

# CHILD SAFETY

**G**ood child health requires that children live in safe environments. Accidents are the leading killer of children over age 1 and many steps can and have been taken to reduce the risks for children. Death rates have decreased since the 1980's as a result of changes in public policy. Injury-related child deaths from motor vehicle accidents, drowning, fires, falls, firearms and suffocation have all declined. But there is still work to be done to prevent unnecessary death and injury to children.



**P**arents clearly have a role to play in keeping children safe. Reduced tobacco use and clean indoor air are beneficial to children and help reduce fires in the home. Driving-under-the-influence laws have reduced exposure for children to alcohol-related auto accidents. Many parents now understand that accidents can be prevented and they understand that they can take steps to protect their children.

**L**ouisiana has a statute that requires review of unexpected deaths of children. This statute should be strengthened to require reporting from local law enforcement and coroners of all such deaths at no cost to the Child Death Review Panel. The panel identifies areas where interventions can be developed to save lives.

**C**hanges in public policy that would continue to reduce child deaths include:

- enforce existing vehicle child restraint laws
- enforce existing bike helmet requirements
- establish minimum age and training requirements for operation of all terrain vehicles
- require pool enclosures to prevent drowning
- require residential smoke alarms
- enact child access prevention laws that require locked gun-storage and trigger locks
- promote educational programs to address sudden infant death and suffocation
- maintain Louisiana's clean indoor air statutes that prevent exposure to second hand smoke
- support ongoing campaigns to encourage use of cribs with narrow width slats and discourage use of soft bedding for infants
- emphasize that infants should be put to sleep on their backs to avert sudden infant death syndrome
- discourage co-sleeping to prevent rollover suffocation of infants
- expand the Nurse Family Partnership Program which works with high risk mothers and helps to assure a healthy environment for the child until age two
- support campaigns to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

**F**or additional information please go to [www.lapartnership.org](http://www.lapartnership.org).

In 2002, there were **251** unexpected deaths of children in Louisiana age 14 or younger

The top four causes of unexpected child death in Louisiana are motor vehicle crashes, airway obstruction, drowning, and fire and burn