



# Child Deaths in Idaho, 2016

All 222 deaths to children under age 18 occurring in Idaho in 2016 were screened by a subcommittee. A case was selected for full review when it met one or more of the following criteria:

1. Death was due to an external cause
2. Cause of death was unexplained
3. Death was due to a cause with identified risk factors

Findings from the Idaho  
Child Fatality Review Team

May 2019

	Total	Screened by CFR Subcommittee	Reviewed by CFR Team
Perinatal Conditions/ Congenital Malformations	85	85	5
Unintentional Injuries (Accidents)	51	51	51
Suicide	15	15	15
Unexplained Infant Death	19	19	19
Assault (Homicide)	6	6	5
Malignancies	8	8	0
Flu/Pneumonia	0	0	0
Non-ranking/All Other Causes	38	38	11
	<b>222</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>106</b>

## Unintentional Injuries

There were **31** motor vehicle accident deaths to children. Failure to maintain lane and inattentive/distracted driving were leading causes. Most children who died in traffic accidents were not properly restrained with a seat belt or safety seat. **Four** of the accidents occurred off-road in ATVs, UTVs or snowmobiles. **Two** deaths were to bicyclists riding in or near road traffic.

Other 2016 accident deaths included drowning (**7**), crush or fall injuries (**4**), firearms (**2**) and asphyxiation (**5**). The asphyxiation deaths were due to varied causes including accidental suffocation (typically to infants in the sleeping environment) and accidental strangulation.

## Sudden Unexplained Infant Death

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age, which remains unexplained after a comprehensive investigation.

There were **12** SUID plus **7** infant deaths of "undetermined" cause. Unsafe sleep environment (including co-sleeping) was the most common preventable factor observed. Additionally, many infant deaths occurred in hazardous or unsanitary homes. Home visiting programs are a proven way of helping families create nurturing and healthy households.

Ongoing education stressing American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) safe sleep guidelines, the dangers of tobacco smoke exposure and the protective factors of breastfeeding may help prevent infant deaths. Parents should be extra mindful of safe sleep environment when infants are away from home as when camping, staying in hotels or visiting relatives.

## Intentional Injuries (suicide and homicide)

Idaho ranks in the top 10 U.S. states for youth suicide. In 2016, there were **15** youth suicides. Victims were predominantly male and ages ranged from 13 to 17 years. Firearms were the injury mechanism in two-thirds of the cases. Hanging and drowning were also seen.

Access to a lethal method was the most common precursor in these deaths. Many who completed suicide had a history of depression or other mental health concerns. Past ideation or attempts were often reported. Triggering events included conflicts in a romantic/sexual relationship, bullying and family instability.

The team reviewed **5** fatal assaults to children. All were school-aged or toddlers.

There were 3 separate cases of suspected murder/suicide in 2016, resulting in multiple deaths. Causes included drowning, blunt force trauma, and dehydration. Substance abuse, mental health issues, and criminal history of the parent or caregiver are common risk factors in child homicides. The number of homicides involving a parent with a history of mental health issues highlights the need for improved access to services in our state. Professionals who work with children should be able to identify the signs of abusive behavior and readily report concerns to authorities.

*"Parents should be extra mindful of safe sleep environment when infants are away from home as when camping, staying in hotels or visiting relatives."*

## Natural Manner Deaths

The CFR team reviewed **5** perinatal condition deaths from 2016. Most involved low birth weight and/or extreme prematurity. Inadequate prenatal care, maternal smoking, drug abuse and existing medical conditions were identified as modifiable risk factors in some of these cases.

In reviewing *all* causes of death, there were a total of **5** cases (all infant deaths)

in which the parents delayed or refused medical care or opted out of vaccines, citing personal or religious beliefs.

An additional **11** reviewed deaths of natural manner were due to varied causes such as respiratory infections, meningitis, and gastroenteritis. Proper hygiene habits, prenatal care, compliance with scheduled vaccinations, and timely medical treatment may prevent severe illness or complications which can lead to death—especially for vulnerable infants and children with underlying medical conditions or developmental delays.

**FOR METHODOLOGY and COMPLETE REPORT OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SEE:**  
[www.idcartf.org](http://www.idcartf.org)

