

Assembly Committee on Children and Families
Public Hearing on Assembly Bill 554
December 17, 2013

Thank you Chairman Krug and committee members for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Assembly Committee on Children and Families in support of Assembly Bill 554 related to creating a statewide program to review child deaths.

No greater tragedy exists than the loss of a child. Each year, more than 700 deaths occur to children under age 18 in Wisconsin.

Child death review (CDR) teams are multidisciplinary groups of experts charged with determining all risk factors and circumstances leading to the child's death in an effort to generate recommendations for preventing future deaths.

- CDR is a professional process aimed at understanding the risk factors and circumstances surrounding the death of a child.
- CDR is not an opportunity to second guess agency policies or critique individual performance.
- These multidisciplinary CDR teams collect data and use their findings to recommend prevention strategies.
- At a minimum, local CDR teams review deaths of children younger than age 18 that occur within their county.

The CDR program in Wisconsin was established in 1998 when the Department of Justice created a state CDR team under the federal Child Justice Act. Over the past 20 years, CDR programs have spread across the United States. Altogether, there are more than 1,200 state and local teams nationwide. Although CDR teams currently operate in 51 Wisconsin counties, Wisconsin is one of seven states that do not recognize the CDR process in statute. Wisconsin CDR teams in Wisconsin are challenged by this lack of regulatory certainty. Specifically, legislation is needed to:

- Establish a recognized CDR program for Wisconsin.
- Affirm the current *ad hoc state* CDR Council to provide advisory oversight and guidance.
- Resolve barriers confronting local CDR teams related to data collection, data sharing, and agency cooperation to support prevention efforts and outreach.
- Protect the process and information shared at CDR team meetings

Senator Olsen and I have introduced Assembly Bill 554 and Senate Bill 436 at the request of the many CDR team members and stakeholders. Many of them are here to provide testimony today. I encourage you to carefully consider their testimony, and hope that you will agree that AB 554 and SB 436 will provide the critical legislative support that is needed to allow these CDR teams to continue their important work to help prevent child deaths in Wisconsin.