

*ONONDAGA COUNTY  
Child Fatality  
Review Team*



*Together, Keeping Kids Safe*

Annual Report  
2018

# **Onondaga County Child Fatality Review Team**

## **Annual Report**

**2018**

### **Our Mission**

To conduct a comprehensive, multidisciplinary review of unexpected child deaths in Onondaga county:

- Better understand how and why children die
- Analyze the patterns of child deaths
- Use findings to take action to prevent other child deaths, illness and injury
- Keep children healthy, safe and protected

### **Introduction**

The Onondaga County Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) reviews cases of Onondaga County children/adolescents 17 years of age and younger who have died unexpectedly and been referred to the Medical Examiner's office. In 2018, 20 child deaths were reviewed by the CFRT. The year of review may not be the year of death. Cases that have criminal charges/investigations pending are reviewed once the criminal case has been disposed of.

The Manner of Death include Accidental, Natural, Homicide, Suicide and Undetermined.

Eleven of the twenty deaths had a report filed with the State Central Registry because of the death. None of the cases was already open to Child Protective Services (CPS) or preventive services.

No children were in the care of DSS at the time of their death.

The CFRT did not write any independent reports during 2018.

The CFRT, which is facilitated by the Coordinator, held twelve meetings during the 2018 cycle. Mandatory team members include representatives from:

- Child Protective Services/Children's Division
- County Law Department
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department\*
- District Attorney's Office
- Emergency Management Services
- Medical Examiner's Office
- NYS Police
- Office of Children and Family Services
- Onondaga County Sheriff's Department
- Pediatricians with Child Abuse Certification
- Syracuse Police Department
- Syracuse Fire Department EMS

Permissive Members (case specific meeting)

Crouse Hospital  
St. Joseph's Hospital  
Syracuse Community Health Center  
SUNY Golisano Children's Hospital  
The Perinatal Center  
McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center

\*Mental Health – team decided to have mental health at all meetings.

At each meeting, there is a review of new cases and possibly an update on a case previously reviewed. There is also a discussion of old, new business, and an update on future trainings.

## **Manner and Cause of Child/Adolescent Deaths**

### **Natural Causes**

Three children, between the ages of 5 years and 16-years died of Natural causes.

- SUDEP (Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy)
- Asthma
- Pulmonary hypertension due to cardiac malformation due to multiple congenital anomalies

### **Accidental Deaths**

Eleven children, between the ages of 1-month and 17-years died of accidental causes.

- Blunt force injuries (one car vehicle accident)
- Blunt force injuries due to a pedestrian/vehicle accident
  - 2 children/2 separate cases
- Blunt force injuries due to automobile/pick-up truck collision
- Positional asphyxia due to bedsharing with an adult on soft bedding
- Positional asphyxia due to obstruction of mouth and nose
- Suffocation due to unsafe sleep environment
- Mixed drug toxicity
- Drowning
- Esophageal ulceration into arch of aorta due to ingestion of battery
- Anoxic brain injury due to positional asphyxia due to entrapment between baby gates

### **Suicide Deaths**

None

### **Homicide Deaths**

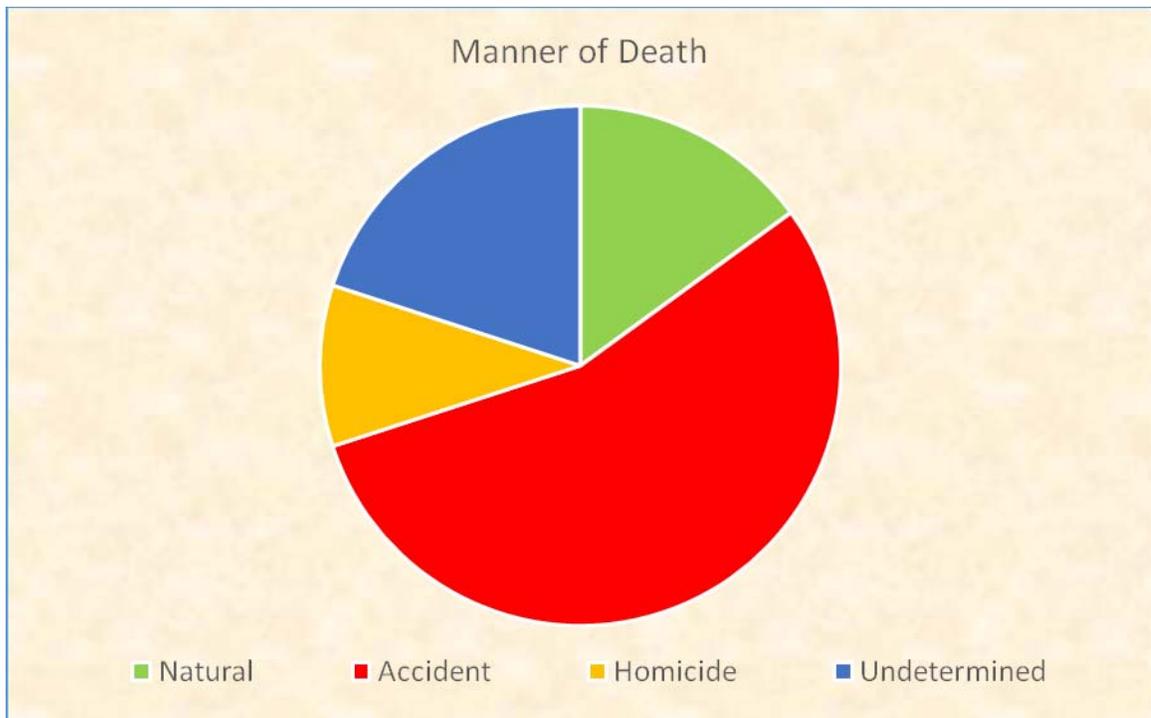
Two children died as the result of Homicide.

- One 15-year-old died due to gunshot wounds/street violence
- One 9-year-old died due to a gunshot wound

## **Undetermined Deaths**

Four children between the ages of 2-months and 14-months whose deaths were Undetermined:

- Undetermined (unsafe sleep was a factor in two cases)
- Undetermined (two cases)



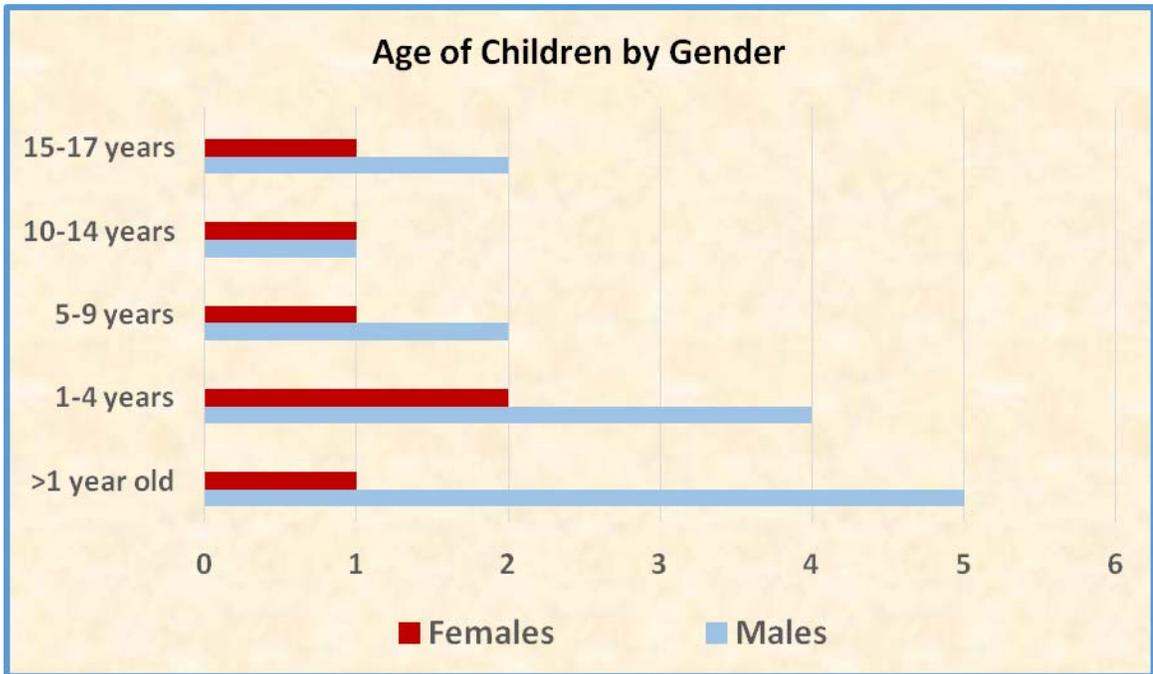
## **Summary of all deaths**

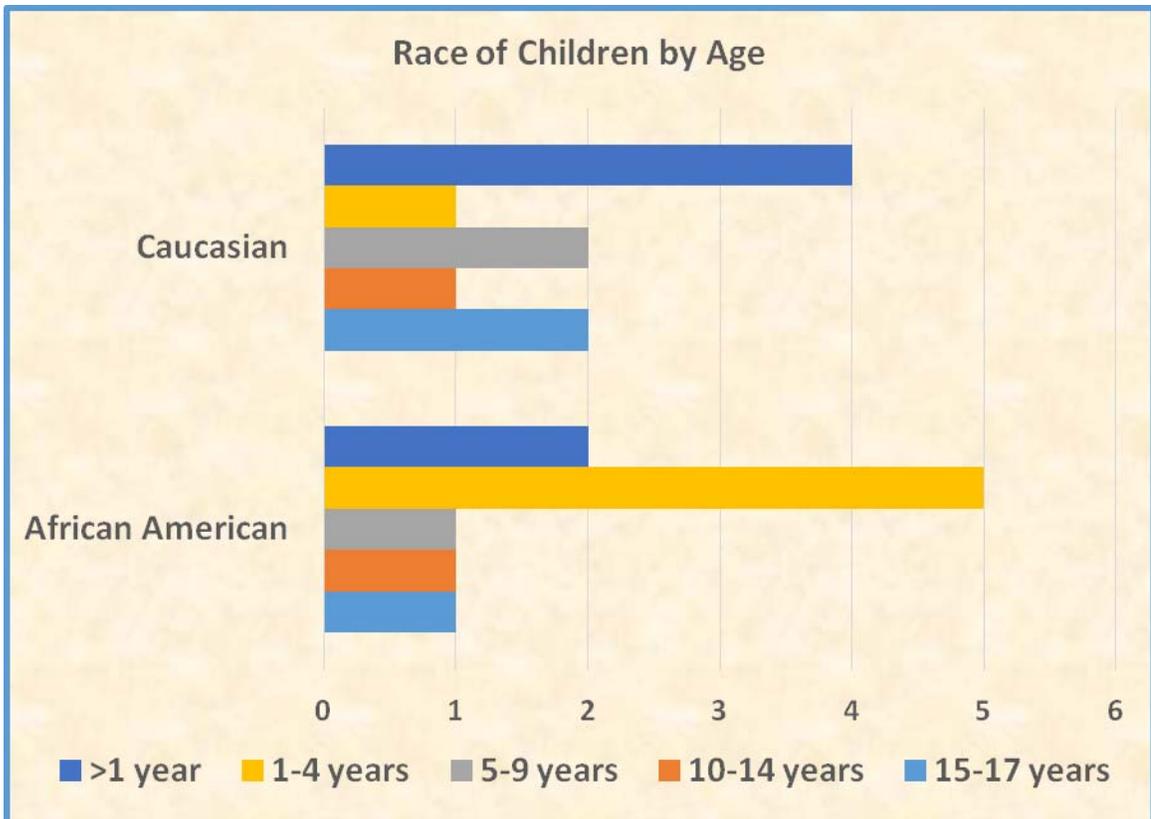
Accidental deaths were 55% or (11). Undetermined deaths were 20% or (4). Natural deaths were 15% or (3). Homicide deaths were 10% or (2) and Suicide deaths were 0%.

## **Infant deaths**

Six infants (under one-year-of-age) were reviewed by the CFRT. This is 30% of the total cases (20) reviewed.

Co-sleeping and/or unsafe sleeping environment were factors in five out of six or 83% of the infant deaths.





### **Team Activities**

Unsafe sleep environments is the leading cause or contributing factor in the deaths of the infants reviewed by our team. These are often preventable deaths. In an effort to promote health, wellness and safety to the children of our county, the following prevention measures were undertaken by members of our team.

- **Child Fatality Review Team Web-site:**
  - Informational articles, team agencies and resources within the community are listed on the web site.
- **Safe Kids Upstate:**
  - Safe Kids Upstate New York is led by Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. This coalition implements evidence-based programs, such as car-seat checkups, safety workshops and sports clinics, that help parents and caregivers prevent childhood injuries

- CFRT is an active partner participating in events and providing information on safe infant sleep:
- Safe Kids Easter Egg Hunt at Raymour & Flanigan – 3/24/18
- Safe Kids Sunday at the Chiefs Game – 6/3/18
- **The Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition:**
  - CFRT was a ground roots partner in forming the coalition and continues to be an active member and on projects. Youth are a focus of the coalition.
  - CFRT/CAC was present at the West Genesee HS Mental Health Wellness and Substance Use Disorder event on March 27, 2018. Literature was available at a table
  - The CFRT coordinator became a trainer for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention educational presentation ‘Talk Saves Lives’ in May.
  - The CFRT has a team (Team Hope) that walk in the AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk in Liverpool, NY in October. This was our 6<sup>th</sup> year.
- **NYS Children’s Justice Task Force:**
  - Coordinator is a representative of the NYS child fatality teams.
- **Safe Sleep Syracuse- Just for Men Facebook page:**
  - Information on safe sleep tips as well as other infant safety measures are posted on the page an average of twice a month. 29 posts reached 1,389 individuals.
- **Justice Center Education for female inmates:**
  - Safe Infant Sleep Education is presented to the female inmates housed on 3C routinely the third Tuesday of the month. Some of these women are pregnant and many have infants being cared for by others while they are incarcerated. 243 women received the education. Some women attend more than once which is good because we know it takes more than one time for the information to be processed and understood.

- **High Schools Health Classes:**
  - Safe Infant Sleep Education has been accepted in Nottingham, Henninger and ITC high schools. 246 students in health classes received the presentation.
- **Huntington Family Center Parenting Classes:**
  - 12 parents received the education
- **Letters to Pediatric Practices:**
  - A condolence letter plus safe infant sleep literature was sent to two different practices after the death of an infant in their practice.
- **Media coverage of the Unsafe Sleep issue:**
  - Nothing this year
- **Community/Agency Education & Literature Table:**
  - The McMahon/Ryan CAC does many presentations in the community on child abuse issues. Always included at any event with their literature is safe infant sleep information.
- **Advertising issues:**
  - The American Express TV/Internet Commercial entitled “Work At Home Dad” depicts an unsafe sleep image in the video. Per NYS Office of Children and Family Services guidance, no team could send a letter; however, we could as individuals, which I did. The letter was also shared with team members and other NYS CFRT teams to see if we could influence American Express to remove the advertisement.

**Trainings provided by team members or staff within team agencies relative to child fatality prevention:**

- ✚ April 16, 2018 ‘Safe Infant Sleep’ for EMTs at SAVES Ambulance Services

- ✚ May 17, 2018 ‘Fatal Child Abuse Cases: Lessons from Lost Children’ at the Lake Ontario Event and Conference Center, Oswego NY. This was a collaborative effort between Madison, Oswego and Onondaga county CFRTs.
- ✚ August 23, 2018 ‘Safe Infant Sleep’ for nine soon-to-be moms at the Perinatal Center
- ✚ September 18, 2018 McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center Conference – Dr. Robert Stoppacher, Our Chief Medical Examiner presented “Investigation of Infant Deaths and Unsafe Sleep Environments”
- ✚ October 4, 2018 ‘Safe Infant Sleep’ to a set of parents. Court ordered by a Family Court Judge
- ✚ October 24, 2018 ‘Safe Infant Sleep’ to home visitors. This was a collaboration between the CFRT and REACH CNY.

### **Recommendations:**

Continue a safe sleep campaign with community agencies and pediatricians to try to decrease the number of infant deaths due to co-sleeping and/or unsafe sleeping environments.

Report prepared by:  
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January 9, 2020