Child Death Review Team Issues Report

The Child Death Review Team has issued a report on child deaths in Santa Barbara County for July 2007 through June 2009. The report reflects the deaths of children through the age of 17 and recommendations to prevent future deaths.

The Child Death Review Team is a county-wide interagency team established in concert with Penal Code Section 1174.32. Child Death Review Teams identify and review suspicious child deaths and facilitate communication among persons involved in child abuse and neglect cases. Teams also provide information to the state about local child deaths and this information is used at the state level to identify trends and ways to prevent child deaths in the future.

“The death of a child, of any age and any circumstance is a tragedy,” noted Dr. Takashi Wada, Director of the Department of Public Health and Health Officer. “It is important for all of us to learn what is preventable and take steps to prevent future deaths.”

Santa Barbara County had 52 deaths to children 17 years old or younger between July 2007 and June 2008 and 45 deaths between July 2008 and June 2009. The key points are:

• The majority of deaths in both years were due to medical conditions or unpreventable disease. In fiscal year 2007 – 2008, 40 of 52 (76.9%) of all deaths were due to medical conditions and in fiscal year 2008 – 2009, 29 of 45 (64.4%) of all deaths were due to medical conditions.
• A child is most at risk of dying during the first 12 months of their life. Many of these deaths, (25 of the deaths for children under the age of 1), were due in some part to prematurity.
• Accidents appear to occur across all age categories.
• Parents co-sleeping with young children or maternal overlying are factors in some accidents and undetermined deaths.

As a result of reviews by the Child Death Review Team in Santa Barbara County, a number of actions have been taken to prevent future deaths. These actions largely relate to educating individuals in our community about the prevention of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and appropriate parenting. There has also been outreach with community agencies to work with high risk families and obtain needed services. The Child Death Review Team will continue to review child deaths. The team remains committed to addressing barriers and learning from child deaths to prevent future deaths of children in our community.

For a copy of the full report, please contact Susan Klein-Rothschild, at 805-681-5435.

###