



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Esther Jacobo
Interim Secretary

September 24, 2013

Dr. Louis St. Petery, Jr., MD
Executive Vice President
Florida Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
P.O. Box 10269
Tallahassee, FL 32302

Dear Dr. St. Petery:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with my staff and representatives from the Department of Health last week to discuss issues related to the management of information on child fatalities reported to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). I regret that I could not attend the meeting in Tallahassee myself, but I have been fully briefed on your discussion and am very optimistic that we can achieve a mutually agreeable solution to your concerns.

Towards that end, I want to confirm my support of the action steps proposed at the meeting:

- DCF will publish a monthly report of child fatalities reported to the Abuse Hotline involving drowning and unsafe sleep practices. This information can be used to promote awareness of the serious threat co-sleeping and drowning pose to Florida's children and to encourage the development of effective prevention and education programs and materials.
- Our agency will also solicit input from child safety experts, including Child Protection Team pediatricians, to help develop guidelines for the classification of child fatalities by child protection investigators. The revised guidelines will be distributed to field staff so we can have a consistent statewide approach to evaluating the circumstances surrounding a child's death and determining whether abuse or neglect can be verified.

These are just two initiatives among many the department is undertaking to reduce child fatalities in Florida. DCF has commissioned a review of child deaths by Casey Family Programs and developments are underway for additional predictive analytics expertise to better understand how community professionals can play a role in prevention of child deaths.

We hope the joint press event scheduled for Wednesday, September 25th, at the Capitol, will also help bring attention to this issue. I truly appreciate your commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of Florida's children – and I look forward to collaborating with you and your colleagues on additional prevention efforts in the future.

Sincerely,

Esther Jacobo
Interim Secretary

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700