



2019

Child Fatality Prevention Report

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking time to review this report and to learn about how we can each do our part to prevent child abuse, neglect, and fatalities in our communities. This is a responsibility that belongs to all of us—from caregivers and DPPHS to teachers, neighbors, and fellow citizens. DPPHS cannot and does not do this important work alone.

In 2019, there were seventeen child fatalities of children who were known to the Montana child welfare system.

Each child's death is one death too many. In 2019, there were seventeen fatalities of children who were known to the Montana child welfare system. The primary three causes of those fatalities were: unsafe sleep for infants (5 children), death from medical-related conditions (4 children), and abuse and neglect (3 children). The remaining causes include drowning, a car accident, a firearm, and SIDS. Of note, 13 were in the care of a parent when they died while two were in the care of foster parents.

The goal of this report is to carry forward and implement the lessons of these fatalities and work to prevent them in the future to the greatest extent possible. Montana's child fatality rate is lower than the national average.* We at DPPHS continue to build and support our community partnerships as we all work to prevent child abuse and neglect in our communities.

In these pages you'll find highlights of our fatality prevention efforts—including the First Years Initiative, launched two years ago, that has since provided nearly 1,500 cribs to support safe sleep for infants through our partnership with Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies. We are also launching two new fatality prevention initiatives in 2020 based on data showing an additional seven deaths in 2019 of children who were not known to or involved in Montana's child welfare system until the Abuse and Neglect Hotline was called immediately following their death. This reality, along with a decrease in Hotline calls during COVID-19, led us to launch a media campaign to encourage reporting. Second, we are partnering with Fish, Wildlife and Parks to provide more than 300 loaner lifejackets at Montana waterways, following child drowning deaths in 2019.

While these are not easy topics to read about or discuss, it is important that we review and learn from these tragedies and work to prevent them moving forward. Together we can and will make a difference in the lives of Montana's children.

Montana's child fatality rate is lower than the national average.*

We at DPPHS continue to build and support our community partnerships as we all work to prevent child abuse and neglect in our communities.

Sheila Hogan, DPPHS Director



* Casey Family Programs, Per Capita Child Fatality Data, Dec. 2019

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- suspect abuse or neglect I can...
- put my baby to sleep I can...
- know kids are around water, I can...

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- becoming a foster parent, I can...
- becoming a respite provider, I can...
- becoming a CASA, I can...
- becoming a Guardian ad Litem, I can...
- getting CPR/first aid certified, I can...
- learning more about Montana's child welfare system, I can...

18 Notes

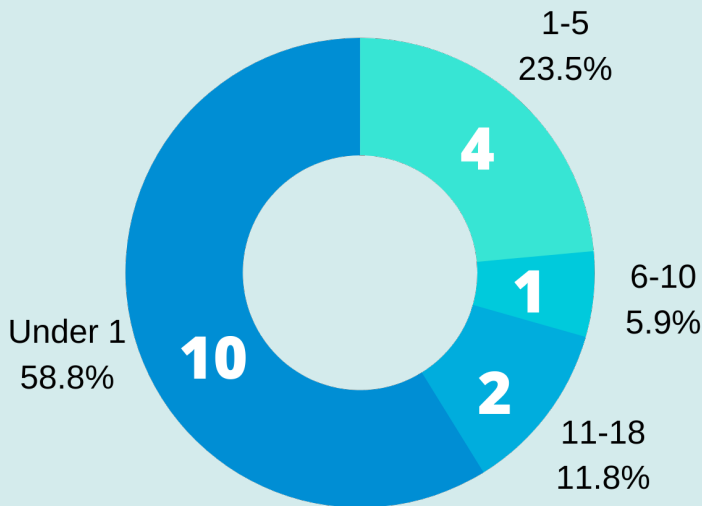
Section 1: Data Trends and Summary



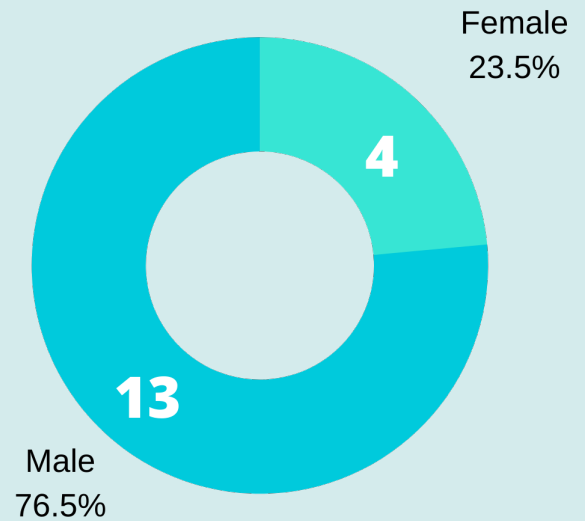
CHILD FATALITY DEMOGRAPHICS

2019 *children known to CPS*

Age of children

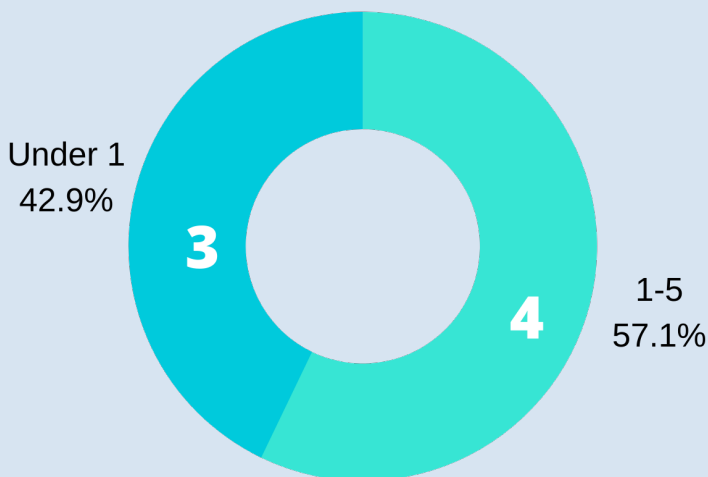


Gender of children

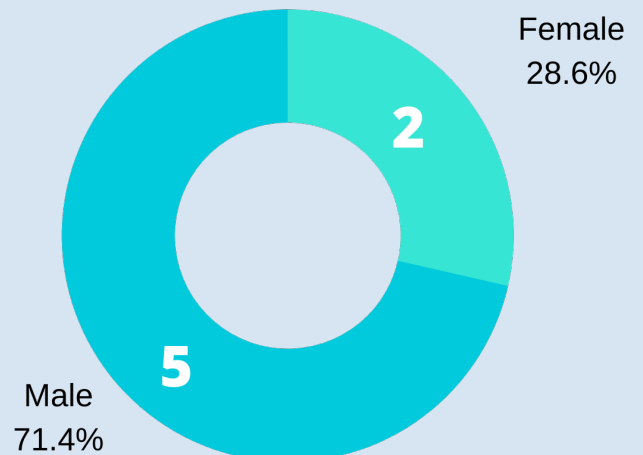


2019 *children not known to CPS until after the fatality*

Age of children



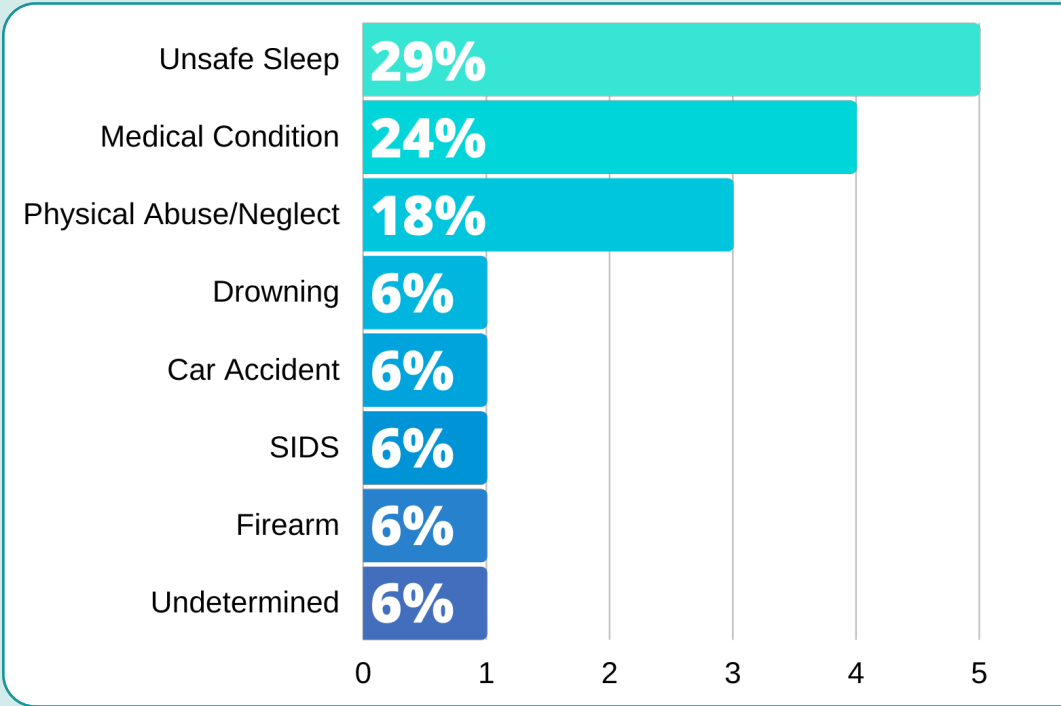
Gender of children



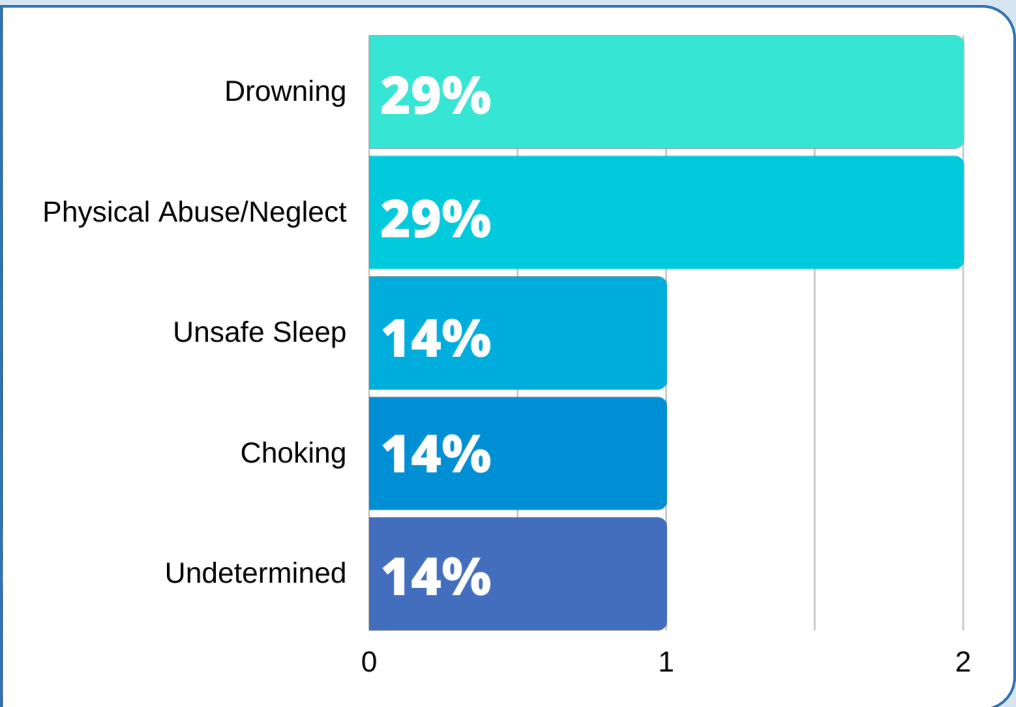
12% Decrease in fatalities of children under age 1 from 2017 to 2019

CAUSES OF FATALITY

2019 Causes of death – children known to CPS



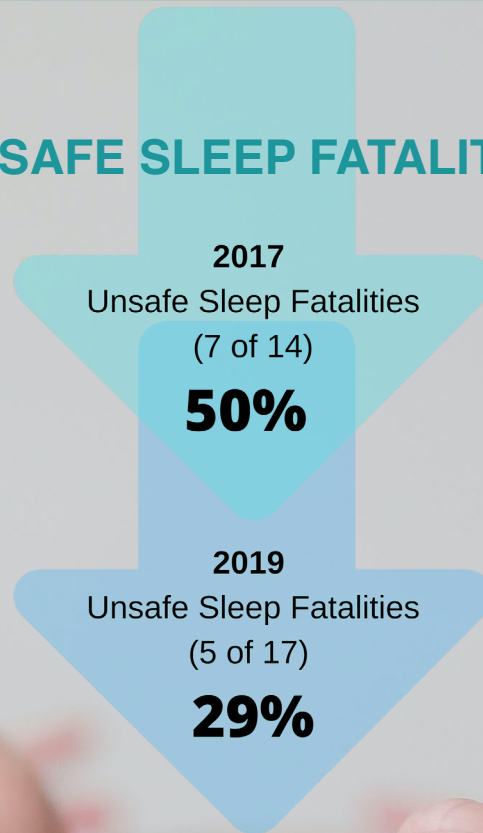
2019 Causes of death – children not known to CPS until after the fatality



INFANTS AND SAFE SLEEP

Nationwide, infants and toddlers are disproportionately impacted by abuse and neglect and are more likely to suffer the most serious injuries from abuse and neglect.* Recognizing this vulnerable age group in Montana, DPHHS launched the First Years Initiative in 2018 focused on preventing abuse and neglect of young children, including the distribution of 1,500 cribs for safe sleep. Since 2017, Montana has seen a decrease in both infant fatalities and unsafe sleep infant deaths.

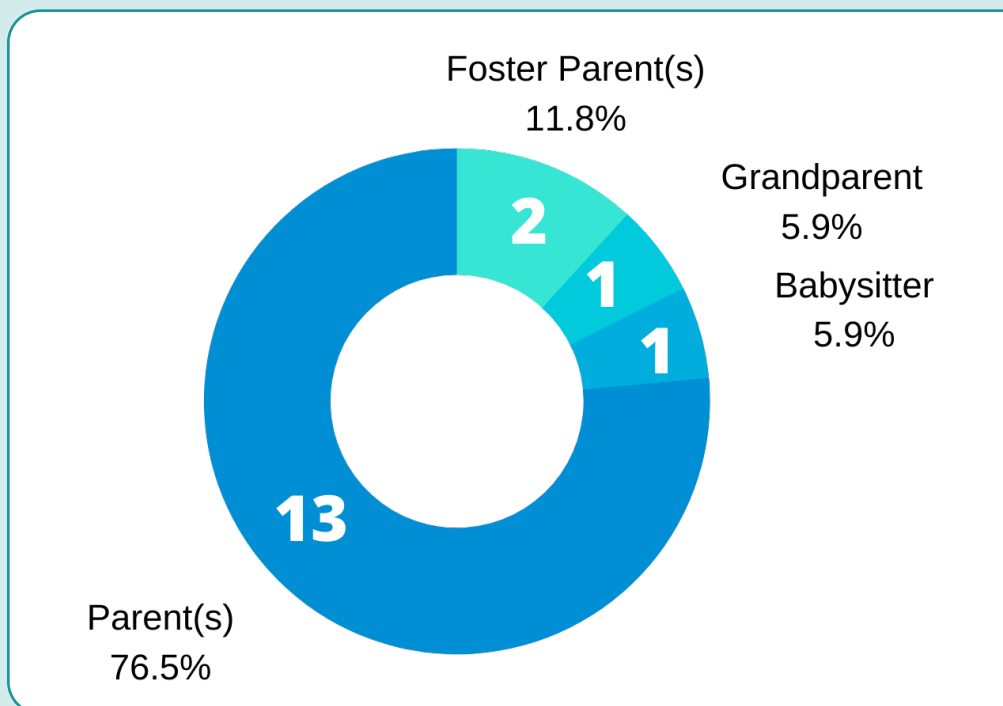
DECREASE IN UNSAFE SLEEP FATALITIES SINCE 2017



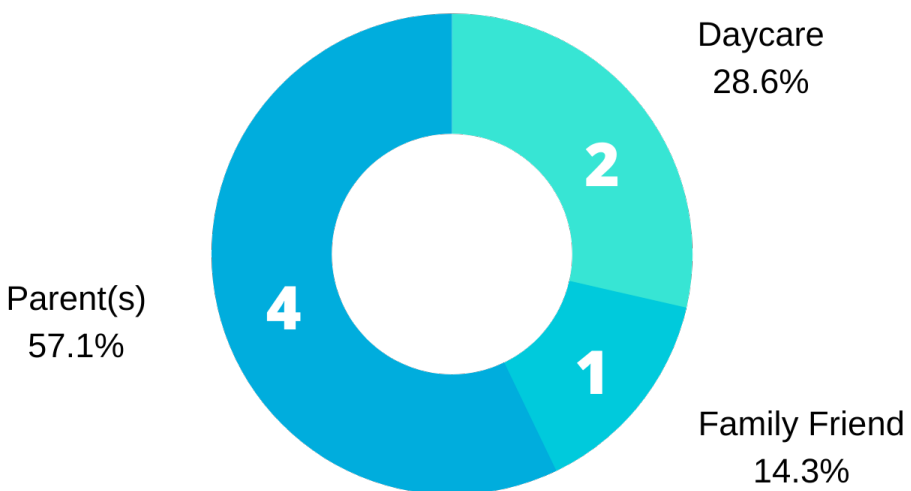
*Zero to Three, *The Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect*,
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/91-the-prevalence-of-child-abuse-and-neglect>

CAREGIVER AT TIME OF FATALITY

2019 CAREGIVER at time of fatality – *children known to CPS*

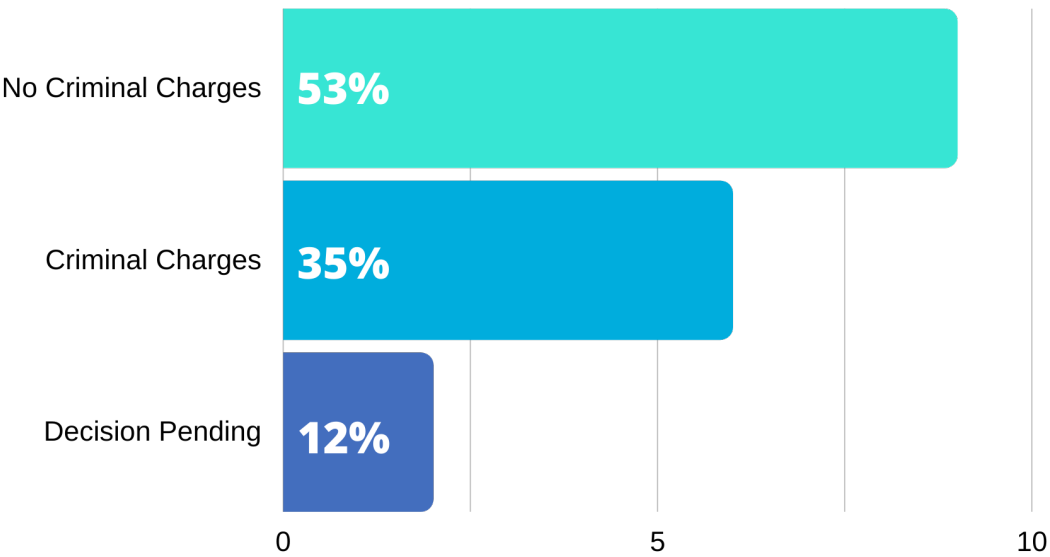


2019 CAREGIVER at time of fatality – *children not known to CPS until after the fatality*



CRIMINAL CHARGES INITIATED

2019 *children known to CPS*



2019 *children not known to CPS until after the fatality*

No Criminal Charges

86%

Criminal Charges

14%

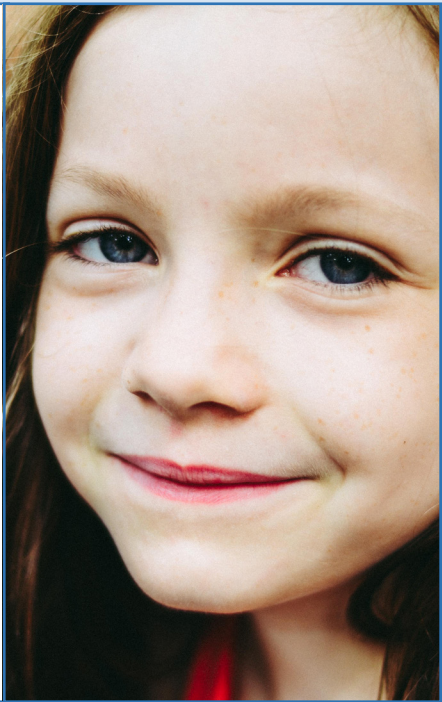
Decision Pending

0

2

4

6



Section 2: Fatality Prevention Initiatives



Section II: Fatality Prevention Initiatives

SAFE SLEEP & SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Unsafe sleep in children under the age of one has consistently been a top cause of child fatalities in Montana since at least 2017. Recognizing the vulnerability of young children, DPHHS launched the First Years Initiative in 2018, with a focus on providing targeted resources, education and support for young children and their families.

Since its inception, the initiative has distributed more than 1,500 cribs for safe sleeping across Montana with Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB) and launched a targeted home visiting program for at risk families.



FIRST YEARS INITIATIVE

We continue this collaborative, innovative work in 2020 with the HMHB media campaign to promote safe sleep for all Montana babies.

“Not only were we able to blanket the state in cribs to almost 10% of infants and their families in the state, amplifying our past work by 5 fold, we were also able to develop a safe sleep public education campaign that was designed for Montana families.”

— Brie Oliver, Executive Director of Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies, The Montana Coalition

Safe Sleep for Montana Babies By the Numbers

Nearly
1,500 • **24** • **6**
cribs distributed across Montana through HMHB counties reservations

21%

Decrease
in

unsafe sleep
fatalities
since 2017

Safe Sleep Asking the Question

Guided by the data on unsafe sleep fatalities, Montana child welfare leaders built additional safe sleep-related questions into their assessment of child safety, including an assessment of whether the caregiver has education on safe sleep and access to a crib.

Questions are also asked about substance use in the home, as impairment has frequently been a factor in safe sleep fatalities.

Through the partnership with HMHB, CFSD is able to provide no cost cribs to families without access or ability to buy a crib.

“DPHHS has deep gratitude for our partnership with Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Montana Coalition for their shared mission and hard work to help babies and families thrive, especially during these unprecedented times.”

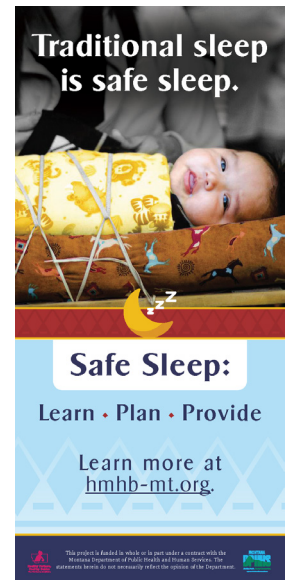
— DPHHS Director Sheila Hogan

Safe Sleep Getting the Word Out

DPHHS and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Montana Coalition has collaborated to launch a 2020 campaign to promote safe sleep conditions for all Montana babies. Developed with Montana families at heart, the campaign language, images, and subsequent media campaign began by asking Montana families what they need and working with stakeholders that provide services directly to families.

Campaign materials can be seen on billboards, digital and print media, and in communities across Montana. **A safe sleep campaign made for Montanans, by Montanans.**

Photo by Karen Cantrell



HOME VISITING: PREVENTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT ACROSS MONTANA

Home visiting has been identified by Congress as a leading tool in significantly reducing child abuse and neglect.

The First Years Initiative launched a home visiting program in January 2018 that exclusively serves at risk families.

1,692

Number of referrals January 2018 through May 2020 from Child and Family Services to local sites FYI home visiting sites.

651

Number of clients enrolled and served by home visiting since January 2018.

Number of counties where First Years Initiative home visiting sites have been established.

14

Butte (2 sites, 3 counties – Silver Bow; Madison; Beaverhead); Big Horn; Cascade; Custer; Dawson; Flathead; Gallatin; Hill; Lewis & Clark; Mineral; Park; and Yellowstone.

What is Home Visiting?

Home Visiting provides voluntary, family-centered services in the home to pregnant and newly parenting women and families with infants and children under the age of 6.

Services support healthy pregnancy outcomes, child health and development, and strong parent-child relationships.

KIDS DON'T FLOAT COLLABORATIVE CAMPAIGN

Drowning can happen to any family. It's quick and it's silent. Drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 1-4 nationally, and a top cause of death among teens according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. In 2019, Montana saw several tragic drowning deaths—including outdoors and an indoor death in a bathtub when a child was left unattended.

Recognizing that drowning poses a real risk to Montana's kids, DPHHS has launched a collaboration with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to support the Kids Don't Float program, which supplies free loaner life jackets across Montana through organizations and life jacket stations near water.

336 life jackets sponsored by DPHHS and given to the Kids Don't Float program.



Healthy People. Healthy Communities.
Department of Public Health & Human Services

HOW TO PREVENT Tragedies at Home

Never leave a baby alone, or with young siblings in a bathtub even for a second.



Always keep baby within arm's reach. Children can drown quickly and silently.



Keep the toilet lid down, and keep young children out of the bathroom when unsupervised.



FWP life jacket loaner station at Spring Meadow Lake.

!? According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, an average of **87 children under the age of 5** drown at home each year.



80% of those deaths happen in a tub. All are preventable.

Keeping our Kids Safe Around Water

American Academy of Pediatricians recommends layers of protection against drowning:

- Always be Watching. Close, constant, attentive supervision around water is important. Assign an adult '**water watcher**,' who should not be distracted by work, socializing, or chores.
- Everyone, children and adults, should wear US Coast Guard-approved **life jackets** whenever they are in open water, or on watercraft.
- All children and adults should **learn to swim**. If swim lessons are suspended in your area due to coronavirus, it is important to add other layers of protection until your child can access lessons.
- Around the house, **empty all buckets, bathtubs and wading pools** immediately after use. If you have young children, keep the bathroom door closed, and use toilet locks to prevent access.
- Pools should be surrounded by a four-sided fence, with a self-closing and self-latching gate. Research shows **pool fencing** can reduce drowning risk by 50%. Additional barriers can include door locks, window locks, pool covers and pool alarms.
- Adults and older children should **learn CPR**.
- Parents and teens should understand how using **alcohol and drugs increases the risk** of drowning while swimming or boating.



Where can I learn CPR?

In-person Training

Montana Heart Rescue CPR Training
www.dphhs.mt.gov

Contact your local EMS or fire department

Online Training

Simple CPR
www.simplecpr.com

American Heart Association
www.cpr.heart.org

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

In seven child deaths reported to DPHHS last year, Montana's child welfare system did not know about the child until after the child's death was reported to the Abuse and Neglect Hotline. While not all child deaths are the result of abuse and neglect, DPHHS is working to ensure all citizens know about the Hotline. **One call could save a life.**

Abuse and Neglect Hotline Calls During Covid-19

Montana saw a drop in calls to the Abuse and Neglect Hotline in March with the onset of the Covid-19 emergency. Calls dropped from an average of 765 a week to just 425 the week of March 15.

As of June 2020, calls are steadily increasing due in part to a rigorous public awareness campaign about reporting abuse and neglect.

Making the Call

Montanans should know that simply making a call to the Hotline will not immediately result in the removal of a child from his or her home. Child welfare workers investigate each case and talk to multiple individuals to understand the safety concerns and threats to a child.

Many systems are involved in keeping kids safe and removals, if necessary, including social workers, judges, and attorneys. Your call to the Hotline, however, could literally save a life in cases where abuse and neglect are found.

Nearly

15%

of calls that come into the Hotline involve a request for services or assistance, meaning that CFSD can help connect families with services such as mental and behavioral health providers, food security and other family needs that can cause stress on a household.



“Teachers and school staff are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect and they are one of the main sources of calls to the hotline. With schools closed and out for the summer, it’s important for all us to take an active role by calling the hotline if you suspect abuse or neglect.”

— DPHHS Director Sheila Hogan

**If you suspect abuse or neglect, call the toll-free hotline:
1-866-820-KIDS (5437)**

RAISE YOUR VOICE
for Montana kids

OUR CHILDREN
DESERVE A
SAFE, STABLE
AND SUPPORTIVE
FAMILY.



 MONTANA
Department of Public Health & Human Services

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, call our toll-free number 1-866-820-KIDS (5437)

Section 3: What Can I Do?



Section III: What Can I Do?

WHEN I:

- **suspect abuse or neglect I can...**
call the Montana Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-866-820-5437 (KIDS).
- **put my baby to sleep I can...**
remember the ABCs...alone, on his back, in a crib with no blankets or items.
- **know kids are around water, I can...**
watch them closely at all times & put a life jacket on them // never leave a child alone in the bathtub.

IF I'M INTERESTED IN:

- **becoming a foster parent, I can...**
call 1-866-9FOSTER to request information from a resource family specialist. Go to the CFSD website at: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/CFSD/FosterParent>.
- **becoming a respite provider, I can...**
call 1-866-9FOSTER to request information about becoming a respite provider from a resource family specialist. Go to the CFSD website at: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/CFSD/FosterParent>.
- **becoming a CASA Guardian ad Litem, I can...**
visit the Montana CASA website at: <https://www.montanacasagal.org>.
- **getting CPR/first aid certified, I can...**
access one of the following resources:

In-person Training

- Montana Heart Rescue CPR Training
www.dphhs.mt.gov
- Contact your local EMS or fire department

Online Training

- Simple CPR
www.simplecpr.com
- American Heart Association
www.cpr.heart.org
- American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

What is a CASA?

CASA volunteers (Court Appointed Special Advocates) provide a powerful voice in court for abused and neglected children.

They gather information, examine and recommend to the Judge the best option for a safe and permanent home for the children assigned to them.

- learning more about Montana's child welfare system, I can...
contact my local CPS office (see regional map below).

CFSD Region Map

REGION VI

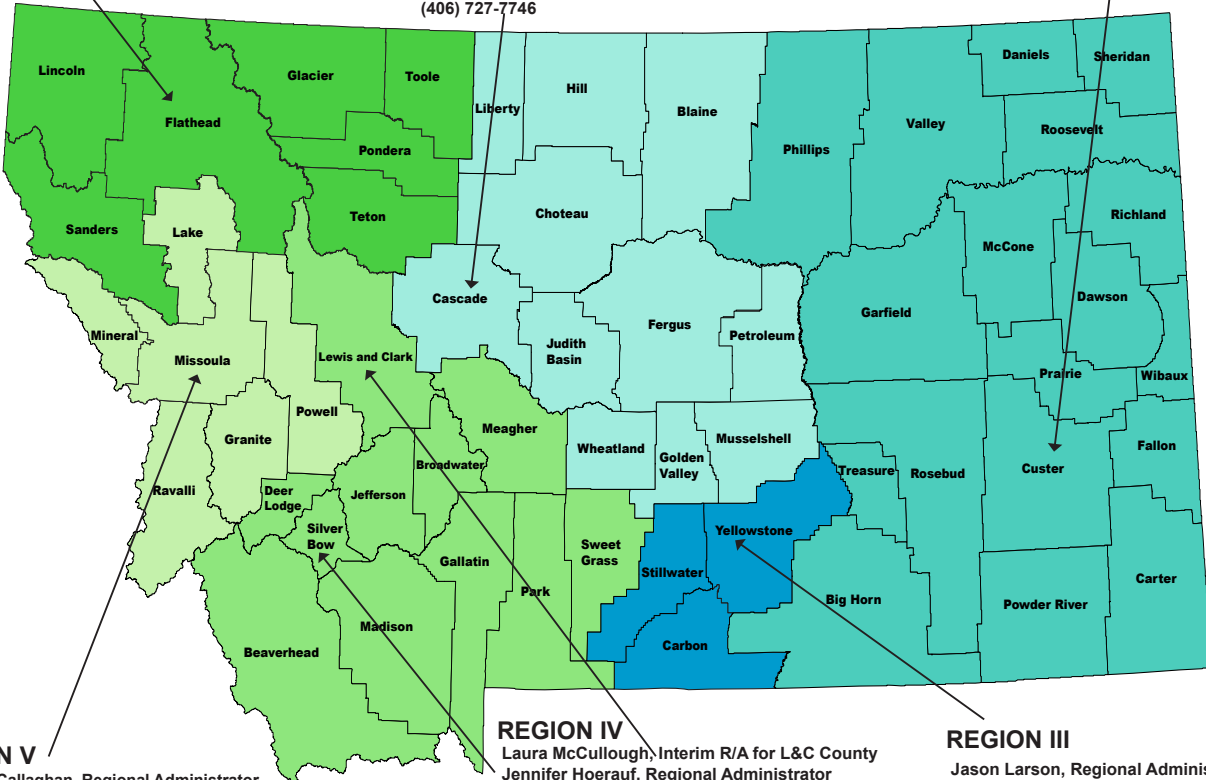
Angie Rolando, Regional Administrator
Teri Magers, Admin Support Supervisor
121 Financial Dr. Ste. C
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 300-7418

REGION II

Sahrta Jones - Jessee, Regional Administrator
Sherry Tonne, Admin Support Supervisor
2300 12th Ave. S. #211
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 727-7746

REGION I

Eric Barnosky, Regional Administrator
Lee Stenseng, Admin Support Supervisor
706 Palmer / PO Box 880
Miles City, MT 59301
(406) 234-1385



REGION V

Courtney Callaghan, Regional Administrator
Jo-Ann Rude, Admin Support Supervisor
2677 Palmer, Ste. 300
Missoula, MT 59802
(406) 523-4100

REGION IV

Laura McCullough, Interim R/A for L&C County
Jennifer Hoerauf, Regional Administrator
Jade Herrera, Admin Support Supervisor
700 Casey St.
Butte, MT 59701
(406) 496-4950

REGION III

Jason Larson, Regional Administrator
Amber Tipton, Admin Support Supervisor
2525 Fourth Ave. N. #309
Billings, MT 59101
(406) 657-3120

Updated December 13, 2019

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.