

- Colorado’s child fatalities due to intra-familial maltreatment are the lowest they have been since 2009.
- Colorado’s child fatalities due to intra-familial maltreatment when the county department of social services had prior involvement have increased from **11** in 2009 to **18** in 2014, and then to **13** in 2015.
- There has been a **23.8%** increase in referrals from 2009 to 2015.
- Legislation in 2011 and 2013 allowed for a more consistent reporting process for the state and counties for intra-familial child fatalities, near fatalities, and egregious incidents.

SUBSTANTIATED FATALITIES DUE TO INTRA-FAMILIAL ABUSE/NEGLECT HAVE MOVED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

While any child fatality due to abuse or neglect is too many, it is important to note that the number of total child fatalities due to intra-familial abuse or neglect has declined in Colorado since 2009. Legislation in 2011 and 2013 allowed for a more consistent reporting process for state and counties.

The table below shows child fatalities due to intra-familial abuse or neglect by calendar year for the past seven years. It also displays the number of fatalities in which there was prior child welfare involvement (defined as a prior referral, assessment/investigation or case involving the child prior to the substantiated fatality^a).

The table and the following graph show that the number of referrals (reports) of child maltreatment handled by the counties grew by **23.8%** from 2009 to 2015. The number of fatalities due to intra-familial abuse or neglect has fallen from **34** in 2009 to **22** in 2015. The number of fatalities with prior involvement has varied over the years, from **32%** in 2009 to **59%** in 2015.

**Substantiated (Confirmed) Fatalities
Due to Intra-Familial Abuse/Neglect by Calendar Year, 2009-2015¹**

| Year Reported | Total Number of Referrals to Counties² | Number of Fatalities due to Intra-Familial Abuse/Neglect³ | Number of Fatalities with Prior County Involvement³ | % of Fatalities with Prior County Involvement¹ |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| 2009 | 74,706 | 34 | 11 | 32% |
| 2010 | 80,118 | 33 | 12 | 36% |
| 2011 | 80,472 | 38 | 21 ^a | 55% |
| 2012 | 83,109 | 26 | 9 | 35% |
| 2013 | 83,504 | 23 | 9 ^a | 39% |
| 2014 | 84,778 | 22 | 18 | 82% |
| 2015⁴ | 92,502 | 22 | 13 | 59% |

^a It is important to note that the definition of prior involvement statutorily changed from five years to two years in mid-2011, then changed to three years in mid-2013.

¹ The transfer process from the Division of Child Welfare to the Administrative Review Division involved substantial data clean-up and data integrity assurance. Numbers may differ from prior fact sheets on this topic.

² Data from Trails

³ Data from Administrative Review Child Fatality Review Team tracking database, counted at the child-level

⁴ The Colorado Department of Human Services implemented a statewide Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline on January 2015.

CHANGES TO IMPROVE THE REPORTING PROCESS

Colorado's Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) process has undergone numerous changes between 2011 and 2013. Prior to 2011, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) had limited authority to conduct fatality reviews. Up until 2011, the CDHS was conducting less formal reviews on child maltreatment fatalities where the child or family had previous involvement with the family in the prior five years.

In 2011, **House Bill (HB) 11-1181**, effective 4/20/2011, provided CDHS with statutory authority for the provision of a child fatality review process, and funded one staff position to conduct these reviews. HB 11-1181 also established basic criteria for when incidents should be reviewed by the CFRT. These included incidents in which a child maltreatment fatality occurred and the child or family had previous involvement with a county department in the two years prior to the fatality. It also outlined criteria that narrowed the definition of 'previous involvement.'

In 2012, **Senate Bill (SB) 12-033**, effective 4/12/2012, added the review of near fatal and egregious incidents to the responsibilities of the CFRT. It also included reporting and public disclosure requirements. This aligned Colorado statute with federal requirements under the 1996 Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) which mandates states receiving CAPTA funds to adopt "provisions which allow for public disclosure of the findings or information about the case of child abuse or neglect which has resulted in a child fatality or near fatality" (42 U.S.C. 5106 § a(b)(2)(A)(x)).

With the passing of **HB 13-255**, effective 5/14/2013, legislative changes to the CFRT process occurred once again. Specifically, criteria for qualifying for a full review by the CFRT were changed. This included lengthening the time considered for previous involvement from two years to three years, and removing the exceptions related to previous involvement. These changes effectively expanded the population of incidents requiring a CFRT review. HB 13-255 also provided funding for two additional staff for the CFRT review process; bringing the total staff dedicated to this function to three.

Incidents Reported Over Time and Statutory Change*

| Year | Fatal Incidents | Near Fatal Incidents | Egregious Incidents | Total Incidents |
|------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 2012 | 59 | 14 | 5 | 78 |
| 2013 | 55 | 21 | 35 | 111 |
| 2014 | 58 | 30 | 22 | 110 |
| 2015 | 43 | 23 | 20 | 86 |

*As the statutory changes over the prior years have modified the population of incidents requiring review, and each has changed within each given calendar year, it limits the ability to interpret trends in the data. Further, any change in the final number of incidents in a given calendar year may be due to definitional changes rather than to changes in the number of actual incidents.

More information on the reporting process for fatalities, near fatalities, and egregious incidents can be found on-line at: <https://sites.google.com/a/state.co.us/cdhs-ard/child-fatality-review-team>