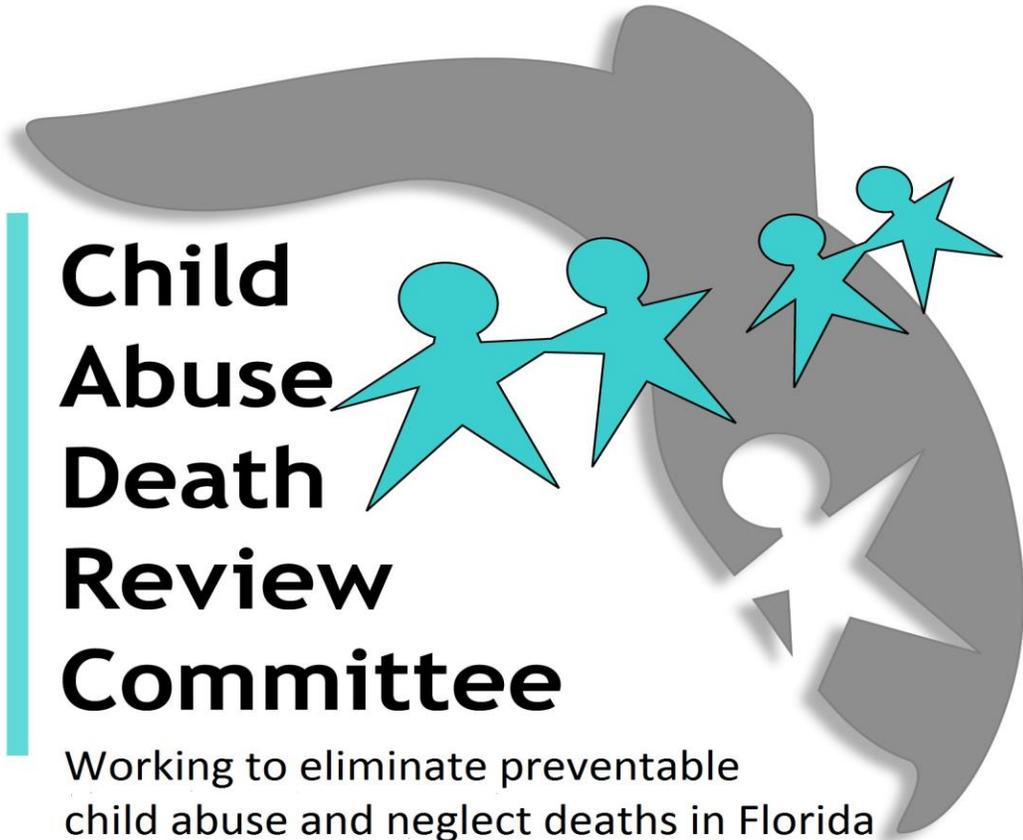


## Guidelines for the State Committee

A large, light gray silhouette of the state of Florida is positioned in the background. Overlaid on the map are several stylized human figures. Five teal-colored figures are arranged in a line across the top and middle of the map, holding hands. One white-colored figure is positioned in the lower right portion of the map, appearing to be in a different pose. A vertical teal bar is located to the left of the main title text.

# Child Abuse Death Review Committee

Working to eliminate preventable  
child abuse and neglect deaths in Florida



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## CHAPTER I

### PURPOSE OF CHILD ABUSE DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEES

#### 1.1 Background and Description

The Florida Child Abuse Death Review Committee was established by statute in s. 383.402, F.S., in 1999. The committee is established within the Department of Health, and utilizes state and local multi-disciplinary committees to review the facts and circumstances of all child deaths reported as suspected abuse or neglect and accepted by the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System within the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The major purpose of the committees is to make and implement data-driven recommendations for changes to law, rules and policies, as well as develop practice standards that support the safe and healthy development of children and reduce preventable deaths.

#### 1.2 Mission Statement

Through systemic review and analysis of child deaths, identify and implement prevention strategies to eliminate child abuse and neglect deaths.

#### 1.3 Operating Principle

A public health approach to child maltreatment is needed to address the range of conditions that place children at risk of harm. The circumstances involved in most child abuse and neglect deaths are multidimensional and require a data driven systemic review to identify successful prevention and intervention strategies.

The state and local review committees shall work cooperatively.

- The primary function of the state review committee is to provide direction and leadership for the review system and to analyze data and recommendations from local review committees
- To identify issues and trends and to recommend statewide action

#### 1.4 Goal

The goal of Child Abuse Death Review Committee is to improve our understanding of the causes and contributing factors of deaths resulting from child abuse and neglect, to influence policies and programs to improve child health, safety and protection; and to eliminate preventable child deaths.

#### 1.5 Objectives

- Develop a system and protocol for uniform collection of child abuse and neglect death data statewide, utilizing existing data-collection systems to the greatest extent possible
- Identify needed changes in legislation, policy and practices, and expand efforts in child health and safety to prevent child abuse and neglect deaths
- Improve communication and linkages among agencies and enhance coordination of efforts

## CHAPTER 2

### STATE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the general standards for the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee membership, and outlines general duties and responsibilities of committee members.

#### 2.2 Statutory Membership

The State Child Abuse Death Review Committee is composed of representatives of the following departments, agencies or organizations:

- Department of Health - The Department of Health representative serves as the state committee coordinator.
- Department of Legal Affairs
- Department of Children and Families
- Department of Law Enforcement
- Department of Education
- Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association
- Florida Medical Examiners Commission, whose representative must be a Forensic Pathologist

In addition, the State Surgeon General is responsible for appointing the following members based on recommendations from the Department of Health and affiliated agencies, and ensuring that the Committee represents to the greatest possible extent, the regional, gender, and ethnic diversity of the state:

- The Department of Health Statewide Medical Director for Child Protection Team
- A public health nurse
- A mental health professional who treats children or adolescents
- An employee of the Department of Children and Families who supervises family services counselors and who has at least five years of experience in child protective investigations
- A medical director of a Child Protection Team
- A member of a child advocacy organization
- A social worker who has experience in working with victims and perpetrators of child abuse
- A person trained as a paraprofessional in patient resources who is employed in a child abuse prevention program
- A law enforcement officer who has at least five years of experience in children's issues
- A representative of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- A representative from a private provider of programs on preventing child abuse and neglect
- A Substance Abuse Treatment Professional

#### 2.3 Term of Membership

The members of the state committee shall be appointed to staggered terms not to exceed 2 years each as determined by the State Surgeon General. Members may be appointed to no more than three consecutive terms. The state committee shall elect a chairperson from among its members to serve for a 2-year term, and the chairperson may appoint ad hoc committees as necessary to carry out the duties of the committee.

Agency representatives who leave their agency during their term must notify the agency head, and the DOH Child Abuse Death Review Committee Coordinator. The agency appointment expires upon the effective date of the member's departure from the agency and the State Surgeon General will request that the agency appoint a new member.

State Surgeon General appointees who resign from their current position must notify the DOH Child Abuse Death Review Committee Coordinator. At the discretion of the Surgeon General, they may remain on the state Committee provided they are still active in their appointed discipline and continue to be employed in the specific job category where indicated. All appointees who leave their employment and otherwise cease to be active in their designated discipline must notify the Chair of the State Committee and the DOH Death Review Committee Coordinator.

All replacements to the state Committee will serve the remainder of the term for the appointee they replace.

## **2.4 Consultants**

The Department of Health may hire staff or consultants to assist the review committee in performing its duties. Consultants must be able to provide important information, experience, and expertise to the Committee. They may not use their participation on the Committee to discover, identify, acquire or use information for any purpose other than the stated purpose of conducting approved child abuse death review activities.

## **2.5 Election of State Chairperson**

The chairperson of the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee is elected for a two (2) year term by a majority vote of the members of the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee. Members of the committee with investigatory responsibilities are not eligible to serve as chairperson. The State Child Abuse Death Review Committee Chairperson may appoint ad hoc committees as necessary to carry out the duties of the Committee.

## **2.6 Reimbursement**

Members of the state Committee serve without compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in s. 112.061, F.S., and to the extent that funds are available. Consultants can be reimbursed reasonable expenses to the extent that funds are available. Requests for funding must be reviewed and approved by the Child Death Review Committee Coordinator.

## **2.7 Terminating State Committee Membership**

A member or a consultant of the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee may resign at any time. A written resignation shall be submitted to the Child Death Review Committee Coordinator. Should action be required, a letter shall be addressed to the State Surgeon General who will either make a new appointment or contact the agency head requesting the designation of a new representative.

## **2.8 State Review Committee Duties**

Chairperson

- Chair Committee meetings
- Ensure that the Committee operates according to guidelines and protocols

- Ensure that all new Committee members and ad hoc members sign a confidentiality agreement

Department of Health Committee Coordinator/Department of Health, Death Review Coordinator for the State CADR or designee

- Send meeting notices to committee members
- Submit child abuse death review data to the State Committee for review and analysis
- Maintain current roster and bibliography of members, attendance records and minutes

#### All Committee Members

- Develop a system for collecting data from local committees on deaths that are reported to the central abuse hotline. The system must include a protocol for the uniform collection of data statewide, which must, at a minimum, use the National Child Death Review Case Reporting System administered by the National Center for the Review and Prevention of Child Deaths, deaths that are reported to the central abuse hotline
- Provide training to cooperating agencies, individuals and local child abuse death review committees on the use of the child abuse death data system
- ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT— prepare and submit a comprehensive statistical report by December 1 of each year to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives which includes data, trends, analysis, findings, and recommendations for state and local action regarding deaths from child abuse. Data must be presented on an individual calendar year basis and in the context of a multiyear trend. At a minimum, the report must include:
  - (a) Descriptive statistics, including demographic information regarding victims and caregivers, and the causes and nature of deaths.
  - (b) A detailed statistical analysis of the incidence and causes of deaths.
  - (c) Specific issues identified within current policy, procedure, rule, or statute and recommendations to address those issues from both the state and local committees.
  - (d) Other recommendations to prevent deaths from child abuse based on an analysis of the data presented in the report.
- Encourage and assist in developing the local child abuse death review committees and provide consultation on individual cases to local committees upon request
- Develop guidelines, standards and protocols, including a protocol for data collection for local child abuse death review committees and provide training technical assistance to local committees upon request
- Provide training on the dynamics and impact of domestic violence, substance abuse or mental health disorders when there is a co-occurrence of child abuse. Training shall be provided by the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, and the Florida Council for Community Mental Health in each entity's respective area of expertise
- Develop guidelines for reviewing deaths that are the result of child abuse, including guidelines to be used by law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, medical examiners, health care practitioners, health care facilities and social service agencies
- Study the adequacy of laws, rules, training and services to determine what changes are needed to decrease the incidence of child abuse deaths and develop strategies and recruit partners to implement these changes

- Educate the public regarding the incidence and causes of child abuse death, and the ways to prevent such deaths
- Provide continuing education for professionals who investigate, treat and prevent child abuse or neglect
- Recommend, when appropriate, the review of the death certificate of a child who is suspected to have died of abuse or neglect

## CHAPTER 3

### MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE

#### 3.1 Conducting an Effective Meeting

The work of the Committee requires regular attendance and participation by all Committee members. Regularly scheduled meetings allow Committee members to make long-term plans and allow for better attendance. Members should become acquainted with protocol for data collection and analysis and come prepared to present their agencies' information and perspectives.

Each member agrees to keep meeting discussions and information regarding specific child abuse and neglect deaths confidential. Confidentiality is essential for each agency to fully participate in the meetings. Committee members are reminded of the following by the Chairperson.

- The review Committee is not an investigative body
- All participants agree to keep Committee discussions relating to specific child abuse deaths confidential
- Meeting minutes will not indicate any case specific information
- The purpose of the Committee is to improve services and agency practices by identifying issues and trends related to child abuse deaths and provide recommendations to address these issues and prevent other child deaths

Each professional brings to the review Committee a unique perspective, professional knowledge and expertise. Each member must acknowledge and respect the professional role of each participating agency.

This reference provides guidelines for the development, implementation, and management of the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee and will be reviewed bi-annually or more often if necessary. Revisions will be distributed to all committee members and posted to the Child Abuse Death Review website.

#### 3.2 Focus on Prevention

The key to good prevention is implementation at the local level. Review Committee members can provide leadership by serving as catalysts for community action. Prevention efforts can range from simply changing one agency practice or policy or setting up more complex interventions for high-risk parents.

The State Committee should work with local committees and community programs involved in child death, safety and protection. Some communities have child safety coalitions, prevention coalitions or active citizen advocacy groups. Connect state and local Committee findings to ensure results. Assist these groups in accessing state and national resources in the prevention areas targeted by their communities.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMMITTEE OPERATING PROCEDURES

#### 4.1 Obtaining Data from Local Committee Reviews

The Chairperson should work closely with the local committees and the state CADR Committee designee to ensure receipt of data from local committees.

Additionally, any meeting notes that directly relate to a specific child must also be secured and separate from general meeting notes.

#### 4.2 Record Keeping and Retention

All records (e.g., completed data forms with attachments, copies of agency department files) must be maintained in a secure area.

All correspondence, public records requests, letters, and communications with the State Chairperson or other Committee members must be copied to Florida Department of Health Child Abuse Death Review Coordinator.

- Pursuant to State of Florida Department of State Record Retention Schedule #34 the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee shall retain a permanent copy of each annual report, either electronically or written.
- State of Florida Department of State Record Retention Schedule #35 addresses copies of documents received from third parties (e.g. individuals, entities, and government agencies) by the State and Local Child Abuse Death Review Committees pursuant to the review of child abuse deaths and for the preparation of the annual incidence and causes of death report required by Section 383.402, F.S. Record copies must be maintained for a period of one year from the date of publication of the annual report. Permission must be obtained from the Florida Department of Health State Child Abuse Death Review Coordinator prior to the destruction of any record
- Documents produced by the State or Local Child Abuse Death Review Committee (e.g., the data form, death summary report, or listing of records reviewed, etc.) must be maintained pursuant to State of Florida Department of State Record Retention Schedule GS1-S, item #338 for a period of five years. Permission must be obtained from the Florida Department of Health State Child Abuse Death Review Coordinator prior to the destruction of any record.
- Committee members must adhere to s. 286.011, F.S. (Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law), and can only communicate with one another about any committee business during a properly noticed meeting

#### 4.3 Child Abuse Death Review Case Reporting System

The State Child Abuse Death Review Committee utilizes the national Child Death Review Case Reporting System to record and track data from child death reviews. The System Guide provides instructions for completing the data form. The Child Death Review Case Reporting System Case Report must be completed on all child abuse deaths reviewed. The committee coordinator should review the data form to ensure that all information is accurate and that the case review is complete.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

#### 5.1 Introduction

As provided in section 383.412, Florida Statutes., all information and records that are confidential or exempt under Florida's public records laws shall retain that status throughout the child abuse death review process, including, but not limited to the following:

- Information that reveals the identity of the siblings, surviving family members, or others living in home of a deceased child
- Any information held by the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee or a local committee which reveals the identity of a deceased child whose death has been reported to the central abuse hotline but determined not to be the result of abuse or neglect, or the identity of the surviving siblings, family members, or others living in the home of such deceased child.
- Portions of meetings of the state or local child death review committees at which confidential, exempt information is discussed
- Recordings of closed meetings

Pursuant to Section 383.412, Florida Statutes, , a person who violates the confidentiality provisions of this statute is guilty of a first degree misdemeanor. Violation of confidentiality provisions by committee members should be referred to the representative agency/organization for appropriate action,

Specific questions regarding confidentiality of child abuse death review information should be directed to the Department of Health, Child Abuse Death Review Committee Coordinator. The Coordinator will seek advice on the issue, as needed, from the Department of Health Office of General Counsel

The State Child Abuse Death Review Committee and local committees may share information made confidential and exempt by this section:

- (a) With each other;
- (b) With a governmental agency in furtherance of its duties; or
- (c) With any person or entity authorized by the Department of Health to use such relevant information for bona fide research or statistical purposes. A person or entity who is authorized to obtain such relevant information for research or statistical purposes must enter into a privacy and security agreement with the Department of Health and comply with all laws and rules governing the use of such records and information for research or statistical purposes. Anything identifying the subjects of such relevant information must be treated as confidential by the person or entity and may not be released in any form

#### 5.2 Confidentiality Statements

Any person who may have access to any information or records regarding review of a child abuse death is required to sign a statement of confidentiality. Persons who may have access to this information shall include state and local Committee chairpersons, state and local Committee members, administrative and support staff for the state and local Committees who open or handle mail, birth or death certificates, records, or any other components required in the preparation of a child abuse death review case.

Each child abuse and neglect death review Committee shall maintain a file with signed copies of the member's confidentiality statement. Other confidentiality statements must be obtained for non-Committee member participants, as needed, on a case-by-case basis. These should be maintained in the local Committee's file.

### **5.3 Protecting Family Privacy**

A member or consultant of the State Child Abuse Death Review Committee shall not contact, interview, or obtain information by request or subpoena from a member of the deceased child's family. This does not apply to a member or consultant who makes such contact as part of his or her other official duties. Such member or consultant shall make no reference to his/her role or duties with the Child Abuse Death Review Committee.

### **5.4 Document Storage and Security**

All information, records and documents for child abuse death review cases shall be stored in locked files. Persons who have access to the locked files or information contained therein shall be required to sign a confidentiality statement.

Copies of documents provided for Committee meetings shall not be taken from Committee meetings. At the conclusion of the Committee meeting, the copies shall be collected and destroyed.

Data about the circumstances surrounding the death of a child is entered into the Child Abuse Death Review Data System from the Child Abuse Death Review Data Form. This secure database is used to generate summary or management reports and statistical summaries or analyses.

### **5.5 Media Relations and Public Records Request**

Public record requests or other media inquiries should be referred to the Florida Department of Health Child Abuse Death Review Committee Coordinator.

## CHAPTER 6

### CHILD ABUSE DEATH REVIEW ANNUAL REPORT

#### 6.1 Guidelines for Report

The State Child Abuse Death Review Committee is required to provide an annual report to the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1st. The report will summarize information gathered by the local committees resulting from their review of specific cases meeting statutory review criteria. The report will contain the following sections.

##### A) Background

- Program Description
- Statutory Authority
- Program Purpose
- Membership of the State Committee
- Local Child Abuse Death Review Committees

##### B) Method

- Overview of Child Death Data
- Department of Health Data on all Children Ages 0 through 17 years

##### C) Findings-Trend Analysis Based on Three Years of Data

- Causes of Death (Abuse & Neglect)
- Age at Death
- Gender and Race
- Age and Relationship of Caregiver(s) Responsible
- Child and Family Risk Factors

##### D) Conclusions

##### E) Prevention Recommendations

##### F) Summary