

*ONONDAGA COUNTY
Child Fatality
Review Team*



Together, Keeping Kids Safe

Annual Report
2019

Onondaga County Child Fatality Review Team

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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 or were in the custody of the Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFC). In 2019, 17 child deaths were reviewed by the CFRT. The year of review may not be the year of death. Cases that have criminal charges or investigations pending are reviewed once the criminal case has been disposed of.

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

All seventeen deaths had a report filed with the NYS State Central Registry because of the death. Four of the cases were already open to Child Protective Services (CPS) or preventive services.

One child was in the care/custody of DCFC at the time of their death.

The CFRT did not write any independent reports during 2019.

The CFRT, which is facilitated by the Coordinator, held nine meetings during the 2019 review year. Mandatory team members include Onondaga County or local agency representatives from:

- Child Protective Services/Children and Family Services
- 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 – the 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

Two children, between the ages of 5 years and 9 years died of Natural causes.

- Complications of Lennon Gastaut Syndrome
- Complications of septic left knee arthritis of unspecified etiology

Accidental Deaths

Two children, between the ages of 12-months and 9-years died of accidental causes.

- Blunt force trauma of head and neck injuries (pedestrian/vehicle accident)
- Sudden death associated with unsafe sleep environment (bed-sharing with others)

Suicide Deaths

None

Homicide Deaths

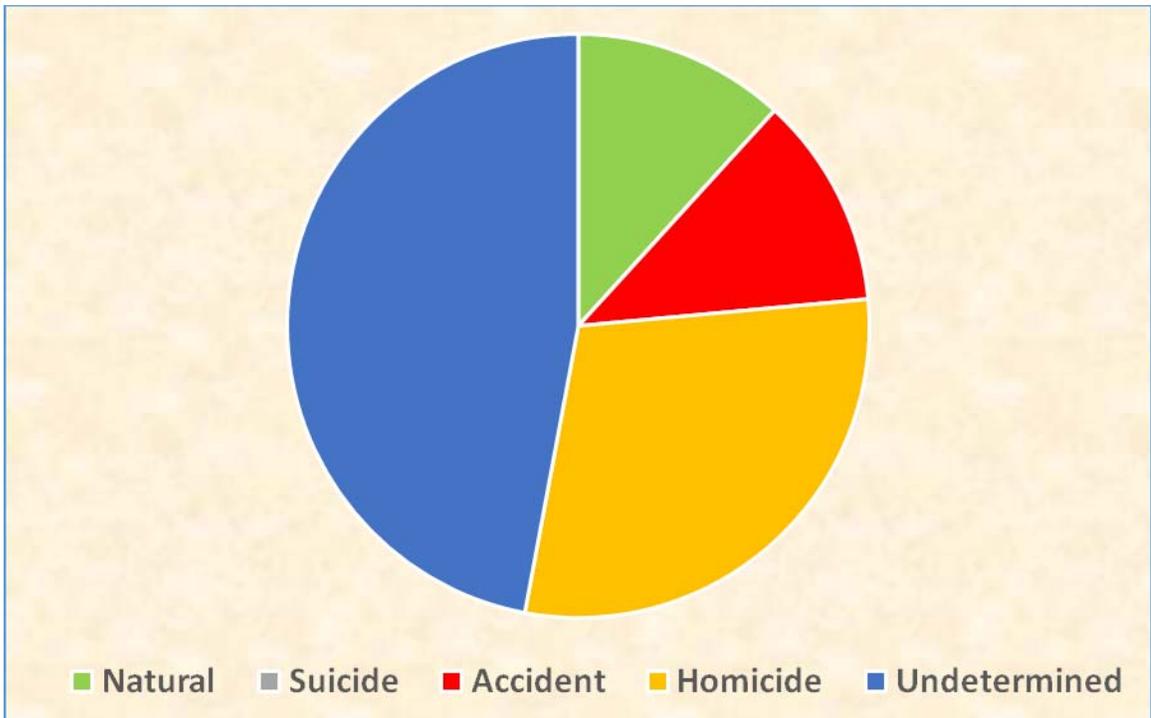
Five children died as the result of Homicide. Two separate cases

- 2 children from anoxic brain injury due to inhalation of products of combustion – arson fire
- 3 children from carbon monoxide inhalation – fire related

Undetermined Deaths

Eight infants between the ages of birth and 18-months whose deaths were Undetermined:

- All eight infants died with unsafe sleep environment as a contributing factor
 - Two were in cribs with soft bedding
 - Six were bed-sharing on a bed or sofa with others



Summary of all deaths

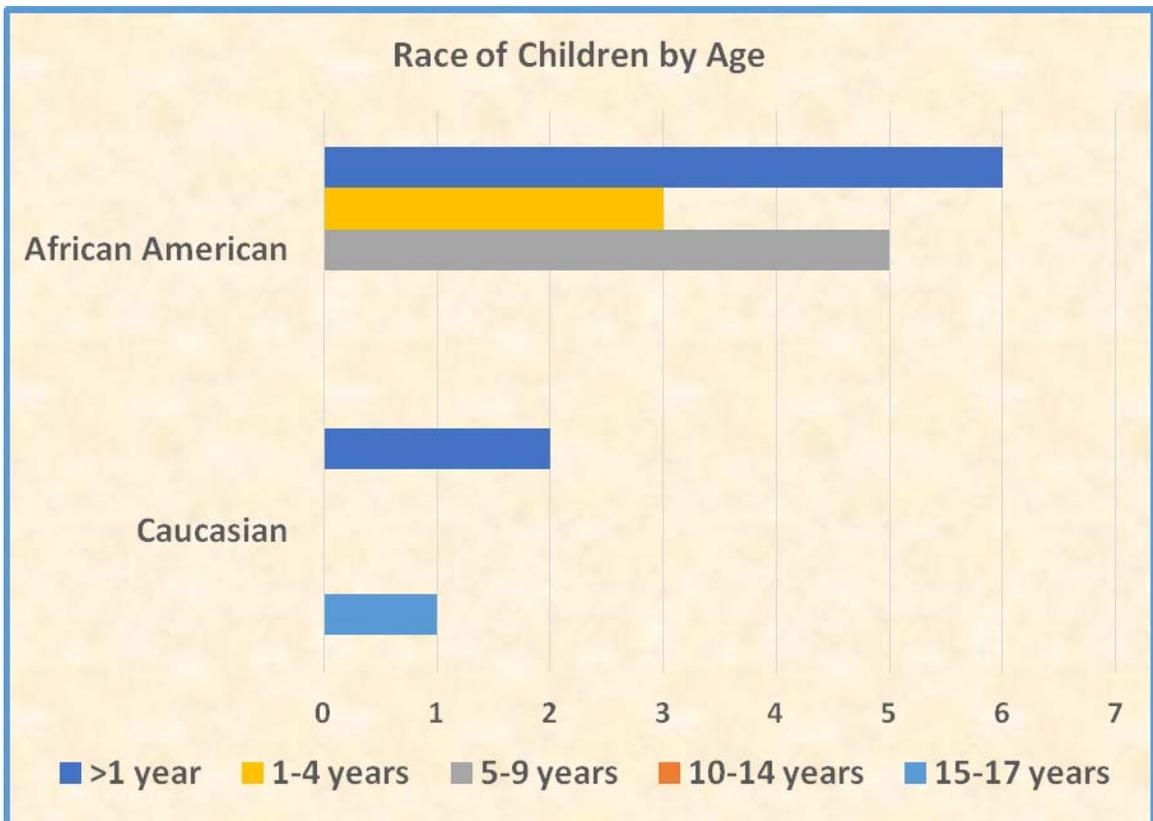
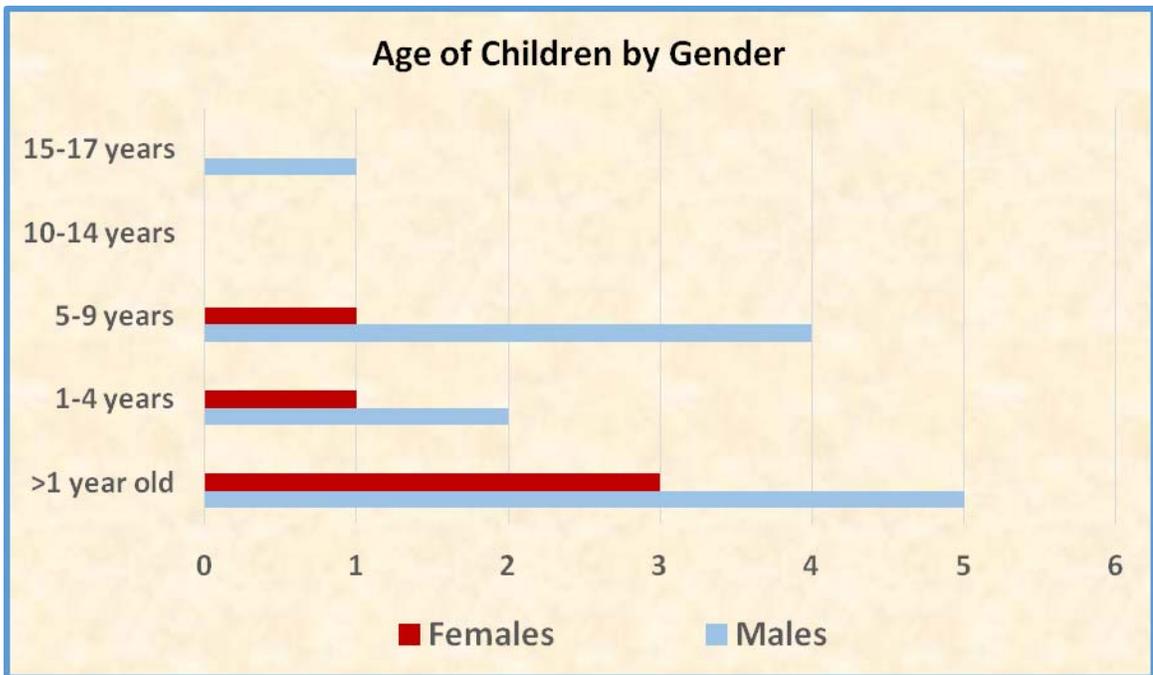
Accidental deaths were 12% or (2). Undetermined deaths were 47% or (8). Natural deaths were 12% or (2). Homicide deaths were 29% or (5) and Suicide deaths were 0%.

Infant deaths –

For the purposes of this report, infant will be from birth to 18 months

Nine infants were reviewed by the CFRT. This is 53% of the total (17) cases reviewed.

Co-sleeping and/or unsafe sleeping environment were factors in nine out of nine or 100% of the infant deaths.



Team Activities

Unsafe sleep environment is the leading cause or contributing factor in the deaths of 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:**

Thanks to funding from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, we were able to update our website this year. Informational articles, team agencies and resources within the community are listed on the web site. <http://www.onondagachildfatalityreview.com/>

- **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 Sunday at the Mets Baseball Game – 5/19/19

- **NYS Children's Justice Task Force:**

- The Coordinator is a representative of the NYS Child Fatality Review teams.
- A new Statewide Child Fatality Review team is being formed and the CFRT Coordinator and the team Pediatrician are members of this team.

- **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. 42 posts reached 3,802 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, many have infants being cared for by others and some are grandparents. 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. 118 women received the education.

- **High Schools Health & Child Development Classes:**

Safe Infant Sleep Education has been accepted in four of our five Syracuse City high schools and Liverpool high school. 713 students received the presentation.

- **Community Safe Sleep Education:**

250 individuals received a presentation and literature:

- Huntington Family Center
- Joseph's House for Women, Inc.
- Onondaga County Children & Family Services/Hillside Kinship care/Foster parents
- The Regional Perinatal Center Centering Group
- The Women's Health Wellness Center
- The Syracuse Community Health Center Centering Group
- OB Nurses from local hospitals
- Nascienta Health Nurses & PT/OT Therapists
- Family Support Services (DCFS)
- Promise Zone staff (School based initiatives/DCFS)
- Liverpool School Nurses and Social Workers
- McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center – 3 Lunch & Learn workshops

- **Community Foundation Grant**

The grant provided for three Lunch and Learn safe infant sleep workshops entitled 'Our Babies are Dying' at the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center.

Eight pack-n-plays with crib sheets were purchased from Cribs for Kids with financial support from REACH CNY. These were delivered and set up for the eight families by the various professionals in the community who identified the need after attending a safe sleep workshop. Parents also received safe infant sleep literature and instruction with the set up.

Bereavement coloring books are provided to surviving siblings by team members involved in a death investigation or service provision. These were purchased with funds provided by this grant.

- **Safe Sleep Ambassadors**

All of the members of the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center's Outreach Team became Safe Sleep Ambassadors through the Cribs for Kids certification program. The Outreach Team always include safe infant sleep education in their community presentations and at tabling events.

- **Community/Agency Education & Literature Table:**

The McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center hosts many presentations in the community on child abuse prevention. Always included at any event is information on infant sleep.

- **The Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition:**
 - CFRT is a partner in with the coalition and continues to be an active member. Youth are a focus of the coalition.
 - On 1/16/19, members of the Youth Project presented at a county-wide schools principals meeting about the Coalition and what resources we had available for them and their schools.
 - CFRT/CAC was present at the following events with suicide prevention literature:
 - Onondaga County Children and Family Services Wellness Day on 1/11/19.
 - Excellus Wellness Fair on 4/30/19.
 - West Side Support Network – Mental Health Awareness and Wellness Night at West Genesee HS on 5/20/19
 - Road2Recovery CNY Benefit Day at the Southwest Community Center on 9/7/19
 - The CFRT coordinator presented a training for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention educational presentation ‘Talk Saves Lives’ to new Syracuse City School District educators on 8/16/19.
 - Senators Round Table hosted by Senators Montgomery, May, Carlucci and on Mental Health for Youth on August 23, 2019 was attended by the Coordinator.
 - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day at North Syracuse Junior High School on 11/23/19. Literature was available at a table.
 - The CFRT has a team (Team Hope) that walk in the AFSP Out of the Darkness Walk in Liverpool, NY on October 12, 2019. This was our 7th year.

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

Larkin, C. ‘Talk Saves Lives’ a training of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention presented to new Syracuse City School District educators on 8/16/19.

Pekarsky, A. ‘Consensus on Abusive Head Trauma in Young Children.’ Stand Against Child Abuse Conference hosted by the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center on 9/17/19

Ehret, B and Larkin, C. ‘Our Babies are Dying’ Stand Against Child Abuse Conference hosted by the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center on 9/17/19

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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