

**CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

Message from the Chairperson

I am pleased to submit the 2021-22 Annual Report for the Child Death Review Committee. The Committee is a Category 3 entity and this report was prepared under my direction and in accordance with the provisions of the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, for the period of April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

As per ongoing practice, consultation with officials and staff of the Department of Justice and Public Safety and other government departments occurred as necessary in relation to cases and procedures.

As Chairperson of the Child Death Review Committee, I accept accountability for results reported on behalf of the Committee for the preparation of this report and the achievement of its objective.


Catherine Barker Pinsent, RSW
Chairperson

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Overview

The Child Death Review Committee (CDRC) was established pursuant to subsection 13.1(1) of the **Fatalities Investigations Act** in 2012 in response to a recommendation of the Turner Review and Investigation Report (2006). The first CDRC was appointed in 2014. The CDRC generally comprises seven members, who serve for a term established by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and the Chief Medical Examiner. During fiscal year 2021-22, the CDRC members were:

- Catherine Barker Pinsent, Social Worker (Chairperson)
- Noreen Careen, Advocate for Women and Children
- Colleen Fox, Policing
- Colleen Galgay, Education (K-12)
- Crystal Northcott, Nursing
- Dr. Nash Denic, Chief Medical Examiner (ex-officio)

There were two vacancies at the end of the fiscal year. Recruitment efforts for a lawyer and Pediatric physician remained ongoing past March 31, 2022. The CDRC was also assisted by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and representatives of the Department of Justice and Public Safety. As the CDRC was not fully constituted during 2021-22, overall spending was limited to just \$290 during the year.

The CDRC meets to review the facts and circumstances of child deaths; deaths occurring during or following pregnancy in circumstances that might reasonably be related to pregnancy; or stillbirths or neonatal deaths where maternal injury has occurred or is suspected. All child deaths investigated by the Chief Medical Examiner are referred to the CDRC for review. The reviews involve consideration of facts and information outlined in file documentation and written reports.

The CDRC does not have a separate budget. Expenses are captured under Administrative and Policy Support activity line within the budget of the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Mandate

The CDRC is required to review child deaths, maternal deaths, and stillbirths or neonatal deaths as outlined in the **Fatalities Investigation Act**.

After each review, the CDRC shall report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety on its findings and return to the Chief Medical Examiner all records relevant to the review. The CDRC also monitors trends in these deaths, may make recommendations on identified trends and determines whether further review is necessary or desirable in the public interest.

Under section 13.5 of the **Fatalities Investigations Act**, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety is required, within 60 days after receiving a report from the CDRC, to make public those recommendations relating to:

- Relevant protocols, policies and procedures;
- Standards and legislation;
- Linkages and coordination of services; and
- Improvements to services affecting children and pregnant women.

Vision

A comprehensive review process that contributes to a reduction in the incidence of preventable child deaths.

Highlights

In September 2021, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council appointed five new members to serve on the CDRC. This included the appointment of a new Chairperson. Recruitment efforts to attract suitable candidates to fill the lawyer and pediatric physician roles continued for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The CDRC had one meeting in the fiscal year. There were significant efforts made by Departmental employees, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the Chairperson to address transition issues including recruitment, privacy and technology.

Report on Performance

Issue: Compliance with the Fatalities Investigations Act

The CDRC reviews child deaths, monitors trends and makes recommendations to the Minister on matters related to the prevention of child deaths, including the need for inquiries. The review process involves an analysis of the facts contained in written reports and investigative material compiled by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and other reports identified as relevant by the CDRC. The CDRC prepares a report on its findings and submits it to the Minister. The objective for the CDRC is consistent for the 2020-2023 planning period and the associated indicators will be reported on for each year of the planning period.

Objective: By March 31, 2022, the Child Death Review Committee will have reviewed child deaths, maternal deaths, and stillbirths or neonatal deaths in accordance with the **Fatalities Investigations Act**.

Indicators	Results
Meetings held as required to review child deaths referred from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner	One meeting was held on March 8, 2022 to begin the orientation of new CDRC members in their roles and responsibilities. While child death reviews did not occur during the meeting, the Chairperson commenced reviewing files

	to ensure appropriate distribution once the members' access to electronic file transfer is available. The CDRC will review all files in accordance with the legislation as soon as practicable.
Submitted a report to the Minister on each child death review	This was not achieved during the fiscal year as new members to CDRC were not appointed until September 2021 and recruitment of a full CDRC membership was not complete by March 31, 2022. In addition, the orientation of the new Chairperson and current CDRC members was impacted by the pandemic, as it was challenging to hold in-person meeting due to continued public health requirements. The CDRC is working with partners to complete membership and facilitate secure information sharing. Once this occurs, file reviews will resume and the CDRC will prepare and submit reports.
Child death review records are submitted to the Chief Medical Examiner	Access to electronic files was not finalized before the end of the fiscal year. However, the CDRC is being assisted by the Department of Justice and Public Safety to facilitate electronic file reviews and complete submissions. New CDRC members were not appointed until September 2021 and recruitment of the full CDRC was ongoing as of March 31, 2022. The orientation of the new Chairperson and CDRC members were affected by the pandemic as it was challenging to hold in-person meeting due to continued public health requirements. These factors challenged achievement of this indicator but work is ongoing to ensure child death review records are submitted as soon as practicable.
Child deaths reviewed collectively to identify trends, risk factors and recommendations for the prevention of child deaths	As the orientation of the CDRC members could not proceed prior to the end of the fiscal year due to public health requirements. This work continued past March 31, 2022 and is anticipated to continue into the next fiscal year. The CDRC is working towards reviewing files in a secure manner.

<p>Recommendations from collective reviews are submitted to the Minister</p>	<p>As the CDRC could not review files, recommendations could not be submitted in 2021-22. The CDRC is working to conduct the necessary files reviews. The CDRC anticipates achievement of this indicator once the CDRC is fully constituted and all members have has secure access to files to review and ultimately develop recommendations.</p>
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Opportunities and Challenges

2021-22 presented significant and unique challenges for the Child Death Review Committee. The terms of the previous members concluded without transition to the new CDRC given the impact of the pandemic and recruitment issues. At the end of the fiscal year the incoming CDRC had two vacancies. Recruitment efforts are ongoing and it is anticipated the positions will be filled early in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

As part of the new Chairperson’s transition and orientation, former chairs provided information and guidance. Former Chairperson, Janine Evans met with officials from the Department of Justice and Safety, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the new Chairperson in March of 2022 to provide an update on the previous efforts of the CDRC.

Given pandemic issues and the geographic location of members, orientation and meetings will be held virtually. In this committee’s first meeting, it was clearly articulated that there is a need for Indigenous representation, which constitutes a gap in membership that must be reviewed. The CDRC strongly advocates for an appointment of a person who can represent the Indigenous populations of Newfoundland and Labrador and has experience advocating on behalf of children. The CDRC will work with partners in the Department of Justice and Public Safety and the Public Service Commission to evaluate the requirements to update the members of the CDRC to include stronger Indigenous representation.

Financial Statements

The CDRC does not have a separate budget. Expenses are captured under Administrative and Policy Support Activity Line within the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

