

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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Childhood Injury Deaths in Baltimore City 2002-2006

BALTIMORE, MD (February 7, 2008)—The Baltimore City Health Department and the Baltimore City Child Fatality Review Team are releasing the following report: *Childhood Injury Deaths in Baltimore City 2002-2006*.

Since 2001, the Baltimore City Health Department has chaired a coalition of city and state agencies called the Child Fatality Review (CFR). This multi-disciplinary team meets once a month to discuss preventable deaths of Baltimore City children younger than 18 years old. Through these case-by-case reviews, the CFR identifies factors that contributed to these deaths and develops recommendations for preventing similar deaths in the future. The Maryland Child Fatality Review Team oversees the CFR teams in local jurisdictions, including Baltimore City.

Injuries are the leading cause of death among children nationwide. Using data from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Vital Statistics Administration, the report takes a retrospective look at injury deaths among Baltimore City children aged 1 to 17 from 2002 through 2006. Highlights from the report follow:

- **On average, 46 children aged 1 to 17 died from injuries in Baltimore City each year from 2002 to 2006.** The number of deaths ranged from 24 to 64 per year.
- **Children were twice as likely to die in Baltimore as in Maryland or the nation as a whole.** The rate of injuries among children aged 1 to 17 in Baltimore from 2002-2006 was 30.7 per 100,000 children as compared to 14.4 per 100,000 children in Maryland and 14.7 per 100,000 children in the nation as a whole.
- **The majority of injury deaths in children were due to homicides.** From 2002-2006, 59% of deaths among children aged 1 to 17 in Baltimore were due to homicides; while 35% were due to accidents, 4% to suicides, and 2% were of undetermined intent.
- **Motor vehicle-related accidents accounted for almost 40% of accidental child injury deaths.** The next most common cause of accidental child injury death in Baltimore City was thermal injuries sustained in residential fires (27% of accidental child injury deaths).
- **Baltimore children were more than eight times as likely to die from homicide and more than four times as likely to die from residential fires as children nationwide, but a third less likely to die from motor-vehicle related accidents.** Comparing

Baltimore to the US as whole, the child homicide rate was 18.1 per 100,000 children as compared to 2.2 per 100,000; the rate of child residential fire deaths was 2.9 per 100,000 as compared to 0.7 per 100,000; and the rate of motor vehicle-related deaths was 4.3 per 100,000 as compared to 6.4 per 100,000.

- **The child injury death rate in Baltimore City declined 29% from 2002 to 2006.** Accidental injury deaths dropped by 52% from 2002 to 2006. Child homicide rates declined by 25% from 2002 to 2006, with a particularly pronounced decline in 2005 followed by an increase in 2006.
- **Older, African American, and male children were more likely to die of injuries in Baltimore in 2002-2006.** Children in the 16-17 year age group had a death rate of 107.4 per 100,000 children; a rate 3 times higher than the age group with the next highest rate of injury deaths (13-15 year olds). African American children were more than twice as likely to die of injuries compared to other children, largely because they were more likely to be victims of homicide. Male children were more than three times more likely to die of injuries than female children. Male injury fatality rates exceeded female rates for all manners of injury.

“Injuries and violent deaths of children are more than individual tragedies,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “They represent a critical public health problem in Baltimore.”

Mayor Sheila Dixon’s strategy on violence includes targeted enforcement, partnerships with state and federal agencies, and community engagement. Public health efforts to address injury deaths include Operation Safe Kids, a case management program for high-risk youth; Safe Streets, a community-based anti-violence initiative modeled on CeaseFire Chicago; and the requirement for fire-safe cigarettes.

The report was put together by the new Office of Epidemiology and Planning of the Baltimore City Health Department.
