

Child Deaths in Idaho

2012

A Report of Findings by the
Idaho Child Fatality Review Team

www.idcartf.org

Prepared April 2015



CFR TEAM SCREENING: *Preventable Natural Deaths*

In addition to detailed reviews of deaths by external causes, a CFR subcommittee (made up of physicians and law enforcement representatives from the CFR Team) screened death records certified with a manner of “natural.” Causes of natural manner deaths include perinatal conditions/congenital malformations, malignancies, influenza and pneumonia, cerebrovascular, and other non-ranking causes. In an effort to review all preventable deaths, the subcommittee flagged cases for further review when questions were raised about the cause as coded on the death certificate and/or if a direct link to an existing medical condition was not apparent. The subcommittee selected 16 of the natural manner deaths for a more thorough review with complete death certificates, birth certificates, coroner/autopsy reports, law enforcement reports, and/or medical records. The natural manner cases selected for additional review fell into the following categories:

Perinatal Conditions/Congenital Malformations	4
Influenza/Pneumonia	1
Cerebrovascular/Heart Disease	1
Non-ranking/All Other Causes	10
<i>Total Reviews of Deaths of “Natural” Manner</i>	16

Findings and Recommendations:

Overall, no system wide issues were identified in the review of additional information (medical records, coroner reports, etc.) in these natural manner deaths. However, the team did find issues of concern in particular circumstances.

Refusal of medical care because of religious or personal beliefs

For 2012, the team identified 2 deaths to children from families who did not seek medical intervention due to religious beliefs. One death was related to complications of Type 1 Diabetes and the other followed a prolonged gastrointestinal illness. The team determined that both of these deaths may have been prevented with proper and timely medical treatment. Idaho civil and criminal codes provide religious exemptions on child abuse and neglect which may prevent

authorities from investigating and monitoring neglect cases and discourage reporting of these incidents.

Panel members from the Idaho Child Fatality Review Team encourage re-evaluation of Idaho law. Because members are supportive of religious freedom, they recommend that the standard for state intervention (when contrary to parental religious beliefs) be limited in scope. It should include, and only include, pediatric cases in which the child's death or severe disability is imminent and would, within a reasonable degree of medical certainty, be prevented by the administration of appropriate medical care. The law would not be used to mandate routine medical care (i.e. well child visits, immunizations, etc.) or coerce parents to give consent for the same. Apart from strengthening laws to protect children from preventable deaths, current law is confusing for medical providers and, to a lesser extent, investigative agencies.