

ONONDAGA COUNTY
Child Fatality
Review Team



Together, Keeping Kids Safe

Annual Report
2022

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Our Mission:

To conduct a comprehensive, multidisciplinary review of unexpected child deaths in Onondaga County.

- Better understand how and why children die
- Analyze the patterns of child deaths
- Use findings to take action to prevent other child deaths, illness, and injury
- Keep children healthy, safe and protected

Introduction:

The Onondaga County Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) reviews cases of children and adolescents 17 years of age and younger who have died unexpectedly, and have been referred to the Medical Examiner's office or were in the custody of the Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). In 2022, the CFRT reviewed 10 child deaths. The year of review does not indicate the year of the child's death. Cases that have criminal charges or investigations pending cannot be reviewed until the criminal case has been disposed of.

The Manner of Death include accidental, natural, homicide, suicide, and undetermined.

Seven deaths had a report filed with the NYS State Central Registry at the time of the death. Three of these cases were already open to Children and Family Services or preventative services.

No children were in the care or custody of DCFS at the time of their death.

The CFRT did not write any independent reports during 2022.

The CFRT, which is facilitated by the Coordinator, held 10 meetings during the 2022 review year. Mandatory team members include representatives from:

- Child Protective Services/Children and Family Services
- County Law Department
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department
- District Attorney's Office
- Emergency Management Services
- Medical Examiner's Office
- NYS Police
- Office of Children and Family Services
- Onondaga County Sheriff's Department
- Pediatricians with Child Abuse Certification
- Syracuse Police Department
- Syracuse Fire Department EMS

Permissive Members (case specific meeting)

Crouse Hospital
St. Joseph's Hospital
Syracuse Community Health Center
SUNY Golisano Children's Hospital
The Perinatal Center
McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center

*Mental Health – team decided to have mental health at all meetings

At each meeting, there is a review of new cases and possibly updates on a case previously reviewed. Also, there are discussions of old/new business and updates on future training.

Manner and Cause of Child/Adolescent Deaths

Natural Causes:

Five Children, between the ages of four days old and 5 years old died of natural causes.

- Cardiopulmonary insufficiency
- Heart failure
- Diffuse midline glioma - brain cancer
- Cardiac Arrest, cardiogenic shock, heart failure, dilated cardiomyopathy, preterm birth, absence of prenatal care
- Ventricular Septal Defect, Downs Syndrome, hypoglycemic

Suicide Deaths:

Three teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 years old died by suicide. Two of the teenagers had made previous suicide attempts before and both were involved with mental health services.

- Two died by hanging
- Firearm: Gunshot wound

Undetermined Deaths:

Three infants between the ages of 3-weeks and 11-months old whose deaths were undetermined:

- Sudden Unexpected Infant Death: Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors
- Unsafe Sleep Environment
- Co-sleeping

*Three infants died with unsafe sleep as a contributing factor. (two of these cases are pending review due to a criminal hold)

Homicide Deaths:

One 16-month old died by Homicide.

- Head trauma

Accidental Deaths:

None

Summary of all Deaths:

Natural deaths were 42% or (5). Suicide deaths were 25% or (3). Undetermined deaths were 25% or (3). Homicide deaths were 8% or (1). Accidental deaths were 0%.

For the purpose of this report:

*Two of the undetermined cases represented in the data charts below are pending review due to a criminal hold. All three of the undetermined cases had unsafe sleep as a contributing factor.

Table 1.

Manner of Death	N	%
Natural	5	42
Suicide	3	25
Undetermined	3	25
Homicide	1	8
Accidental	0	0
Total	12	100

Figure 1.

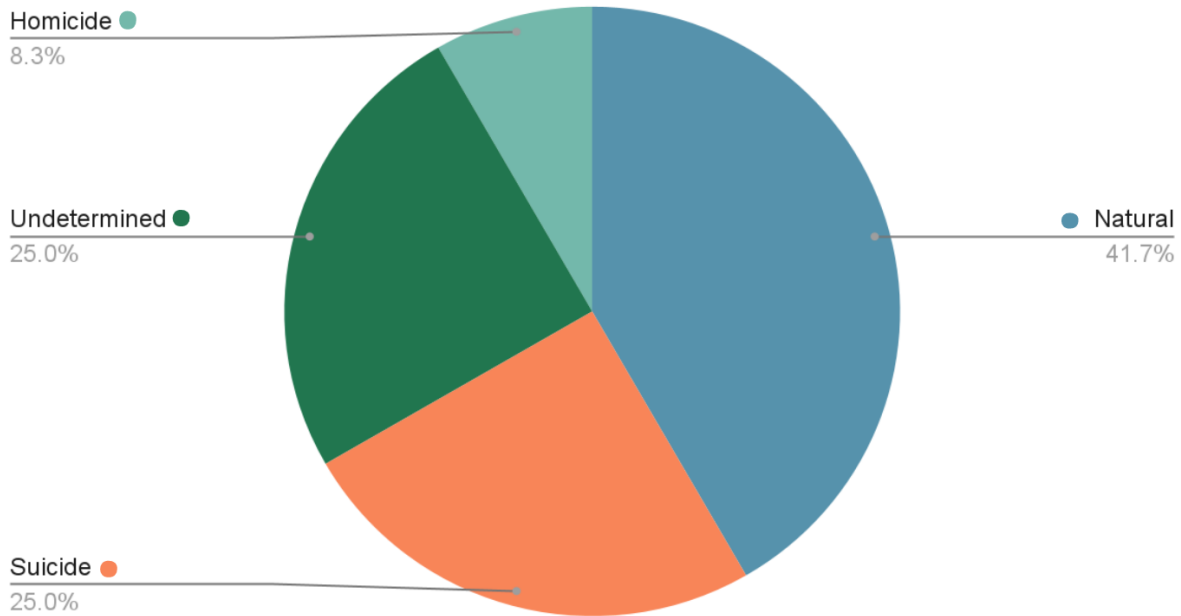


Figure 2.

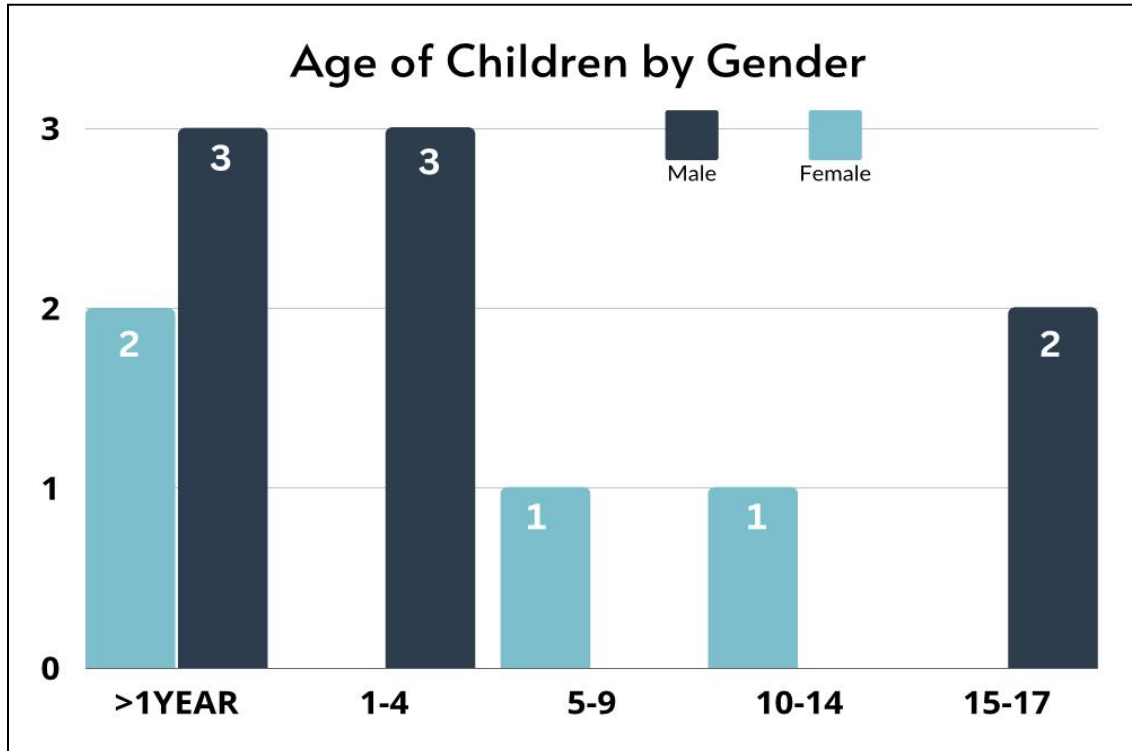
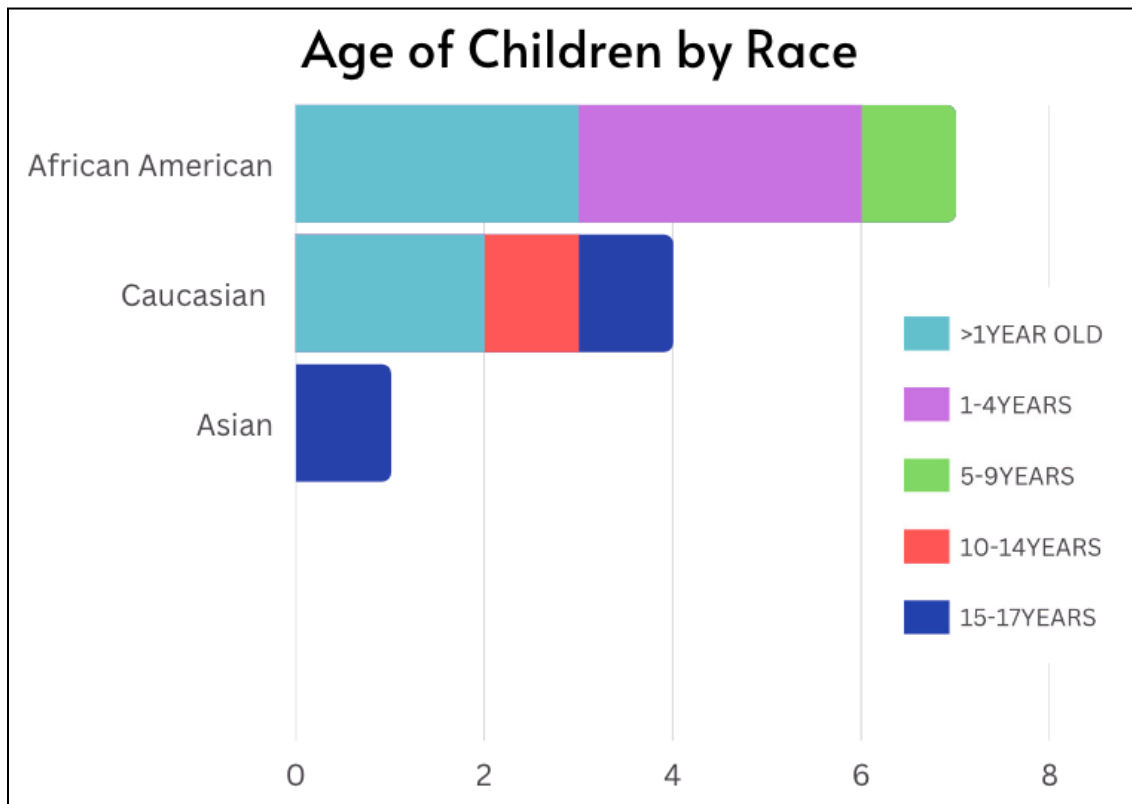


Figure 3.



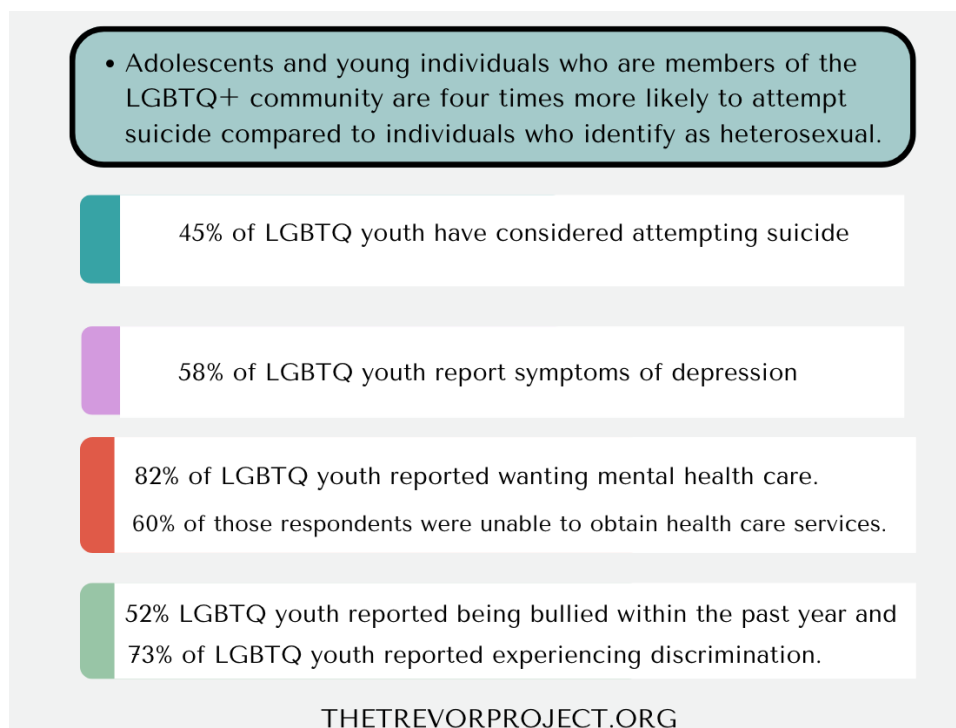
Unsafe Infant Sleep Environment Deaths:

Unsafe sleep environments remain the leading cause and contributing factor in the deaths of infants reviewed by the Onondaga County Child Fatality Review Team. As these are often preventable deaths, our prevention efforts focus on educating the community about the dangers of an unsafe sleep environment and demonstrating what a safe sleep environment looks like. The American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines recommends all babies sleep on their back, alone in their own sleep space, and on a flat, firm sleep surface that is free of blankets, toys, and other objects. These guidelines are vital for every sleep, including naps.

Suicide Deaths in Onondaga County:

Suicide is a major public health issue that recognized by the CDC as one of the leading causes of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death among youth and adolescents.

In 2022, 25% of cases reviewed by the Onondaga County CFRT were by suicide. The CFRT coordinator observed that the majority of suicide cases reviewed were members of the LGBTQ+ community. Information and other indications also suggest mental health may have played a role. It is essential to address the mental health concerns of our youth. In an effort to focus on prevention efforts, the CFRT remains a close partner with suicide prevention resources including the Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition (OCSPC). Similarly addressing this critical issue is The Trevor Project: a non-profit organization that aims to end suicide among LGBTQ+ youth through research, education, and awareness. The Trevor Project website provides many resource services, public education, and research. Below is an infographic displaying some data retrieved from the 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health.



Team Activities:

Prevention efforts and community activities previously put on hold due to the pandemic limited in-person safe sleep presentations and allowed for virtual meetings to be held. In 2022, safe sleep presentations continued virtually. The following prevention measures were undertaken by members of the CFRT to promote safety, health, and wellness for children in Onondaga County:

- **Child Fatality Review Team Website Resources:**

The Onondaga County Child Fatality Review Team website includes resources for parents, caregivers, and professionals seeking prevention information on various topics and Bereavement resources. The website has been updated with additional resources

- Site visits for the 2022 review year: 64,639 visitors and 167,526 pages views
- Link: <https://www.onondagachildfatalityreview.com/>

- **Safe Sleep Syracuse – Just for Men Facebook Page:**

- Safe Sleep Syracuse–Just for Men Facebook page has had 5 posts, reached 27 viewers, and posts every Tuesday.

- **OC_Safesleep Instagram Page:**

- OC_Safesleep Instagram page has 21 posts reaching 85 viewers, and 106 followers. This account is also scheduled to post safe sleep information every Tuesday.
- Accounts were created on social media platforms TikTok and Twitter to increase social media presence and viewership.

- **Suicide Prevention:**

- CFRT is an active partner with the Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition. Monthly meetings remained virtual.

- **Safe Kids Upstate:**

- Safe Kids Upstate New York is a partner with the Hospital Safe Sleep team.

- **High Schools Health & Child Development Classes:**

- **Statewide Child Fatality Review team**

- Attended by coordinator

- **Justice Center Infant Safe Sleep Education for Female Inmates**

- Still on hold per COVID

- **Jamesville Penitentiary Women and Babies Program**

- Still on hold per COVID

- **Community Collaborations and Safe Sleep Education:**

- **Nine Safe sleep presentations presented to a total of 153 people.**

Presentations occurred in high schools, early childhood development classes, local groups, safe homes for women, shelters, foster parenting training, and jails. Material was also presented to nurses and advocates.

- **Pack and Play Crib Distribution/Community Displays:**

- 8 pack-and-plays were donated in Onondaga County.
- Once upon a child partnership (3-5 sleep sacks donated to each family who receives a pack-and-play)
- CNY diaper bank partnership has donated 3,500 diapers, 20 packs of wipes, 900 pull ups, and 120 cans of formula. This generous donation has allowed us to work with families in the community and help supplement monthly diaper and wipe needs.
- Safe sleep displays are set up at McMahon Ryan CAC, Syracuse Community Health Center and both WIC offices.
- Pack-n-play set up and safe sleep presentation for moms in need.
- Tables at both WIC locations have allowed for patients to grab resources as they wait in the waiting room. Nurses reported that their patients were enjoying the information. Many were not made aware of the dangers of unsafe sleep.

Meetings and presentations attended by the coordinator as a team member:

- Public Health Department and Social Workers, CFRT, CAC advocate,
- CFRT Coordinator's call
- NYS Child Fatality Review Team
- Children with Disabilities and Child Abuse and Maltreatment Webinar
- CFRT & CAC Board of Directors Presentation
- Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital Safe Sleep Committee meeting
- Self-Care & Stress Inoculation by NYS Office of Victim Services
- NYSPQC Educational Webinar on Updated AAP Guidelines
- Webcast on Breastfeeding Grand Rounds-Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Breastfeeding through Community and Hospital Based Approaches.
- Safe sleep presentation
- Articles and trainings forwarded to team members

Recommendations:

- Create a blog to increase website viewership and continue to spread accurate safe sleep information. Posting monthly and sharing the blog post to our Instagram, Facebook and website. The blog could consist of interviews with professionals in the community who have an interest in sharing their knowledge to better the parents of Onondaga County.
- Continue to reach out to Syracuse University professors and find a teacher who would be willing to let unsafe sleep prevention come in and speak to his/her classroom on safe sleep.
- Pair with Sleep in Heavenly Peace and attend the bed building events. This would help the safe sleep resources get in the hands of locals who are in need of beds for children. It would be wise to see if any of the families had children under the age of 3 who are currently bedsharing.
- There was great success at countless table events this year. Continue to add our names to free events around the city that allow us to interact with locals
- Receiving additional flyers and handouts to leave with the families after we give presentations so they have a guide to look back on in the future and to share with friends.
- Continue working with the Suicide Prevention Coalitions to promote awareness, break stigmas, and reduce the risk of suicide –especially individuals apart of the LGBTQ+ community whose suicide rates remain increasingly high in recent years.
 - **The Trevor Project**
More than half of LGBTQ+ youth experience bullying, discrimination, and mental health issues with nearly half also report having suicidal thoughts.
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/public-education/>

Report prepared by: Elli Mccarthy and Kate Fitzgerald
 Reviewed by: Kathy Delany, CFRT Coordinator 8/29/2023