

Arizona Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

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390 Arizona Child Deaths in 2022 Were Preventable

(November 15, 2023-- Phoenix, AZ) – In 2022, 875 Arizona children died and 390 of these deaths were preventable. Arizona infant mortality rate increased 11% and the child mortality rate for firearm injury, motor vehicle crash injury, neglect/abuse deaths, prematurity, and sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUIDs) increased.

Key findings and recommendations to prevent these deaths are:

Although substance use-related deaths decreased 9% in 2022, substance use caused or contributed to 163 child deaths and 100% of these deaths were determined to be preventable.

- The most common cause of these deaths was poisoning.
- 34 Arizona children died from fentanyl poisoning and eight of these children were less than 5 years old.
- Some of CFRP recommendations to prevent these deaths include storing medications out of the reach of children, implementing universal screening for substance use and mental health issues during adolescent well visits, and increasing access to mental health and substance use treatment programs.

There were 74 sudden unexpected infant deaths in 2022, a 13% increase from 2021.

- 97% of these deaths occurred in an unsafe sleep environment and 96% of these deaths were preventable.
- To prevent these deaths, CFRP recommends that caregivers should always put their baby to sleep Alone on their Back, in a Crib and that rocking sleepers, nursing pillows, infant loungers and related products never be used for sleep.

Neglect/abuse caused or contributed to 146 deaths in 2022, a 12% increase in the neglect/abuse death rate from 2021 to 2022.

- The two most common risk factors for these deaths were parental substance use history and poverty.
- CFRP recommends Arizona invest in the financial wellbeing of families, including increasing access to concrete supports like food, housing, and childcare which reduces the risk of neglect and the need for foster care.

Arizona's child firearm mortality rate has been increasing since 2014 and in 2022 there were 59 firearm injury deaths.

- The most commonly identified owner of the firearm was the child's parent and 83% of firearm injury deaths involved a handgun.
- Some of the CFRP recommendations to reduce firearm deaths include increasing access to mental health services for children and their families and increasing public awareness that the most effective way to prevent firearm-related child deaths is to remove all firearms from the home.

In 2022, ten percent of all Arizona child deaths were due to infectious diseases.

- There were 17 COVID-19 deaths, 14 deaths due to pneumonia and 32 deaths due to other infections (i.e., influenza, congenital syphilis, RSV, meningitis). Many of these deaths could have been prevented by immunizations.
- Since the advent of COVID-19 vaccinations, child deaths in Arizona from COVID-19 have decreased from 32 deaths in 2021 to 17 deaths in 2022.
- Nine infants in Arizona died from congenital syphilis. Timely testing and treatment during the mother's pregnancy could have prevented these deaths.

There were 30 drowning deaths in 2022, a 33% decrease from 2021.

- Drowning was the leading cause of death for children 1-4 years of age.
- To prevent drowning deaths, the CFRP recommends that caregivers provide constant supervision of young children around pools and that Arizona increase the availability of affordable swim lessons for children.

The mission of the Child Fatality Review (CFR) Program is to reduce preventable child fatalities through an annual systematic, multidisciplinary review of all child fatalities in Arizona. By reviewing these deaths, the program can identify the causes, contributing factors, preventability, and trends which can inform the community and public policymakers who wish to reduce the child mortality rate in our state through the implementation of the CFR's state team recommendations and other strategies.

The full report and all recommendations are available at:

<https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/reports-fact-sheets/index.php#child-fatality-review-annual-reports>

About the Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AzAAP)

The AzAAP is the state's leading professional pediatric organization dedicated to promoting the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of every Arizona child. Representing more than 1,100 healthcare professionals including pediatricians, nurses, dentists, psychiatrists, hospital administrators, and other allied health practitioners. For more information, call 602.532.0137 ext. 402 or visit www.azaap.org.