

Local Child Fatality Prevention Team 2025 Annual Report to the Union County Board of County Commissioners

Local Child Fatality Prevention Team Background:

North Carolina Session Law (NCSL) 2023-134 enacted changes to strengthen the state's child fatality prevention system which included the establishment of a State Office of Child Fatality Prevention (CFP State Office) within the Division of Public Health (DPH), Department of Health and Human Services (the Department), made changes to the Child Fatality Prevention System, and made it mandatory to report child fatalities into the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System (NFRCRS).

The NFR-CRS is a web-based system hosted by the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention within the Center for National Prevention Initiatives of the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) and is used by many states to provide child death review teams with a data system for capturing, analyzing, and reporting of information shared at a child death or serious injury review. MPHI has a Cooperative Agreement with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to manage the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention.

Per NCSL 2023-134, Local Teams are defined as a multidisciplinary child death review team that is either a single or multicounty team responsible for performing any type of child fatality review pursuant to Article 14 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes.

This program receives an Agreement Addendum which provides funding for the Local Team to conduct child fatality reviews pursuant to Article 14 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes as well as continue use of the NFR-CRS.

The Local Teams are expected to (1) conduct child fatality review pursuant to Article 14 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes; (2) identify gaps or deficiencies that may exist in order to improve the delivery of services to children and families; (3) make recommendations for changes and carry out changes that could prevent future child fatalities; and (4) educate their communities on how to prevent children dying in their counties.

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The Union County Local Team has identified the following recommendations for systemic improvements based on reviews during the 2025 calendar year:

- Legislative change for juveniles to receive escalated penalties for repeated gun offenses.
- Increasing funding to the Department of Juvenile Justice to drive more effective treatment options.
- Increasing resources in schools to focus on prevention services and linkage to additional support and resources.
- Developing targeted prevention programs for elementary and middle schools.
- Recommended that the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) conduct an evaluation of a certain section of road. The NCDOT and the Regional Traffic Engineer's Office conducted a formal investigation to identify potential safety enhancements.
- The Regional Child Welfare Consultant is trying to obtain approval from the State Office to change the current District Attorney Referral Form. This change would allow the DA's Office to track specific patterns, thus strengthening the community's approach to the safety of children by being more coordinated with complex cases.
- More gun safety training for homeowners who have children and at-risk children.
- Took steps to involve the Department of Juvenile Justice to strengthen the community's approach for adolescents involved with DJJ.
- The State should create some educational materials involving the dangers of placing children on farm equipment.

The Union County Local Team routinely reviews cases that are highly complex in nature. These situations often involve individuals with significant mental health challenges, psychiatric conditions, and substance use disorders, many of which have gone untreated. In most cases, the individuals and families involved have limited or no resources.

These cases frequently present in crisis, with multiple unstable and sometimes violent factors. They often involve several children, each with their own set of behavioral, developmental, or emotional concerns. On numerous occasions, recommended treatments have been unavailable or unattainable due to financial barriers or the lack of appropriate services.

Given these circumstances, the Union County Local Team has identified the following critical resource gaps within the current system:

- Lack of available or adequate services
- Limited services for youth with co-occurring mental health and developmental disabilities
- Limited access to healthcare and lack of health insurance
- Limited community awareness of existing services
- Insufficient financial resources



In 2025, the Union County Local Team reviewed 19 child fatality cases, 4 of which met the requirement for an escalated case review. The North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) requires escalated reviews for specific categories of child deaths. These reviews address complex cases involving child maltreatment or prior child protective services involvement. Local Teams conduct the reviews with support from the State Office of Child Fatality Prevention and state and local social services agencies, and they may draw on information from separate internal reviews by the State Division of Social Services. The goal of these escalated reviews is to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to child deaths and to guide evidence-driven prevention strategies.