

# CHILD FATALITY REVIEW TEAM ESTABLISHMENT PROTOCOL



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

## Establishing a Child Fatality Review Team

Thank you for your interest in establishing a local Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT). Child Fatality Review is a prevention-focused process where multi-disciplinary teams meet to review individual child deaths to better understand how and why children die. Collected and reviewed child death information helps communities have a clearer understanding of underlying risk factors they might not identify otherwise. Established CFRTs review deaths in one county or regionally, including more than one county.

The following steps will establish a local CFRT:

### 1. Establish Team Organizer(s)

Team organizer(s) may self-identify or may be selected to organize a local CFRT. Team organizer(s) must be willing to dedicate the time needed to establish a local CFRT and may come from any profession. A variety of professionals establish local CFRTs in Texas including physicians, prosecutors, medical examiners, law enforcement personnel, justices of the peace, public health officers, Child Protective Services workers, and child advocates.

### 2. Contact the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) State Injury Prevention Coordinator

The team organizer(s) should contact the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator ([cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov)) to request CFRT information and membership materials.

The team organizer(s) may also request data (county- or region-specific mortality data) for a specified time period from the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator to assist with planning for future child fatality review meetings once a local CFRT has been established.

### 3. Contact an Operational CFRT

The team organizer(s) may contact an established and operating CFRT presiding officer with at least one year's experience in conducting child fatality reviews and request permission to attend one of their meetings. If the team organizer(s) do not know of an established local CFRT, they should reach out to the DSHS state

injury prevention coordinator for assistance ([cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov)). Observing an established CFRT can help provide operational insight.

#### **4. Contact Local Agencies**

Using the below guide of suggested CFRT members, the team organizer(s) should develop a prospective members list. The team organizer(s) should then contact potential members to discuss establishing a local CFRT.

Potential members should be in leadership positions and have the authority to implement necessary changes and obligate the agency in cooperative projects and protocols.

Potential members should have the knowledge and experience of direct and routine child fatality involvement.

Members will provide the CFRT with essential input and should be comprised of professionals with both executive and specialized responsibilities.

A local CFRT must reflect the diversity of the county's population and may include:

- a criminal prosecutor involved in prosecuting crimes against children;
- a sheriff;
- a justice of the peace;
- a medical examiner;
- a police chief;
- a pediatrician experienced in diagnosing and treating child abuse and neglect;
- a child educator;
- a child mental health provider;
- a public health professional;
- a child protective services specialist;
- a sudden infant death syndrome family service provider;
- a neonatologist;
- a child advocate;
- a chief juvenile probation officer; and
- a child abuse prevention specialist.

Appointed CFRT members may select additional team members according to community resources and needs.

When forming regional CFRTs, the team organizer(s) should consider which professions are involved with child death response(s) in multiple counties.

Counties covered by a regional CFRT should have many of the following areas of jurisdiction or responsibilities in common, such as DSHS public health region, district attorney's office, medical examiners' jurisdiction, hospital district, or emergency medical services/firefighter's district.

Each county covered by a regional CFRT should have a member representative from that county on the regional CFRT. A regional director or other professional whose jurisdiction or responsibilities include the county would fulfill this requirement.

## **5. Conduct a Stakeholders Meeting**

The stakeholders meeting provides community stakeholders and prospective CFRT members an opportunity to discuss local CFRT organization and operation prior to the first child fatality review meeting.

The team organizer(s) should invite prospective CFRT members, the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator, and, if possible, an established CFRT member to attend this meeting.

### **During a stakeholders meeting:**

- Prospective team members will introduce themselves and provide information about their agency. The team organizer(s) will lead a discussion of prospective team member roles. Please contact the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator ([cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov)) for more information.
- The DSHS state injury prevention coordinator will review and discuss the CFRT authorizing statute, [Texas Family Code, Chapter 264, Subchapter F](#), and provide important Texas child fatality review information to meeting attendees.

- Meeting attendees will compile a list of additional prospective CFRT members and develop a plan for enlisting their participation, including a timeframe to complete contact.
- Meeting attendees should select members to fill CFRT leadership positions, presiding officer, team coordinator, and data entry coordinator if these roles have not been designated. Please reference the team leadership section of the [CFRT Operations Protocol](#) for more information about each role's responsibilities.
- The CFRT will set a time, date, and location for another organizational meeting. If the CFRT does not require an additional organizational meeting, the CFRT can schedule the first child fatality review meeting. All organizational issues should be addressed prior to beginning child fatality reviews.
- Team leaders must lead a discussion and have members sign the CFRT Interagency Agreement prior to child fatality reviews. The purpose of the Interagency Agreement is to establish official working relationships and a commitment to CFRT confidentiality standards. Each CFRT member should sign the Interagency Agreement. Team leaders must keep a copy of the signed Interagency Agreement and scan then email a copy of this Agreement to the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator ([cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov)). See [Appendix A](#) for a sample Interagency Agreement.
- The team organizer(s) should allow time for each meeting attendee to participate, ask questions, and express concerns. If the team organizer(s) do not immediately have answers to questions, CFRT members should agree to get answers or find out what other CFRTs are doing regarding an issue and report back to the group within an agreed timeframe. The DSHS state injury prevention coordinator can be a resource for these answers.

#### **Following the stakeholders meeting:**

The team organizer(s) should inform the DSHS state injury prevention coordinator of the names and contact information for the selected presiding officer, team

coordinator, and data entry coordinator, as well as the first child fatality review meeting date.

For more information on CFRT operations, please reference the [Child Fatality Review Team Operations Protocol](#).

## Appendix A: Child Fatality Review Team Interagency Agreement

Child Fatality Review Teams (CFRTs) may download the interagency agreement directly at: [dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review).

All CFRT members must sign the Interagency Agreement when forming a new CFRT. If a new member joins the team, only the new member must sign the Interagency Agreement. The team coordinator must keep the Interagency Agreement and forward a copy to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) state injury prevention coordinator.

### Agreements:

The parties are vested with the authority to promote and protect the public health and safety and to provide services which improve the well-being of children and their families.

The parties agree that they are mutually served by the establishment of a multi-agency, multi-professional CFRT and that the outcome of such CFRT reviews will be the identification of preventable child deaths and recommendations for intervention and prevention strategies.

The CFRT objectives are agreed to be:

- Promote cooperation, communication, and coordination among agencies involved in responding to child deaths.
- Assure the accurate inventory of child fatalities by age, location, cause, manner, and circumstance.
- Support adequate child death investigation and certification.
- Implement investigative guidelines and recommendations for child fatalities.
- Improve recognition of child deaths from abuse and neglect, genetic diseases, inadequate medical care, and public health dangers through analysis of patterns and trends in child fatalities.
- Enhance the general awareness of child deaths through understanding how and why children die.

- Identify system-based impediments to child health and safety that, when removed, will ultimately reduce preventable child death numbers.
- Initiate local prevention efforts to reduce preventable child death numbers as indicated by CFRT findings.

The parties agree the CFRT membership may be comprised of, but not limited to, the following professionals:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| • Criminal Prosecutor          | • A Child Protective Services Specialist          |
| • Sheriff                      | • A Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Service Provider |
| • Medical Examiner             | • Neonatologist                                   |
| • Justice of the Peace         | • Child advocate                                  |
| • Police Chief                 | • Juvenile probation officer                      |
| • Pediatrician                 | • Child Abuse Prevention Specialist               |
| • Child Educator               |   |
| • Child Mental Health Provider |   |
| • Public health professional   |   |

The parties agree the review process requires case-specific record sharing and that confidentiality is inherent in many of the involved reports, so there will be clear measures taken to protect confidentiality.

It is agreed that all CFRT members will sign a confidentiality agreement which prohibits any unauthorized information dissemination beyond the purpose of the review process. Data will be submitted by the local CFRT to DSHS where it will be maintained for the purpose of establishing a state central child fatality registry with standardized, non-identified aggregate data from CFRTs throughout Texas.



Name of Child Fatality Review Team: \_\_\_\_\_

The following agencies make this cooperative agreement:

**District Attorney's Office**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Sheriff Department**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Police Department**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Add Agency Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Medical Examiner/Justice of the Peace**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**DFPS - Child Protective Services**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**City/County Health Department**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Add Agency Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Child Fatality Review Websites

### Texas Child Fatality Review

[dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review)

### National Center for Child Fatality Review and Prevention

[ncfrp.org/](https://ncfrp.org/)

### State Child Fatality Review Team Committee

[dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/state-child-fatality-review-team-committee](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/state-child-fatality-review-team-committee)

### National Fatality Review Case Reporting System

[data.ncfrp.org/Account/Login](https://data.ncfrp.org/Account/Login)

## Contact Information

### Texas Child Fatality Review

Texas Department of State Health Services  
1100 West 49<sup>th</sup> Street  
Mail Code 1922  
Austin, Texas 78756

Phone: 512-776-7373  
Fax: 512-458-7658

[cfrt@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:cfrt@dshs.texas.gov)

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***[dshs.texas.gov/injury-  
prevention/texas-child-fatality-  
review](https://dshs.texas.gov/injury-prevention/texas-child-fatality-review)***