BURKE COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

2025 Local Child Fatality Prevention Team Annual Report to County Commissioners and Board of Health

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.

Burke County Local Child Fatality Prevention Team has identified the following as the Child Death Trends for 2025 (2024 Deaths):

- 7 Birth Defects
- 4 Accidents
- 2 Illnesses
- 1 SIDS
- 2 Homicides
- 2 Suicides
- 1 Unknown

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

- **Education on the Importance of Prenatal Care and Genetic Testing:**
  Increase community awareness and access to early and consistent prenatal care to improve birth outcomes and reduce preventable infant deaths. Efforts should include education on the role of prenatal visits and genetic screening in identifying potential health concerns, as well as reducing barriers to care through provider collaboration and accessible, culturally appropriate resources.

- **Suicide Awareness and Education on Warning Signs for Community Members and Parents:**
  Expand suicide prevention efforts by increasing education on recognizing warning signs of mental health distress in youth and how to respond. This includes promoting evidence-based training, reducing stigma, and strengthening coordination between schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to support early identification and intervention.

The Burke County Local Team has identified the following resources needed to address identified gaps and deficiencies in the existing system:

The Burke County Local Team has identified significant gaps in both the availability of and access to child mental health services, as well as a lack of clear, centralized information to help families and providers navigate the system. These gaps can result in delays in care, unmet behavioral health needs, and increased strain on families, schools, and community partners.

To address these deficiencies, the following resources are needed:

- **Expanded Provider Capacity:** Increased availability of child focused mental health professionals, including licensed therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, particularly those trained in trauma-informed care and evidence-based practices for children and adolescents. This includes both in-person and telehealth options to improve reach in rural areas.

- **Timely Access to Services:** Strategies to reduce wait times for assessments, diagnosis, and treatment, including enhanced referral networks and partnerships with regional providers.

- **Centralized Resource Directory:** Development and maintenance of a comprehensive, user-friendly, and regularly updated directory of local child mental health services. This should include eligibility criteria, referral processes, insurance/payment information, and points of contact to improve system navigation for families and professionals.

- **Care Coordination and Navigation Support:** Dedicated staff or systems (e.g., care coordinators, case managers, or family navigators) to assist families in understanding available services, completing referrals, and following through with treatment plans.

- **Community and Provider Education:** Increased outreach and training for schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations on how to identify mental health needs in children, make appropriate referrals, and support families through the process.
- **Culturally and Developmentally Appropriate Services:** Ensuring services are accessible and responsive to the diverse cultural, linguistic, and developmental needs of children and families in Burke County.
- **Collaboration Across Systems:** Strengthened partnerships between public health, schools, DSS, healthcare providers, and community-based organizations to create a more coordinated and responsive system of care.

Burke County Local Child Fatality Prevention Team Activities 2025 & Funding Usage:

- Advertising and supporting programming for the Burke County Public Schools Suicide Awareness Night.
- Provided a meal for Local Review Team members during a scheduled meeting as a token of appreciation for their time and service.
- Purchased 8-gun safes to hand out to community members in need to prevent gun related accidents / suicides in children within the county.
- Purchased 4 child tracking devices to assist children within the community who are nonverbal and are prone to adventuring outside of the home to help prevent accidental deaths within the county.

In summary, the work of the Burke County Local Child Fatality Prevention Team remains critical to understanding the factors contributing to child deaths and identifying actionable strategies to prevent future loss. Through continued multidisciplinary collaboration, data-driven review, and community engagement, the team is committed to strengthening systems of care and addressing identified gaps.

In the coming year, Burke County will prioritize expanding access to child mental health services, enhancing community education efforts around suicide prevention and prenatal care, and improving coordination across agencies to ensure families can more easily navigate available resources. Additionally, efforts will focus on strengthening data collection and utilization through the NFR-CRS to better inform local prevention strategies. By building on the progress made in 2025, the team will continue working toward a more responsive, and prevention-focused system that supports the health and safety of all children in Burke County.