

Buncombe County  
Community Child Protection Team & Child Fatality Prevention Team



*Protecting our Children*

---

---

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT TO BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Submitted 6/21/2020**

**I. Introduction to the North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention System**

North Carolina's Child Fatality Prevention System is addressed in Article 14 of the North Carolina Juvenile Code, N.C.G.S. 7B-1400 through 7B-1414. The public policy that anchors this system is articulated in the statute as follows:

*The General Assembly finds that it is the public policy of this State to prevent the abuse, neglect, and death of juveniles. The General Assembly further finds that the prevention of the abuse, neglect, and death of juveniles is a community responsibility; that professionals from disparate disciplines have responsibilities for children or juveniles and have expertise that can promote their safety and well-being; and that multidisciplinary reviews of the abuse, neglect, and death of juveniles can lead to a greater understanding of the causes and methods of preventing these deaths.*

According to Article 14, the purpose of the system is to assess the records of all deaths of children in NC from birth to age 18, as well as selected cases in which children are being served by child protective services (CPS), in order to:

- Develop a community-wide approach to child abuse and neglect;
- Understand causes of childhood deaths;
- Identify gaps or deficiencies in service delivery in public agency systems designed to prevent abuse, neglect, and death; and
- Make and implement recommendations for laws, rules, and policies that will support the safe and healthy development of children and prevent future child abuse, neglect, and death.

Every county in NC has two teams that are part of the state Child Fatality Prevention System.

1. The **Community Child Protection Team (CCPT)** reviews selected active cases of children who are being served by child protective services (CPS), and all cases in which a child died as a result of suspected or confirmed abuse or neglect and a report of abuse or neglect had been made about the child or their family to the Department of

Social Services (DSS) within the prior 12 months, or the child or their family was a recipient of CPS within the prior 12 months.

2. The **Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT)** reviews the records of all cases of additional child fatalities (i.e., the deaths of children who died from a cause other than suspected abuse or neglect). It is important to note that fatalities are reviewed during the calendar year following the year of death.

In most counties, including Buncombe, these two local review teams are merged into one team. Based on case reviews, the local CCPT/CFPT makes recommendations and advocates for system improvements and needed resources where gaps and deficiencies may exist.

CCPT and CFPT membership is designated by statute, consisting of various representatives of public and private community agencies that provide services to children and their families, including the local Department of Social Services (DSS), Health Department, law enforcement, Guardian Ad Litem, and school systems. The local board of county commissioners also may appoint as many as five additional members to represent agencies or the community at-large. Appendix 1 shows the mandated members and their appointing authority, as well as the specific individuals filling those roles for the Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT at this time. All mandated membership positions are filled at this time.

The purpose of this report is to give a summary of the activities and accomplishments of the Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT during calendar year 2019, including the number of child fatality reviews conducted and data on the causes of those child fatalities, the number of DSS case reviews conducted, and recommendations for system improvements and needed resources to prevent child abuse, neglect and death.

## II. **Role of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners**

- Receive annual report from Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT, which contains recommendations for prevention of child abuse, neglect and death.
- Advocate for system improvements and needed resources, if requested.
- Appoint members to the Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT as designated by state statute.

## III. **Child Maltreatment Case Reviews**

In 2019, the Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT reviewed two cases of child abuse and neglect. **Findings included** substance use disorder, intimate partner violence, generational abuse/neglect, and mental health disorders. **Community needs identified:** additional substance use detox programs for individuals with medical needs; additional program slots for mothers who want residential substance use disorder treatment that allows them to have their children with them.

**IV. Child Fatality Reviews**

In 2019, the Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT reviewed 20 deaths that occurred in children who resided in Buncombe County at the time of their deaths in 2018. **Please see Appendix 2 for aggregate data on the causes of child deaths in Buncombe County in 2018, as well as select demographic information about the deceased children.**

In 2019, the team identified the following system problems and recommendations for future prevention efforts. One (highlighted below) involves a specific recommendation for Buncombe County government.

Cause of Death	System Problem Identified	Recommendation
Suicide	Emerging issue of teen suicide in the US; lack of community knowledge of this issue, the warning signs of suicidal ideation in minors and what to do if a minor is suicidal	Local agencies who provide behavioral health services and education to minors and their caregivers (Vaya, RHA, Family Preservation, NAMI, etc.) should consider providing community education (media campaigns, community forums, etc.) on teen suicide.
	Emerging issue of teen suicide in the US; lack of healthcare provider knowledge of this issue, appropriate screening for suicidal ideation in minors and what to do if a minor is suicidal	MAHEC and Mission Children’s Network should consider providing healthcare provider education on teen suicide.
	Ongoing issue of safe firearm storage in the community which increases risk of self-harm by minors	Buncombe County Sheriff’s Office, Asheville Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies should consider providing community education on firearm safety, as well as distribution of gun locks.
	Lack of application of gun safety interventions/equipment by parents and other adults leads to minors having easy access to guns and ammunition. This ease of access results in preventable injury and death.	The NC Child Fatality Task Force should explore a statewide gun safety education campaign promoting responsible gun ownership; we recommend focusing education on parents and adults, including at places that sell guns and ammunition.
Homicide	Employers and their staff struggle with or do not know how to respond to intimate partner violence (IPV) affecting their employees/coworkers	Employers should provide training to their leadership and staff on IPV and institute HR best practices on how to

		address IPV affecting employees/coworkers.
	School staff and students could benefit from additional education on how to identify and address IPV	Helpmate and the local school districts (Asheville City and Buncombe County) should look at expanding the provision of IPV/relationship safety education to additional grades, and should ensure that all school staff have been trained on how to identify and respond to IPV affecting students and families.
	Gun violence is a growing threat to the health of youth and adults in our community.	<p>Law enforcement agencies and municipalities in Buncombe County should lead or promote community work relating to gun violence, pulling together representatives from all sectors, including affected communities, to work on understanding &amp; addressing the causes of gun violence in our community.</p> <p>The NC Child Fatality Task Force should continue to encourage statewide work on gun violence. Need to pull together representatives from all sectors, including affected communities, to work on understanding &amp; addressing the causes of gun violence in our communities.</p>
Sudden Unexplained Infant Death – unsafe sleep environment	Parents/caregivers continue to place infants in unsafe sleep environments despite receiving education on safe sleep, leading to preventable infant deaths	BCHHS-led Safe Sleep Workgroup should reconvene to look at current guidance/promising practices on messaging about safe sleep, and consider updating our local safe sleep campaign materials. The workgroup should reach out to UNC Center for Maternal and Infant Health. The workgroup should collaborate with Buncombe County Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) partners who are working on infant mortality.

**V. Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT Activities and Accomplishments**

- The team met 12 times in 2019.
- Individual reports were completed on child deaths reviewed by the team and were forwarded to the state CCPT Consultant and CFPT Coordinator.
- The annual CCPT Survey and CFPT Activity Summary were completed by the dates requested.
- Team Chair, Review Coordinator and several other team members attended a regional training for CFPT members.
- To support safe sleep, the team purchased and distributed two Pack n' Plays each, along with sheets and sleep sacks, to four local shelters and Buncombe County's Nurse-Family Partnership Program.

**VI. Conclusion**

Thank you to the members of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners for this opportunity to share the work of the Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT. We appreciate your support of our efforts to prevent child abuse, neglect and death. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions about this report.



Jennifer Mullendore, MD, MSPH  
Chair, Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT  
Medical Director and Interim Health Director, Buncombe County Health and Human Services

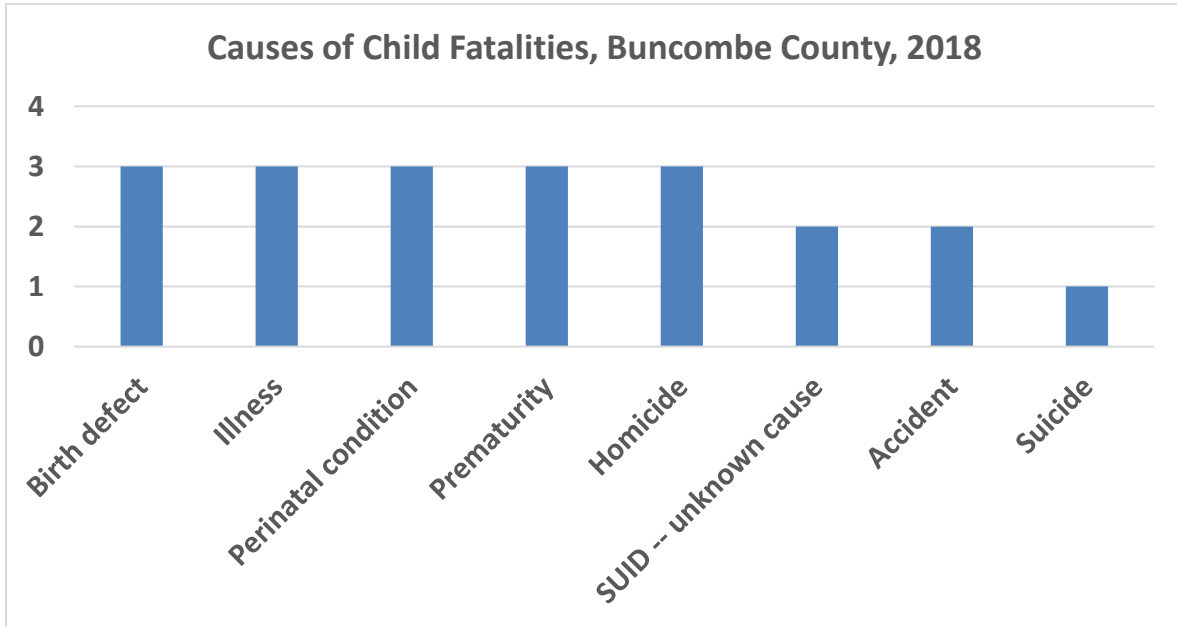
[Jennifer.Mullendore@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Jennifer.Mullendore@buncombecounty.org)

**Appendix 1: Buncombe County CCPT/CFPT Membership (as of 6/21/2020)**

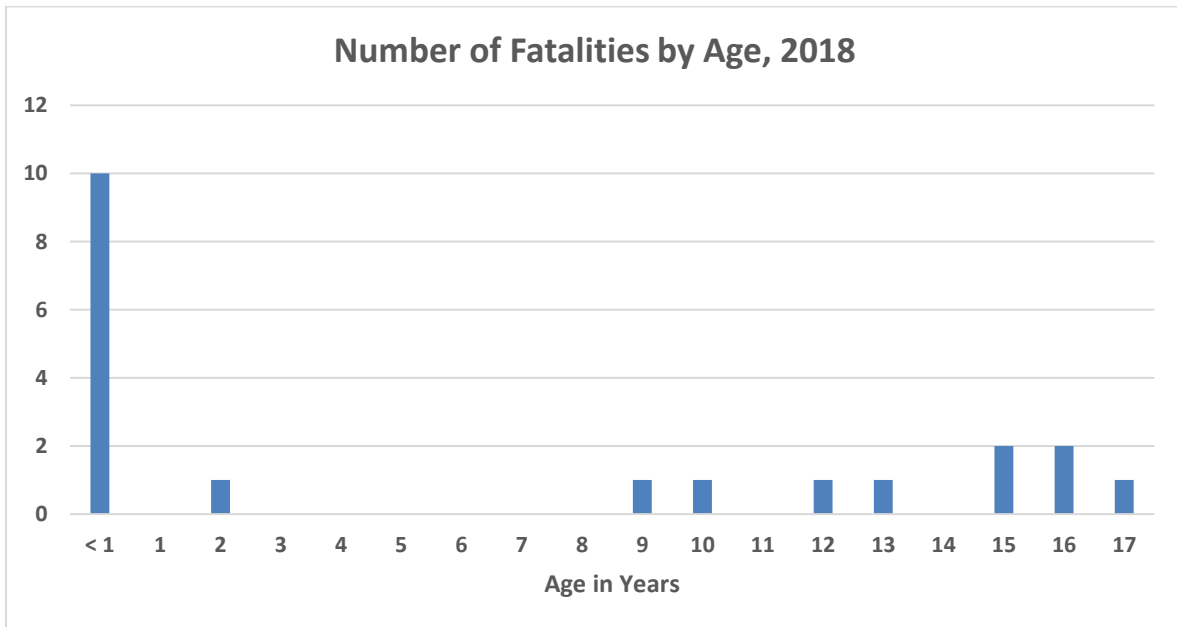
<b>MANDATED MEMBER</b>	<b>APPOINTING AUTHORITY</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>MEMBER SINCE</b>
DSS Director		Buncombe County HHS (BCHHS)	Stoney Blevins	2018
DSS staff member		BCHHS	Rebecca Smith	2019
“ “ “		BCHHS	Trina Hill	2019
Local Law Enforcement Officer	Board of County Commissioners	Asheville Police Dept.	Sgt. Diana Loveland	2018
	“ “ “ “	Buncombe County Sheriff’s Dept.	Sgt. Casey Roberts	2019
Attorney from District Attorney’s Office	District Attorney	Buncombe District Attorney’s Office	Amy Broughton	2019
Executive Director of local community action agency (or their designee)		Community Action Opportunities	Trudy Logan	2016
Superintendent of each local school system (or their designee)		Asheville City Schools	Darren Barkett	2020
		Buncombe County Schools	Jennifer Reed	2018
County Board of Social Services member	Chair of BCHHS Board	Buncombe County HHS Board	Lucy Lawrence	2018
Mental Health Professional	Vaya Health LME/MCO Director	Vaya Health	Mark Van Tuyl	2019
Guardian ad Litem Coordinator (or their designee)		Guardian ad Litem – District 28	Coby Wellshear	2019
Director of local Department of Public Health		Buncombe County HHS	Dr. Jennifer Mullendore (as interim)	2011 (2020 in this role)
Local Health Care Provider	BCHHS Board	Buncombe County HHS	Dr. Jennifer Mullendore	2011
	“ “	MAHEC OB/Gyn Specialists	Dr. Elizabeth Buys	2017
Emergency Medical Services provider or firefighter	Board of County Commissioners	Buncombe County EMS	Max Boswell	2019

District Court Judge	Chief District Court Judge	Buncombe County District Court	Judge Ward Scott	2015
County Medical Examiner	Chief Medical Examiner	Buncombe County Medical Examiner	Dr. Cynthia Brown	1999
Representative of a Local Child Care Facility or Head Start program	Buncombe County DSS Director	Community Action Opportunities Head Start	Sharon Farmer	2015
Parent of a Child Who Died Before 18 <sup>th</sup> Birthday	Board of County Commissioners	n/a	Vivien Snyder	2018
Additional member #1	Board of County Commissioners	Children's Developmental Services Agency	Molly Payne	2005
Additional member #2	Board of County Commissioners	Mountain Child Advocacy Center	Geoff Sidoli, Executive Director	2015
Additional member #3	Board of County Commissioners	Community Care of NC (CCNC)	Sherry Noto	2018
Additional member #4	Board of County Commissioners	MAHEC Ob/Gyn Specialists, Project CARA	Tammy Cody, Social Work	2018
Additional member #5	Board of County Commissioners	Helpmate	Chanel Young (for Joanna Knowles)	2019
Review Coordinator	Buncombe County DSS Director and Health Director	BCHHS	Melissa Moses	2019

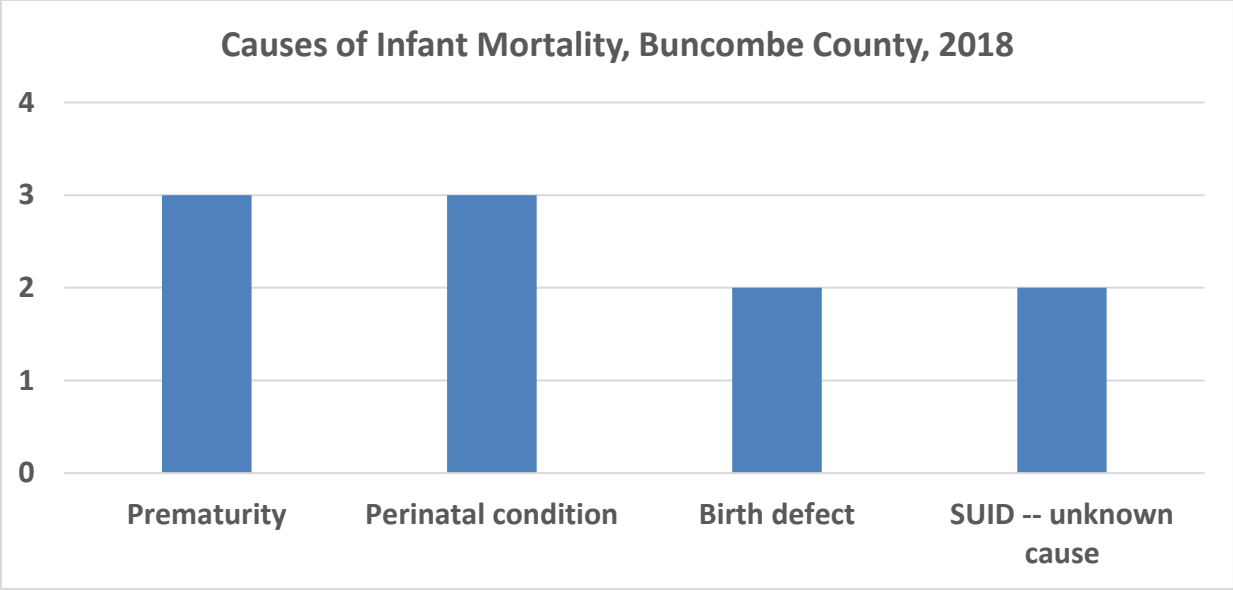
**Appendix 2: 2018 Buncombe County Child Fatality Data (from Buncombe County CFPT)**



- SUID = Sudden Unexplained Infant Death; both involved unsafe sleep environments
- Accident: 1 gunshot; 1 drowning
- 20 fatalities total, including 10 infants (age <1 year)







- SUID = Sudden Unexplained Infant Death
- Infant mortality by race/ethnicity:
  - 8 White/Non-Hispanic
  - 1 White/Hispanic
  - 1 Other/Non-Hispanic
- Infant mortality by gender:
  - 5 female
  - 5 male