



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
***DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES***

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December 15, 2019

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu  
State House  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu:

On July 29, 2019, SB 118, a bill establishing a Child Fatality Review Committee (CFRC), was signed into law. This new CFRC replaced a CFRC committee that was established in 1995 by an Executive Order of Governor Merrill. The legislation requires that by December 15<sup>th</sup> of each year the Committee shall complete an Annual Report. Since the Committee has only been meeting since early September and most of our work since then has been organizational in nature, we are using this letter to inform those who will receive the Annual Report in subsequent years of our work so far.

Child Fatality Review is grounded in the belief that a child's preventable death is a community's responsibility. A sentinel event should raise a call to action. The primary goal is to learn what happened and prevent harm to other children.

Under the Executive Order of Governor Stephen Merrill, New Hampshire began systematically reviewing the preventable deaths of New Hampshire children to identify and investigate risks and the service system responses. This Executive Order has successfully guided the work of the CFRC for more than 20 years. The previous Review Committee brought together the Department of Justice, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), agencies including Division of Children Youth and Families (DCYF), Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) and other human services, Law Enforcement, medical, and community based child advocacy organizations.

SB 118 codified this process and created a legislative authority for the Review Committee.

The objectives of this newly established committee are to:

- Describe trends and patterns of child deaths in New Hampshire, including sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID) and sudden death in the young (SDY).
- Identify and investigate the prevalence of risks and risks factors among the populations of deceased children.

- Evaluate the service and system responses for children and families and to offer recommendations for improvement of these services.
- Improve the sources of data collection by developing protocols for autopsies, death scene investigations, and complete recording of cause of death on all death certificates.
- Enable state agencies, law enforcement, health care providers, and community-based organizations to more effectively prevent and investigate child fatalities.

The twenty-eight members of the committee represent agencies tasked with protecting children from harm and agencies with the capacity to implement changes to policies and procedures that can have a positive impact on the safety of the children of New Hampshire.

An organizational meeting of the committee, called by then Commissioner Jeffrey Meyers of the DHHS, was held on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and the first official meeting was held on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. There has been one subsequent meeting. These first three meetings were organizational in nature and used to help educate the new members of the committee on the roles and responsibilities of the new Child Fatality Review Committee. As required by SB 118, the committee members also elected their co-chairs. Our first meeting to conduct a death review is scheduled for January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020. In subsequent reports, we will be including fatality data that has informed our work.

The work of this committee is to ensure the health and safety of the children of New Hampshire and to reduce the number of preventable child deaths. To these goals, we dedicate our work and efforts. In recognition of this commitment and dedication, it is with great pride that as we begin our work, we present this opening statement to the Honorable Christopher T. Sununu, Governor of the State of New Hampshire.



Debra Samaha, MPH  
Co-Chair  
NH CFRC



Marc Clement, PhD  
Co-Chair  
NH CFRC

MC/jb

cc:

Senate President:

Speaker of the House of Representatives:

Health and Human Services Oversight Committee