



To Protect and Promote the Health and the Environment of the People of Kittitas County

Child Fatality Review Program

This document outlines the purpose, structure, and benefits of the upcoming Child Fatality Review process facilitated by the Kittitas County Public Health Department. It provides an overview of how the Child Fatality Review process identifies data-driven strategies to improve child health and safety.

What is Child Fatality Review?

Child Fatality Review (CFR) is a structured, multidisciplinary process designed to examine the circumstances surrounding a child's death, with the goal of preventing future fatalities. This process strengthens interagency coordination and supports systemic improvements in children's health and safety at the local, state, and national levels. CFR teams review individual cases to identify trends, gaps in services, and potential opportunities for system improvements, as well as recognize effective existing strategies. Importantly, this is not a punitive process; rather, it brings together professionals from various fields to share perspectives through their unique lenses to collaborate on actionable solutions to prevent future fatalities.

The anticipated start date for the first review facilitated by the Kittitas County Public Health Department is quarter four of 2025.

Statutory Authority

Child Fatality Review is authorized and protected under RCW 70.05.170, which states that local health departments have the authority to review the records from the preventable death of a child less than nineteen years of age. Review teams obtain and analyze relevant reports from community partners and stakeholders. All protected information remains confidential.

Child Fatality Review Benefits

The CFR team is focused on examining preventable deaths, such as those resulting from unintentional injuries, motor vehicle incidents, communicable diseases, issues related to mental health, etc. Through this process, the team identifies risk factors that may have contributed to the death and protective factors that can help prevent future harm and promote resilience.

Understanding risk factors allows our community to take meaningful steps to reduce future risk, whether through health promotion, education, policy development, local ordinances, or legislative action. Examples of actionable outcomes might include installing a life jacket loaner station at a lake following a drowning review or launching a community campaign to promote proper car seat use.



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Equally important is recognizing protective factors, conditions, or programs already working well, which can be strengthened and expanded. Often, effective programs and resources already exist within the community but may be underutilized or lack sufficient resources and support. This process can help highlight gaps in services or support and create opportunities to improve or develop initiatives that support child safety and well-being.

Partnerships

CFR teams bring together a core group of professionals who contribute their unique expertise to identify potential risk and protective factors evident in each case. The team will potentially have members from:

- Kittitas County Public Health Department
- pediatric or family medicine doctor
- emergency medical services
- Kittitas County Coroner's Office
- law enforcement agencies
- Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services
- Kittitas County Prosecutor's Office

Other support members are invited to the review meeting if pertinent to the topic of review. This could look like a school counselor being asked to come to a review for suicides or overdoses, or the fire department being asked to join a review that has fire-related incidents.

Staff and Team Supports

At KCPHD, we are committed to conducting Child Fatality Review (CFR) work with professionalism, empathy, and collaboration. We recognize that participating in CFR can be emotionally challenging and that staff may be at risk of experiencing vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma is the emotional and psychological impact that can result from hearing about or engaging with traumatic events experienced by others. We are dedicated to fostering a supportive environment where staff can recognize the emotional demands of this important work in a healthy and sustainable way. As part of our commitment, we will offer education and resources on trauma-informed care and mental health to all CFR team members, which team members are encouraged to utilize as needed.

Submitted: July 2025

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