

## PREVENTION FINDINGS: THE FINAL REPORT

**“Injury is a problem that can be diminished considerably if adequate attention and support are directed to it. Exciting opportunities to understand and prevent injuries and to reduce their effects are at hand. The alternative is the continued loss of health and life to predictable, preventable and modifiable injuries.”**

*-Dr. William Foege, Former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

The difference between a fatal and nonfatal event is often only a few feet, a few inches, or a few seconds. In the past, most people believed that serious and fatal injuries were random or unavoidable events, or simply the result of individual carelessness. Fortunately, the science of injury prevention has moved away from this fatalistic approach to one that focuses on the environment and products used by the public, as well as individual behavior. Injuries are now widely recognized as understandable, predictable and preventable.

A *preventable child death* is defined as one in which awareness or education by an individual or the community may have changed the circumstances that lead to the death. Prior to August 2000, CFRP panels were asked to report their conclusions and prevention responses for each death reviewed on the Data Form 2. Legislation passed in 2000, now requires that the panel complete a Final Report, summarizing their findings in terms of circumstances, prevention messages, and community-based prevention initiatives.

The death of a child is a sentinel event that captures the attention of the community, creates a sense of urgency and a window of opportunity to respond to the questions, “What can we do?” County-based prevention activities serve to raise awareness, educate parents and caretakers, influence public policy and involve the community in prevention initiatives that protect and improve the lives of children. In 2004, CFRP panels throughout our state reported their findings and prevention responses utilizing the Final Report. The initiatives highlighted below demonstrate how a few volunteer professionals have been able to measurably reduce or eliminate threats to the lives and well being of countless Missouri children.

### **Legislation, Law or Ordinance:**

A fourteen-year-old boy was found dead at a residential treatment facility. The boy died as a result of an unrecognized medical emergency. The panel recommended that unlicensed treatment facilities be made subject to some degree of regulation by an appropriate authority.

A thirteen-year-old male was killed after his ATV rolled over on him. The panel met and recommended that legislators introduce laws regarding non-licensed drivers operating ATV's, helmet laws for ATV drivers and apply age restrictions to ATV drivers. They also recommended a required safety class for ATV operators, similar to the hunter safety classes.

### **Community Safe Project:**

A nine-year-old girl and her family were found dead in their home. A car had been left running in the garage, all died of carbon monoxide poisoning. The county panel recommended a promotional effort in the community for carbon monoxide detectors, as well as smoke detectors.

A five-year-old boy was killed when he was struck and run over by a school bus. The local panel met with school personnel, transportation personnel and community neighborhood watch members to discuss safety and educational issues regarding school buses and bus stops. The panel also formed a committee of community and school personnel to meet and share safety and educational ideas concerning children and school buses. This committee plans develop a "pilot" project to ensure the safety of children on and off the bus.

### **Public Forums:**

A fifteen-year-old boy committed suicide. The local panel contacted the school and held a town hall meeting regarding suicide prevention and requested the community implement programs addressing youth with at risk behaviors. They also asked a licensed counselor to the meeting to talk with parents and students about coping with a suicide related death.

An eleven-year-old girl was accidentally shot and killed while she and her friend were playing with a gun found in the home. The panel held a public meeting regarding firearm safety and the importance of keeping guns locked in the home. As a result of the meeting, the local Sheriff's Department has placed firearm locks at their office, free to the public.

### **Educational Activities in Schools:**

A fifteen-year-old boy was found unresponsive in his home and died a day later in the hospital. He had taken five morphine tablets and was known to be huffing inhalants. The boy's parents presented a program to the Middle School and High School regarding inhalant abuse. Pamphlets regarding inhalant abuse were also passed out to the students and parents.

A seventeen-year-old boy was killed in a motor vehicle accident. The local panel staged a mock drill before the high school students, simulating a vehicle accident involving occupants that have been drinking. They also had EMS come to simulate what they do at the scene.

### **Educational Activities in the Media:**

A fourteen-year-old boy was found at the bottom of a pond, he had drowned. The panel released several news articles regarding water safety and the need for adult supervision around bodies of water in the local newspaper. They also placed water safety instructions in local businesses throughout town.

A newborn infant died at the hospital shortly after birth. The teenage mother was unaware she was pregnant. The panel met with the local Health Department to discuss teen pregnancy and birth control strategies. The local Health Department agreed to place an article in the newspaper encouraging sexually active teens to use some form of birth control and to see a doctor or come to the Health Department, if they think they may be pregnant.

### **Consumer Product Safety:**

A 7-month-old infant was placed in a baby swing for nap. While unattended, the child slid down in the swing and suffocated, when the chest strap became wrapped around their neck. The panel saw this as an opportunity to remind parents never to leave infants unattended and to always make sure that the child is properly placed in a swing.

## News Services:

A three-year-old child died in a house fire. She was found in the corner of her room. The fire had started after other children had been playing with a cigarette lighter. The house had no working smoke detectors. The county panel contacted local newspapers and ran stories promoting fire safety. In the article, it stressed the importance of escape plans and teaching children not to play with fire (lighters or matches). They also focused on the importance of working smoke detectors.

A three-month-old boy was put to sleep in his parents bed, he was found unresponsive the next morning. The panel released several public service announcements and ran articles in the local newspaper regarding the hazards of co-sleeping. They also began researching how to start a safe crib project in their community.

## Changes in Agency Practice:

A thirteen-month-old child died due to an asthma attack. Mom had not refilled medication or returned for further doctor's appointments. The panel approached the hospital regarding follow-up measures on at-risk patients. The hospital agreed to put in a flagging system for fatality prone asthma patients, if they do not show up for their appointments.

A nine-month-old girl was found lifeless in her crib. Her parents were intellectually limited and were receiving services from the Department of Social Services. The panel recommended that the Department of Social Services review policy and procedures for services to mentally limited parents.

## Other Programs/Activities:

A two-month-old infant was put down early in the morning for a nap on an air mattress. The child was found later that afternoon, unresponsive. The panel suggested that hospital staff talk with parents about safe sleep practices and appropriate supervision guidelines for infants, before sending the infant home.

A nine-year-old boy was electrocuted while climbing a tree at a friend's house. The Child Fatality Review Program panel contacted the local electric cooperative about providing educational programs in elementary schools regarding safety.



"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." -Helen Keller