

Child Death Review Team Guidelines for Drowning Surveillance

Given that there is a process in place that examines child deaths (i.e. Child Death Review Teams) and a mechanism for systematically reporting these deaths and the circumstances surrounding them (National Center for Child Death Review Case Reporting System), there is an opportunity to utilize this system to conduct surveillance on child drowning deaths.

However, there are some limitations with the current level of detail related to childhood pool/spa drownings that is collected through that system. As part of our Kids Plates project, we developed the *Child Death Review Case Reporting Form Pool/Spa Drowning Supplement* to the National Center for Child Death Review Case Reporting Form. The additional information obtained in the supplement will enhance our understanding of risks related to child drowning and may be useful for designing more targeted and appropriate interventions.

Following are the recommended steps for Child Death Review Teams to follow for the review and surveillance of drowning deaths of children less than 5 years involving pools and spas.

Step 1. Conduct Reviews of All Fatal Child Drowning Cases

- Obtain records as recommended in the National CDR Program Manual.¹
- Include police and medical examiners/coroners who are core members of Child Death Review Teams in team meetings. It is especially important to review copies of their reports, including pictures and diagrams, to better understand the circumstances surrounding the drowning incident.
- Invite the officer who was at the scene to participate in the case review. If this is not possible, a phone call and interview by a CDRT member in advance of the CDR meeting is recommended. Use the *Drowning Surveillance Guidelines for Scene Investigators** when obtaining information about the drowning incident.
- Use the *Issues and Questions to Consider When Conducting Review of Child Drowning Case** checklist to assist in collecting information.
- In communities with a large number of child drownings, consider establishing a drowning review subcommittee or scheduling special review meetings to address groups of child drowning deaths.

Step 2. Complete and Submit the National Child Death Review Case Reporting Form

- Print (<http://www.childdeathreview.org/reports/CDRCasereportForm2-1-11009.pdf>) or photocopy the National Child Death Review Case Reporting System Case Report 2.1*.
- Complete the Case Report form following the guidelines outlined in the CDR Program Manual.¹ (It is recommended that teams complete a hard copy of the form before submitting on-line because data will become available before, during and after the review meeting. Filling out a hard copy first will make it easier to submit a complete on-line record of the review.)

¹ A Program Manual for Child Death Review - Strategies to Better Understand Why Children Die & Taking Action to Prevent Child Deaths. Prepared by The National Center for Child Death Review, September 2005. <http://www.childdeathreview.org/Finalversionprotocolmanual.pdf>

- Follow the California guidelines for submitting the data form.
 - For those teams participating in the national on-line system, submit the data on-line.
 - For all other teams, submit a hard copy of Case Report 2.1 to the FCANS Program.²

Step 3. Complete Child Drowning Pool/Spa Supplement

- The *Child Drowning Pool/Spa Supplement** should be used for all pool/spa drowning deaths of children less than 5 years of age.
- Photocopy the *Child Drowning Pool/Spa Supplement* or download a copy*. Complete the *Supplement* as part of the child death review process.
- Currently there are no procedures in place for submitting the supplemental data to the state or national child death review system. (Negotiations are currently underway to incorporate the *Supplement* into the next version of the national on-line reporting system).
- However, it is recommended that local teams review the supplement data along with the National Child Death Review Case Reporting System case and summary data reports for the drowning cases they have reviewed. The National System can provide teams with individual case reports as well as several standardized reports, including two drowning specific reports.³
- To assist local teams with the process of compiling and summarizing the supplemental drowning data, we developed an easy to use data entry and analysis tool. This program as well as the standardized drowning reports and individual case summaries from the National System will assist local teams in better understanding issues related to young childhood pool and spa drowning in their communities. Information on how to obtain a copy of the program and instructions for use is available*.

Step 4. Work with local law enforcement and medical examiner/coroner to improve data

- Encourage local law enforcement, medical examiners and coroners to improve and report on the data collected through scene investigations.
- Disseminate *Drowning Surveillance Guidelines for Scene Investigators** to local law enforcement and coroner/medical examiner agencies.

* Available at <http://www.ockeepkidssafe.org/drowning.htm>.

² Local California CDR Teams are required to submit data to the FCANS Program and are encouraged to participate in the national system. For further information, and submissions, contact Steve Wirtz, PhD, Fatal Child Abuse and Neglect Surveillance (FCANS) Program, Safe and Active Communities (SAC) Branch, California Department of Public Health, PO Box 997377, MS 7214, Sacramento, CA 95899-7377, steve.wirtz@cdph.ca.gov, (916) 552-9831, Fax (916) 552-9810.

³ One of the standardized drowning reports provides demographic data by place of drowning. The other standardized report provides factors related to flotation device, child's swim ability, barriers, supervision and supervisor alcohol or drug impaired, also by place of drowning.