

## Child fatalities as a result of abuse or neglect in Florida rural counties

### Daniel Pollack

The Florida Department of Children and Families recently launched its *Child Fatality Prevention Website*<sup>1</sup> which provides data on child fatalities alleged to be a result of abuse or neglect.

Focusing on Florida's rural counties during the previous three years (2012-2014), the following observations are noteworthy:

- \* Statewide there were a total of 1,099 child fatalities. Of those, 43 were in non-metropolitan counties (3.9%).
- \* Statewide children age three and under represented 81% of fatalities. However, in non-metropolitan counties, children age three and under represented only 74.4% of fatalities; 25.6% were more than three years old.
- \* Five non-metropolitan counties had no child fatalities alleged to be a result of abuse or neglect (Desoto, Glades, Lafayette, Putnam and Washington).
- \* Eight non-metropolitan counties had only one child fatality alleged to be a result of abuse or neglect (Calhoun, Franklin, Hardee, Jackson, Liberty, Monroe, Taylor, and Union).

### Child fatalities alleged to be a result of abuse or neglect in Florida non-metropolitan counties, 2012-2014

County	Year 2014	Year 2013	Year 2012
1. Bradford	0	0	3 <sup>2</sup>
2. Calhoun	1 <sup>3</sup>	0	0
3. Columbia	0	4 <sup>4</sup>	2 <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/childfatality/>

<sup>2</sup> A) 3 1/2 year-old drown while visiting grandparents; B) 4 month-old found unresponsive after being placed on the mother's bed for a nap. The child was alone on the bed, but pillows had been placed around her" to keep her from scooting off"; C) 2 year-old left the home and fell into septic tank and drown. Family was visiting relatives and did not know the septic tank was open.

<sup>3</sup> 3 month-old found unresponsive after sleeping in bed with a relative. The relative likely rolled over onto the child as preliminary findings suggest suggest compressional asphyxia.

<sup>4</sup> A) 8 month-old found unresponsive in crib containing a pillow and stuffed animal; B) 4 1/2 year-old autistic child found missing from his home at 10 PM. Child found unresponsive in the pond behind the home; C) 11 year-old died of a gunshot wound after loaded gun accidentally discharged when he attempted to take the gun away from a two year old; D) 11 month-old sleeping with the parents on the floor on a mattress found unresponsive.

<b>4. Desoto</b>	0	0	0
<b>5. Dixie</b>	1 <sup>6</sup>	1 <sup>7</sup>	0
<b>6. Franklin</b>	0	1 <sup>8</sup>	0
<b>7. Glades</b>	0	0	0
<b>8. Hamilton</b>	0	0	2 <sup>9</sup>
<b>9. Hardee</b>	0	1 <sup>10</sup>	0
<b>10. Hendry</b>	0	1 <sup>11</sup>	1 <sup>12</sup>
<b>11. Holmes</b>	0	1 <sup>13</sup>	2 <sup>14</sup>
<b>12. Jackson</b>	0	0	1 <sup>15</sup>
<b>13. Lafayette</b>	0	0	0
<b>14. Levy</b>	1 <sup>16</sup>	0	3 <sup>17</sup>
<b>15. Liberty</b>	0	1 <sup>18</sup>	0
<b>16. Madison</b>	1 <sup>19</sup>	0	1 <sup>20</sup>
<b>17. Monroe</b>	1 <sup>21</sup>	0	0
<b>18. Okeechobee</b>	2 <sup>22</sup>	3 <sup>23</sup>	0

<sup>5</sup> A) 3 week-old infant found unresponsive in her bassinet; B) 3 month-old was placed on a pillow on his stomach next to the parents bed at his 3-4 AM feeding. At 8 AM the father picked him up and found him unresponsive. The parents were visiting relatives and not in their home at the time of the death.

<sup>6</sup> 1-year-old child found face-down in a koi pond while he was in the care of his grandparents. The adults were outside talking and lost track of the child.

<sup>7</sup> 2 year-old found unresponsive in backyard pool with 4 year old sister.

<sup>8</sup> 4 month-old died while in the bed with the father.

<sup>9</sup> A) 3 year-old wandered out of the house while in the care of his 17 year-old aunt and drowned in the above ground pool B) 2 year-old got out of the house and drowned while the mother was taking a shower.

<sup>10</sup> 1 year-old sustained lethal injuries while he was in the care of his parents.

<sup>11</sup> 6 1/2-month-old found unresponsive after sleeping in bed with her 12 year-old aunt.

<sup>12</sup> 2 year-old died in car accident with mother who was driving drunk. The car flipped over and landed in a canal which resulted in the child drowning.

<sup>13</sup> 2 month-old died while co sleeping with the parents; the father may have been under the influence of substances at the time.

<sup>14</sup> A) 7 month-old child was found unresponsive after sleeping with the mother. The mother may have been under the influence of substances at the time; B) 1 month-old child died from a staphylococcus infection.

<sup>15</sup> 2 month-old was found unresponsive in his pack and play.

<sup>16</sup> 6 year-old died after he was attacked by his aunt's pit bull dog while he was being baby-sat at her home.

<sup>17</sup> A) 4 1/2 year-old found unresponsive after complaining of a stomach ache and running a low grade fever; B) 17 and 1/2 year-old found deceased in boyfriends bed from a mixed drug intoxication; C) 5 year-old died from drug intoxication after her mother left her at the babysitters. Caregivers were arrested and charged with manslaughter.

<sup>18</sup> 1 year-old child died from drowning in the bathtub.

<sup>19</sup> 2 month-old was pronounced dead two days after he was taken to the hospital for possible medical concerns and sent back home. Although a follow-up appointment had been scheduled with a physician, the child died the day before this could occur.

<sup>20</sup> 1 1/2 year-old sustained inflicted fatal injuries from mother's paramour while mother was out of the home.

<sup>21</sup> 9 month-old child found unresponsive after sleeping on the couch with his mother. The death occurred during the course of an open investigation concerning parental substance abuse issues.

<b>19. Putnam</b>	0	0	0
<b>20. Suwannee</b>	1 <sup>24</sup>	2 <sup>25</sup>	3 <sup>26</sup>
<b>21. Taylor</b>	0	0	1 <sup>27</sup>
<b>22. Union</b>	0	1 <sup>28</sup>	0
<b>23. Washington</b>	0	0	0
	Total = 8	Total = 16	Total = 19
			Total for years 2012 – 2014 = 43

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<sup>22</sup> A) Newborn was discovered choking on her formula after her father fell asleep while feeding her. She was transported to the hospital where she was pronounced dead 3 days later. At the time of the incident, there was an open investigation stemming from the mother testing positive for marijuana at the infant's birth; B) 2 year-old was found in a pond near the residence after he got out of the home undetected. Although the pond was noted to have a fence surrounding it, it appeared that the child was able to crawl underneath which allowed him access to the water.

<sup>23</sup> A) 4 year-old found hanging from a rope tied to the bottom rail of a loft bed while playing. Child later died and the manner of death was accidental; B) 4 year-old drowned in neighbor's pool after leaving home undetected by the mother; C) 4 year-old died of unknown causes. Initially, it was believed that the child drowned in the bathtub while the father was sitting on the bed texting; however, the cause and manner of death could not be determined.

<sup>24</sup> 8 month-old found unresponsive after sleeping with his mother on a mattress on the floor.

<sup>25</sup> A) 10 month-old born at 28 weeks gestation with history of respiratory infections found unresponsive in her crib; B) 3 month-old sleeping on a pillow beside her 17 year-old mother found unresponsive.

<sup>26</sup> A) 8 year-old with chronic disease died prematurely; B) 3 month-old found unresponsive in his crib with non lethal blunt force injuries to the head, chest and thorax and fractures to the distal right and left femur. No arrests were made; C) 1 1/2 year-old left the house undetected and drown in the backyard above ground pool. Family was visiting relatives when death occurred.

<sup>27</sup> 1 month-old found unresponsive and hour after being put in the bed between his parents.

<sup>28</sup> 1 month-old found unresponsive on a pillow on the couch. The father sitting in a recliner next to the couch fell asleep and woke up about an hour later and found the infant unresponsive.