

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RELEASES 2012 STATEWIDE CHILD ABUSE DEATH
REPORT**

~Report covers 126 abuse and neglect deaths of Florida children from 2011~

TALLAHASSEE— Drowning prevention and safer sleeping environments for children and infants could reduce unnecessary child deaths in Florida, according to a new report released by the Statewide Child Abuse Death Review Committee.

The committee recently presented its 13th Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature, highlighting key recommendations following the review of 126 child deaths that were verified as caused by abuse or neglect in 2011. Sixty-two deaths were caused by drowning or unsafe sleeping practices with infants.

“We are committed to eliminating child deaths from abuse and neglect by working with state agencies and communities across Florida,” said Surgeon General and Secretary of Health John H. Armstrong, M.D. “Promoting safer environments around water or while sleeping will help prevent profound heartbreak.”

The Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) worked collaboratively with the Statewide Child Abuse Death Review Committee, local death review teams, law enforcement, prosecutors, medical professionals and prevention specialists to identify risk factors associated with these types of deaths and to develop training on preventive measures.

“So many of these deaths are preventable,” said Department of Children and Families Secretary David Wilkins. “By working together, we can all do more to educate parents and caregivers and prevent these tragedies in the future.”

Some of the report’s findings include the following:

- The number of child deaths in Florida continues to decrease.
- Children under four are at the highest risk of dying, especially from preventable causes such as drowning and co-sleeping.
- Domestic violence intervention in families’ lives can prevent some child abuse deaths.
- Neglect is the leading factor in verified child deaths. Drowning is the top cause.

DOH is considering statutory changes to broaden the scope of the review to all child deaths investigated by DCF. This may improve the ability to craft strategic prevention and education strategies through a broader analysis. A copy of the full report is available at www.flcadr.org/reports.html.

DOH protects, promotes and improves the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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