

## **Guilford County Community Child Protection Team and Child Fatality Protection Annual Update June 2018**

Guilford County has joined with the State of North Carolina to love and safeguard our children. The Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) was established by North Carolina law (General Statute 7B-1406) in May of 1991 as a means for the state and local communities to form a partnership to strengthen child protection. The CCPT is a multidisciplinary team of professionals who meet bi-monthly to promote a community-wide approach to the problem of child abuse and neglect.

The state of North Carolina mandated that each county create a Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) in 1995. All 100 counties are required to have a multidisciplinary CFPT. The Guilford County team is responsible for reviewing the death of any child that resides in Guilford County who does not reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Each year, children die from preventable causes such as: Unsafe sleep environment, drownings, car accidents, fires, suicides and homicides as well as those who are born with congenital anomalies. Through the careful review of death records, we search to identify the causes of infant deaths and make recommendations to prevent future fatalities.

In Guilford, CCPT/CFPT operates as a blended team. The purpose of the team is to provide the opportunity for agencies that serve children to present challenging cases for review. Due to the diversity and expertise of the team members, recommendations often assist case workers identify additional resources for families in need. The team identifies gaps in services and makes recommendations or suggests opportunities for education to the state which may prevent future fatalities.

The composition of the CCPT and CFPT is mandated by law and includes appointed members of various agencies and organizations and some at large members. For the most part, the membership requirements are the same for both teams. Those required for both the CCPT and CFPT are:

- A. The county Department of Social Services (DSS) director, or members of the director's staff;
- B. A local law enforcement officer;
- C. An attorney from the district attorney's office, appointed by the district attorney;
- D. The executive director of the local community action agency;
- E. The superintendent of each local school system or the superintendent's designee;
- F. A member of the county DSS Board, (Human Services Advisory Committee in Guilford County) appointed by the chair;
- G. A local mental health professional;
- H. The local guardian ad litem coordinator, or the coordinator's designee;
- I. The director of the Health Department; or director's designee and
- J. A local health care provider.

In addition, to meet the requirements of the CFPT, the following representatives should also serve on the team.

- A. Emergency Management Services (EMS)
- B. District Court Judge
- C. County Medical Examiner
- D. Representative of a Child Care Facility or Head Start
- E. Parent of a child who died prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday

#### **Review of CCPT/CFPT Activities since June 2017:**

- Forty active members representing human service agencies, law enforcement, EMS, fire department, judicial and other community organizations serve on the CCPT/CFPT.
- Since June of 2017, the team has held eight meetings and reviewed 22 abuse/neglect and child fatality cases.
- As summarized in the most recent data from the North Carolina Resident Infant and Child Deaths Report (attached), of the 80 child deaths in Guilford County, 52 were children under the age of 1 year.
- Other trends in Guilford's child deaths include: The highest number of child deaths are due to perinatal conditions and birth defects; 15 were related to a childhood illness; 11 children died from abuse or neglect; five deaths occurred due to an unsafe sleep environment, five children drowned; three children died from suicide; and one child died from homicide.
- Trends in child abuse/neglect cases: During the 2016 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Human Services - The Division of Social Services (DSS) received 5,171 Child Protective Services reports involving the alleged maltreatment of more than 10,000 children. Of these calls, 3,658 were accepted for investigation. The average number of children in foster care in Guilford County is 546. Neglect is the reason 93% of children entered custody. The majority of the reported cases relate to substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence.
- The Child Protection and Prevention Teams' educational activities included domestic violence prevention, child safety, cyberbullying, gun safety, pregnancy prevention and safe sleep. The teams sponsored a county-wide First Responders training on Child Death Crime Scene Investigations, and collaborated with local agencies on community activities and health fairs for Prevent Child Abuse Month.
- The Annual Safety Makes Cents Award of \$1,000 was presented to the Family Support Network of Central Carolina to use for the purchase of safe sleep materials and devices.

#### **Remaining Challenges of the CCPT/CFPT team:**

- To continue identifying appropriate opportunities to educate parents on the dangers of co-sleeping with their babies.
- To promote public understanding of the referral and/or reporting processes for suspect cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate human services agencies.

- To bring national attention and professional training opportunities to address issues related to child abuse and neglect in Guilford County.

**Recommendations:** Additional mental health, substance abuse and support services are needed for parents and children. Services should include: Affordable treatment for individuals who are uninsured, more providers, access to more emergent services for youth, and affordable access to pharmaceutical treatment for uninsured persons. Additional support services should include: Case management and affordable childcare.

For more information, please contact: Kimberly Herzing, Chair at 336-641-3723 or Melissa Burkes, Review Coordinator at 336-641-6253.