



Chapter 10. Data Collection for Child Death Review Teams

Child Death Review Teams run on information. Without information about the child and the family, nothing can or will be done by the Team. Data are the foundations for identifying preventable deaths and developing prevention and intervention strategies and programs.

Why Data Are Important

- Data can be compiled and used to assist the Team with identifying the cause of child deaths and how to prevent it
- Data can be used to compare what one team does with what other teams do
- If you have reliable data, it can compare its experience with that of other demographically similar teams
- Data also support the work of activists who need quantifiable figures about a specific problem

All teams, if possible, should try to cultivate a data expert. This is usually someone in the county who is interested in databases and how to make them work. This person may come from a public health agency, the medical examiner's office or any of the other Core Member agencies.

Defining the Data Set

A data set might address but not limit itself to:

- Demographics about the child
 - Name
 - Date of birth
 - Date of death
 - Gender
 - Race/ethnicity
 - County of residence/zip code
 - County of occurrence
 - Parents' names
- Name and profession of person who certified the death
- Whether there was an autopsy
- Identification of agencies and private providers who had contact with, or provided services to, the child and family before or after the death. The data set should specifically identify:

- Agencies on the Team that had contact with the child before or after the death
- Agencies on the Team that had contact with the family before or after the death
- A summary of the contact history
- Investigation of the death. The data set will require information about:
 - The death scene preservation and investigation by Law Enforcement, if appropriate
 - Child Protective Services contacts
 - The autopsy findings, including impressions of the Forensic Pathologist and Coroner's Investigator
 - The prosecution response, if any
 - An assessment of the family with regard to continuing risk factors or possible family needs, and identification of whom did the assessment
- The responses of the criminal, juvenile or civil court systems, if appropriate. Available information may depend on when the Team collects its data.
 - Was a perpetrator identified?
 - Were charges filed?
 - If not, why not?
 - If so, what was the outcome of the case (e.g., civil litigation, criminal conviction, acquittal or mistrial) and any penalties for conviction
 - What were the results of any civil court proceedings?
 - What were the results of any Dependency Court action on behalf of other children in the home?
- A determination whether, in the team's judgement, the death was preventable. Based on what the Team learns, the team might identify:
 - What could have been different that might have prevented the death
 - What action the team could take that might prevent future similar deaths
 - Who will take what steps to implement the any identified actions

Analyzing and interpreting the Data Collected by the CDR Team

Data must be analyzed in order to bring the Team closer to its goal. As the team compares current data with previous years, it may identify trends or changes. The team can then begin to ask "why?" This information may then be utilized to review and perhaps change the manner and type of data that the Team collects. The following should be considered when reviewing data:

- Look at numbers over a period of time
- Put the numbers together in a format that allows for a comparison
- Compare your numbers to those of other jurisdictions
- Begin to tabulate where the data indicates the need for systems' changes
- Share appropriate data analysis with the community
- Use individual cases as examples when they present lessons

The analysis of aggregate data is essential to the development of meaningful and productive prevention campaigns. If a Team does not know how, where and why children die, it is most difficult to move from outrage about a single case to action. Funding for prevention strategies is frequently tied to being able to prove there is a need. Proving there is a need is complimented by rigorous analysis of the data compiled.