

## Alabama Department of Child Abuse Prevention



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### **Prevent Child Death in the Birth to Three Populations**

Abusive Head Trauma, (Shaken Baby Syndrome) and Unsafe Sleeping Environments are the leading cause of preventable child death in Alabama. In 2007, seventy-six percent of the preventable child deaths in Alabama occurred in the (0-3) population, and thirty-two percent of those in Jefferson County. The annual direct and indirect costs of child abuse and neglect in Alabama are approximately \$520,000,000. The lasting costs to our families, neighborhoods, and county is immeasurable.

Abusive Head Trauma may go undiagnosed for years; it often manifests itself as minor neurological deficits or learning disorders but may be the cause of more severe problems such as blindness, deafness, paralysis requiring lifelong care, or death.

#### **The Challenge of Arresting the Problem:**

Although many agencies and organizations are addressing the problem there has not been a strategically coordinated effort to bring all legitimate parties together and efficiently utilize every available resource to attack child death in this population. Where data exists that indicates areas of high risk, (those physical areas of Jefferson County) in which the highest rates of abuse and neglect are reported, very specific programming to prevent abuse and neglect will be coordinated.

#### **The Jefferson County Pilot Project to Prevent (0-3) Child Death:**

The Jefferson County Pilot Project led by the Department of Child Abuse Prevention and under the umbrella of the First Lady's Infant Vitality Initiative, is bringing Jefferson County community partners together to develop a plan that will streamline prevention efforts to impact the problem.

The Project will bring some twenty 501C-3 agencies, nine area hospitals and public health, mental health, law enforcement, neighborhood associations, local businesses, the faith community, volunteers, colleges and universities, the Mayor's office, District

Attorney's office, and civic organizations together to concentrate efforts to protect Jefferson County's children.

**Action Steps to Prevent Child Death in the (0-3) Population in Jefferson County:**

Law enforcement will be trained on Abusive Health Injury using simulator dolls that accurately indicates the areas of the brain affected by shaking an infant, as well as the required force to inflict injury. Community training will target new mothers, individuals ordered to attend domestic violence intervention programs, victims of domestic violence, individuals participating in substance abuse treatment programs, babysitting certification programs, school age children, and healthcare professionals.

"Cribs for Kids", will be developed providing infants with safe sleeping space;

Standardized risk assessments will be used by local hospitals;

Neighborhood Associations will recruit mentors for new mothers. Since we know the most dangerous timeframe for preventable child death is the first week of life and weeks (6-8); a three month commitment will be required of mentors.

Educational material and public awareness campaigns will be developed and target areas will be blanketed;

The project will be evaluated over a three year period using Mobile County as the control area. Upon complete development of the model and with promising outcomes, the program will be replicated to other areas of the state.