

REGIONAL INFANT AND CHILD MORTALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mission: to review infant and child deaths so that information can be transformed into action to protect young life.

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

The Regional Infant and Child Mortality Review Committee (RICMRC) was established in 1997 with the aim of examining deaths of infants and children to identify preventive strategies that may decrease the risk of loss of young life in ten South Eastern South Dakota Counties: Brookings, Hanson, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, Miner, Moody, Turner, Union. Its membership is composed of professionals representing expertise in pediatrics, medico-legal death investigations, nursing, law enforcement, child protective services, emergency medical services, and mental health.

To operationalize its goal of preventing loss of life of infants and children under the age of 18, the Committee reviews deaths of:

- Residents of the RICMRC region that occurred subsequent to hospital discharge following delivery (or did not occur in a hospital) from causes sustained in the region
- Non-residents of RICMRC region that occurred in the region from causes sustained in the region

In 2016, 25 deaths met the Committee's criteria and all were reviewed (compared to 32 cases in 2013 and 25 cases in 2014, 24 in 2015). The following observations can be made from these reviews:

- There was an increase in deaths caused by maltreatment - typically there is one such death a year, in 2016 there were three
- Three children died in auto crashes – none were appropriately restrained
- Suicide remains an ongoing concern for the community
- Five infants died in sleep, with the exception of one death, all occurred in the presence of risks in the sleep environment

Strategies for the prevention of deaths during infancy and childhood include the following:

1. **"Safe to sleep" is more than just "back to sleep."** Solo sleep in a crib with a tight sheet and no bumper pads, soft bedding or toys avoids risks.
2. **Infants must sleep in places with flat horizontal surfaces.** Avoid used and worn cribs or portable cribs and other devices that may not provide a flat surface for sleep
3. **Seat belt use is mandatory.** The proper use of seat belts saves lives. Adults must model use of the entire seat belt and assure that cars do not move until seat belts are properly in place for all passengers.
4. **Infants and young children put objects in their mouths creating a choking hazard.** Be wary of what may be reached by a young child and how it could be lethal.
5. **Temporary removal of guns from homes and access to mental health services reduces risks of suicide.** Adolescence is often a time of volatile emotions. Removing potential sources of self-harm is protective.
6. **Child care must be safe.** Cautious attention in choosing a provider and environment for child care is vital for the well-being of infants and young children.

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