



Child Fatality Review Board 2024 Annual Report

Located at
219 East Market St. Lima,
Ohio 45801-1503

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Allen County Child Fatality Review (CFR) Board has been conducting case reviews since January 1, 2001. This report marks the twenty-fourth year of child death reviews by the Board.

In accordance with Ohio law, CFR Boards in every county or region are required to review all deaths of children under 18 years old. While these reviews remain confidential, the **Child Fatality Annual Report** provides the community with key insights from the cases of all children who resided in Allen County and passed away in 2024.

The primary objective of the Allen County CFR Board is to examine the circumstances surrounding each child's death, identify potential risk factors, and make recommendations for policy or program changes aimed at preventing future child fatalities.

In 2024, a total of **nine (9) child deaths** were reported in Allen County. The CFR Board reviewed all cases with available documentation. However, three cases remain pending due to incomplete or unavailable records. Over the past five years (2020–2024), Allen County has recorded **70 child deaths**, averaging nearly **14 deaths per year**.

INTRODUCTION

Mission: To reduce the incidence of preventable child deaths in Allen County.

The Allen County CFR Board has several key objectives. Its primary goal is to accurately identify and document the causes of death for all children under 18 residing in Allen County. The board also collects and analyzes data on child fatalities to identify trends and patterns. Additionally, it works to identify preventable causes of death and develop recommendations to support policy changes and address public health and safety concerns within the county. Lastly, the board aims to establish standardized protocols and procedures for investigating child deaths, ensuring consistency and accuracy in its annual reviews.

Allen County Child Fatality Review Board Members

Brandon Fischer, MA, REHS - Chair, Allen County Public Health
Debra Hattery-Roberts, BSN, RN – Secretary, Allen County Public Health
Sarah Schroeder, BSN RN- Allen County Public Health Nurse III
Christine Gaynier, MD – Medical Director, Allen County Public Health
Amy Miller- Family Resource Center
Michelle Stockwell- SAFY
Dustin Holcomb, MPH – Epidemiologist, Allen County Public Health
Tami Gough, Director of Health Promotion and Prevention, Allen County Public Health
Robert Bruni – Allen County Children Services
Tammie Colon, Director – Mental Health & Recovery Services Board of Allen, Auglaize, and Hardin Counties
Kelly Monroe – Mental Health & Recovery Services Board
Lt. Brian Leary – Lima Police Department
John Meyer, MD – Allen County Coroner
Craig Kupferberg, Superintendent – Allen County Educational Service Center
Lt. Mark Baker – Allen County Sheriff's Office
Rachael Staley – Allen County Help Me Grow
Christin Winter – Mercy St. Vincent Health Connections
Marcell A. King, C.O.O. – Lima Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program (UMADAOP, Inc.)
Destiny Caldwell- Allen County Prosecutor's Office

Child Fatality Review Board Membership

The Allen County CFR Board is composed of representatives from various agencies, including Allen County Children Services, the Allen County Coroner, the Allen County Board of Developmental Disabilities, the Allen County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, the Allen County Prosecutor's Office, Allen County Public Health, the Allen County Sheriff's Office, the Family Resource Center, Mercy St. Vincent Health Connections, SAFY Lima Behavioral Health, the Lima Police Department, Lima UMADAOP, the Allen County Educational Service Center Superintendent, and local physicians from the community. Meetings are confidential and closed to the public and media, as required by Ohio law. Attendance is limited to board members and invited guests, though representatives from other organizations may be included when their expertise is relevant to a specific case under review.

Meetings are closed to the general public and the media and are kept confidential, as required by Ohio law. Only board members and invited guests are permitted to attend CFR Board meetings. Representatives of other organizations are occasionally invited to attend when a relevant case is being discussed.

Summary of Reviewed Cases

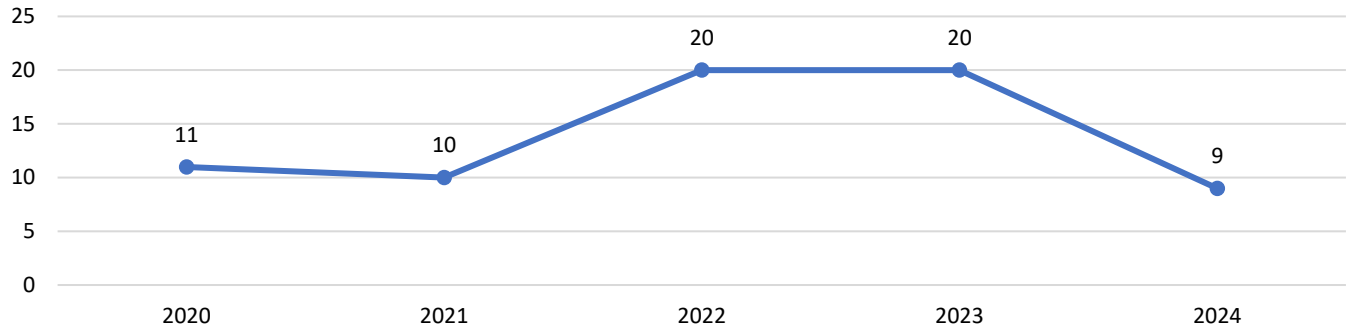
The Allen County CFR Board reviews the deaths of individuals under 18 who were residents of Allen County at the time of their passing, excluding non-residents. The board collects and examines key demographic data, including the cause of death, contributing factors, and other relevant details. For infant deaths, maternal prenatal medical history is also considered. Each case undergoes a comprehensive review once all necessary documentation is received. Cases involving ongoing criminal investigations or prosecutions are deferred until those proceedings are complete to prevent interference. Additionally, every three years, Allen County agencies collaborate on a Community Health Assessment (CHA) to identify and address significant health concerns in the community. The 2024 Community Health Assessment is available on the Allen County Public Health County website, which has more data related to prenatal care, infant mortality, and top community health priorities for children. [Community Data | Allen County Public Health](#)

For more information or to receive a copy of the Allen County Child Fatality Annual Report, see (<https://allencountypublichealth.org/> under the Data and Reports tab –Child Fatality Review or call (419) 228-4457.

Child Deaths in 2024

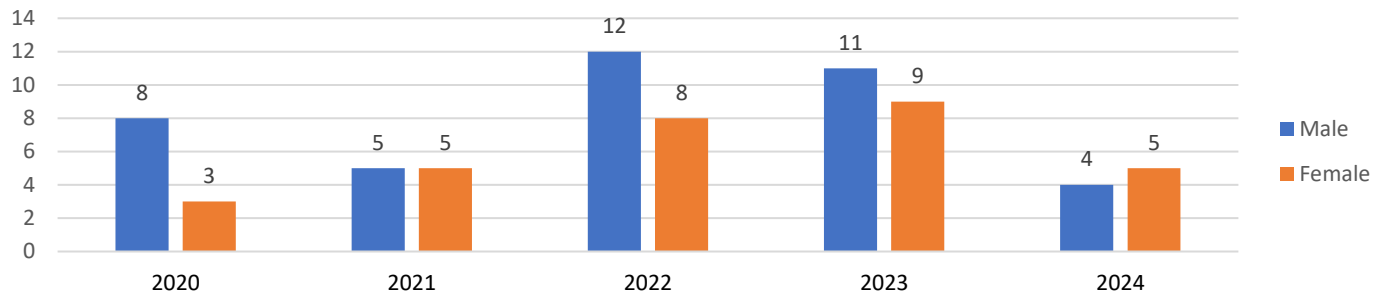
Total Deaths for Year-9

Deaths decreased by 55% from 2023 to 2024.



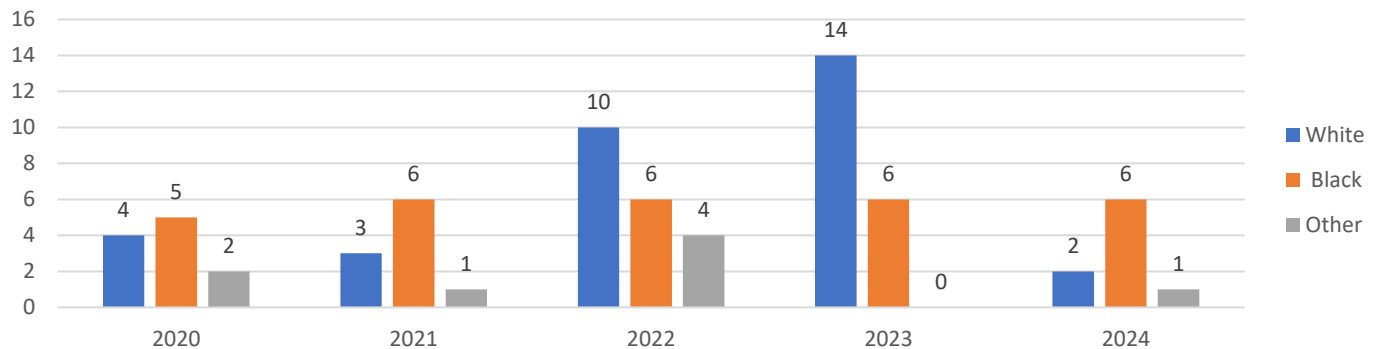
Sex

Female deaths were slightly high than males for the first time in over 5 years, accounting for 55% of all the deaths in 2024.



Race

In 2024, those who were identified as Black accounted for two thirds of all cases, while only accounting for just slightly over 10% of the total population.



Age

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Totals
<24 hours	3	2	2	5	2	14
1-28 days	2	0	0	10	1	13
29-364 days	1	2	6	3	3	15
1-4 years	1	1	3	1	1	7
5-9 years	0	0	2	0	0	2
10-14 years	1	2	3	0	2	8
15-17 years	3	3	4	1	0	11
TOTAL	11	10	20	20	9	70

Infant Mortality Rate

5 Year average rate 6.92

Infant mortality refers to the unfortunate loss of a child before their first birthday. The infant mortality rate calculates this loss by measuring the number of infants who pass away within their first year per 1,000 live births. It serves as a crucial gauge of a community's overall health status. From 2023 to 2024, there was a 67% decrease in infant deaths in Allen County.

Year	Infant Deaths	Rate Per 1,000 Live Births
2020	4	3.4
2021	5	4.1
2022	9	7.6
2023	18	15
2024	6	4.8

CAUSE OF DEATH

In 2024, deaths were categorized into medical or external causes, each further specified. Medical causes encompass natural processes such as birth defects, prematurity, sudden infant death syndrome, cancer, and cardiovascular issues. In 2024, 5 infants who died prematurely (<37 weeks) fell into this category, constituting 56% of all child fatalities, along with 1 infant from another medical condition (infection). External causes involve injuries, whether unintentional or intentional, or from the absence of essentials like heat or oxygen. Examples include firearms, vehicular incidents, and suicide. In 2024, 3 deaths (33%) were attributed to external causes.

Infant deaths	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
# of deaths reviewed	6	4	8	18	6	42
Premature (<37 weeks)	3	3	2	12	5	25
Low birth weight (<2500g)	3	2	5	13	5	28
Intrauterine smoke exposure	1	0	2	2	1	6
Intrauterine alcohol exposure	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intrauterine drug exposure	0	1	1	1	1	4
Late (>6 weeks) or no prenatal care	1	2	7	1	1	12

Columns do not add up to the total number of deaths because the factors are not mutually exclusive. Source: National Fatality Review Case Reporting System Database

MEDICAL CAUSES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Prematurity	3	0	1	7	5	16
Neurological	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUID	1	0	1	0	0	2
Cancer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiovascular	0	0	0	5	0	5
Congenital anomaly	2	2	1	1	0	6
Pneumonia	0	1	2	1	0	4
Other infection	0	1	3	0	0	4
Other perinatal condition	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other medical	1	0	3	2	1	7
Undetermined	0	0	2	2	0	4
External Causes	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Homicide	2	2	0	0	2	6
Motor vehicle	1	2	1	0	0	4
Suicide	1	0	2	0	0	3
Other injuries	0	2	4	2	1	9

CASE OVERVIEW

Each child fatality that took place within the jurisdiction of Allen County Public Health in 2024 will go through review. The following subcategories describe the manner of death established from both the Ohio death certificate and the subsequent review process. The categories include natural, accident, suicide, homicide, undetermined, pending, and unknown.

The CFR Annual Report defines natural cause as those primarily resulting from illness or internal bodily malfunction unaffected by external forces such as violence or accidents, homicide as the killing of a person by another person, and accidents as death caused by unintentional rather than by natural causes, suicide, or murder. For Allen County in 2024, **6** cases were classified as **natural**, **2** as **homicide**, and **1** as **accident**.

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID)

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) refers to the unexpected and sudden death of an infant under one year old, often classified into three main categories: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), deaths from unknown causes, and accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed. According to the CDC, approximately 3,500 SUID cases occur in the U.S. each year, with around 1,300 attributed to SIDS, another 1,300 due to unknown causes, and about 800 resulting from accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed. In 2024, Allen County reported no infant deaths related to SUID.

Preventable Deaths

In Ohio, a child's death is considered preventable if community or individual actions could have reasonably altered the circumstances leading to the death. The CFR Board's review process

comprehensively examines various factors contributing to the death, determining which could have been reasonably changed. Cases are categorized as "probably preventable" or "probably not preventable." The CFR process, even for deaths labeled "probably not preventable," identifies care gaps or environmental factors impacting children's quality of life, leading to recommendations and suggested changes by the Board.

PREVENTABILITY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Probably preventable	5	6	7	3	3	24
Probably not preventable	6	4	10	12	6	38
Unable to determine	0	0	3	5	0	8
TOTAL	11	10	20	20	9	70

Conclusion

The CFR Board in Allen County is committed to preventing child deaths, recognizing each loss as a profound tragedy rather than just a statistic. Many of these deaths occur suddenly and unexpectedly, deeply affecting families and communities. Through its review process, the board identifies key risk factors such as prematurity, low birth weight, and unsafe environments. This report presents the CFR Board's findings on child deaths in 2024, outlining contributing circumstances. With representatives from multiple agencies, the board provides diverse recommendations and promotes policies and programs aimed at reducing risks and improving children's well-being in Allen County. It encourages the widespread distribution of this report to those who can help drive meaningful change and prevent future tragedies.

Recommendations

Parenting-Related Gun Safety Recommendations:

- ✓ Educate parents and caregivers on securely storing firearms, including using gun safes, trigger locks, and storing ammunition separately.
- ✓ Provide resources for parents to talk to children about the dangers of firearms and the importance of never handling a gun without adult supervision.
- ✓ Inform families about Ohio's laws regarding firearm storage and liability when a minor gains access to an unsecured firearm.
- ✓ Advocate for policies and programs that reduce firearm-related injuries among children and teens, including mental health resources and conflict resolution education.

Social Media Strategies for Child Safety & Injury Prevention

- ✓ Launch a broad awareness campaign covering various child safety topics, such as safe sleep, gun safety, car seat use, water safety, and poison prevention.
- ✓ Share quick, digestible tips on injury prevention through visually appealing graphics and short videos on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.
- ✓ Host live discussions with pediatricians, safety experts, and first responders to answer common questions about child safety in real time.

- ✓ Dedicate weeks to specific safety topics, such as "Fire Safety Week," "Gun Safety Awareness," or "Car Seat Safety Month," featuring daily posts and interactive challenges.
- ✓ Encourage parents to share their own child safety tips or stories, creating a community-driven conversation around injury prevention.
- ✓ Share links to free resources, safety checklists, and local programs offering car seat checks, CPR classes, and safe sleep.

Pregnancy-Related:

- ✓ Increase awareness of premature labor warning signs and strategies to reduce associated risks.
- ✓ Emphasize the importance of early and consistent prenatal care.
- ✓ Provide education and support for adopting healthy lifestyle choices before, during, and after pregnancy, including ways to reduce tobacco use and exposure.
- ✓ Offer support services to help women abstain from alcohol and illicit drug use, particularly during pregnancy.
- ✓ Educate individuals on pregnancy prevention, including safe sex practices, STI prevention, and appropriate spacing between pregnancies.

Parenting-Related:

- ✓ Expand the distribution of safe sleep education, reinforcing the ABCs of safe sleep: Alone in their own sleep space, on their Back, in a Crib free of blankets, pillows, and toys.
- ✓ Raise awareness about child abuse prevention and how to recognize warning signs.
- ✓ Provide guidance on making informed choices when selecting a partner.
- ✓ Strengthen parenting skills through education on child supervision and firearm safety.
- ✓ Offer genetic counseling for families who have experienced the loss of an infant or child due to genetic conditions, helping them understand potential risks in future pregnancies.

Community Resources & Support:

- ✓ Encourage regular and consistent medical care for children with chronic medical conditions.
- ✓ Educate the community on the dangers of distracted and impaired driving.
- ✓ Increase awareness of available resources and referrals for families in crisis, including those affected by domestic violence, substance abuse, or household instability.
- ✓ Provide information on victim support systems.
- ✓ Advocate for improvements in social determinants of health, such as housing and employment, as highlighted in the Health Policy Institute of Ohio's 2023 report on the Social Drivers of Infant Mortality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The CFR Board acknowledges the challenges of acquiring necessary medical records for thorough investigations and appreciates the value of accessing a mother's prenatal records, which enhances the depth of assessment in cases where such records are available. Recognizing the variability of these cases, the Board highlights the difficulty in tracking the support received by parents after a child's death. Collaborating with community agencies to provide support services for grieving families is crucial for healing and closure, a support system the CFR Board acknowledges as essential for families coping with the loss of a child.

PREVENTION INITIATIVES

The CFR Board's mission is to prevent child deaths by sharing recommendations and collaborating with partners to initiate community action. These recommendations transform into initiatives when resources, priorities, and authority align to drive change. The following initiatives are underway in Allen County to aid in the prevention of child deaths. Any recommendation without an existing community initiative is considered a gap requiring collaboration with community partners to address and review progress.

Pregnancy-related initiatives within the community:

Help Me Grow, facilitated by Mercy St. Vincent Health Connections, offers evidence-based home visiting services to pregnant women and parents with young children at risk of poor birth or developmental outcomes in Allen County. Through regular meetings with social workers, nurses, or early childhood professionals, at-risk families receive the necessary support, education, and resources to ensure the physical, social, and emotional health of their children and prepare them for learning.

The Community Health Worker Pathway HUB program, facilitated by Mercy Health St. Ritas, connect low-income pregnant women to prenatal care and support services.

The Allen County WIC program is a nutrition education program that provides nutritious foods to promote good health for pregnant women, postpartum women, breastfeeding women, and for infants and children under five.

Parenting-related initiatives within the community:

Infant safe sleep campaigns persist in Allen County, spearheaded by Allen County Public Health. Through various channels such as social media, waiting room posters, and handouts distributed during programs like the WIC program and infant immunizations, families receive crucial safe sleep messages. Additionally, the Cribs for Kids Program supplies Pack 'n Plays to ensure safe sleep environments for infants in need, coupled with educational sessions on safe sleep practices. Allen County Children Services and Help Me Grow also contribute to spreading safe sleep information across the community.

The Allen County Board of Developmental Disabilities oversees Ohio's Part C Early Intervention locally, a voluntary and confidential program catering to families with children (birth up to age 3) facing developmental delays or medical conditions potentially causing delays. Emphasizing that children learn best in familiar surroundings, services are delivered at home, daycare, playgrounds, or other convenient

locations for the family. Tailored to the family's priorities, services focus on addressing daily challenges such as mealtime, bath time, and bedtime. Parents or primary caregivers play a crucial role in the team, receiving coaching to enhance their child's skills, along with developmental activities for incorporation into family routines.

Community resources and support-related initiatives within the community:

Upon notification of a child's death, Allen County Public Health sends a personalized condolence letter to the family, enclosing resources and support services materials for referrals within the community.

Childhood immunizations are available through the Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program for uninsured and underinsured infants, children, and adolescents. New mothers at Lima Memorial Health System and Mercy Health St. Rita's Medical Center receive Tdap vaccinations before leaving the hospital to prevent pertussis transmission.

The Lima-Allen County Safe Community Coalition, a federally funded initiative locally implemented by the Lima-Allen County Regional Planning Commission, aims to reduce traffic crashes. Using national crash data, the coalition targets initiatives such as increasing seat belt use, motorcycle safety, and combating impaired and distracted driving through multi-pronged strategies.

Prevention Awareness Support Services (PASS) contracts with the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Allen County and presents evidence and school-based programs on substance use and suicide prevention.

Lifelines, Remove, Refuse, Reasons (RRR), and Know the Risks are evidence-based programs offered in Allen County schools for suicide prevention, drug and alcohol prevention, and awareness of prescription opiate risks.

Operation Save the Lost, a grassroots nonprofit formed in 2020, provides Joibit tracking devices to families with children on the autism spectrum. These devices offer GPS tracking and boundary alerts, enhancing child safety. With a mission to protect children with autism, the organization has distributed devices to families and seeks additional funding for wider distribution.

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