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**STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
JOINS FORCES WITH CLARK COUNTY TO ADDRESS CHILD FATALITIES**  
-Preliminary four-year data analysis by state is first step in improving child welfare in  
Nevada -

**December 1, 2005** (*Carson City*) – The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) today released a preliminary data analysis of child fatalities in Clark County from January 2001 through December 2004.

“Child fatalities are most tragic. Most child fatalities are not the result of maltreatment, but those fatalities that occurred as a result of child maltreatment or were preventable are even more heartbreaking,” said DHHS Director Mike Willden. “Efforts to understand the contributing factors that lead to a child’s death may highlight the system changes and issues that could be improved to achieve the safety, permanency and well-being of Nevada’s children and families.”

Officials emphasized that the findings in the data analysis are preliminary, but that they show approximately 114 fatalities (10 percent of all child deaths) that have a potential of being substantiated as abuse or neglect. Upon review of the files, 79 additional cases should have further review to determine if maltreatment occurred.

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The data analysis indicated needs for data improvement in these areas:

- Ensuring that full and correct information is obtained and recorded;
- Linking child fatality data with other public systems of care, such as child protective services, juvenile justice services and mental health services;
- Ensuring complete case information and correct case closures;
- Ensuring that suspected child abuse or neglect is reported to child welfare agencies.

In response to the data analysis, the state, in coordination with county welfare agencies, will convene a blue ribbon review committee to oversee an external review process by an independent expert panel. The members of the review committee will include statewide representatives from several disciplines, including medical, legal and law enforcement. Together, the review committee and expert panel will recommend legislative, administrative and systemic changes needed to improve Nevada child welfare.

This preliminary data analysis was completed over a period of four months by the department's Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). The data analysis of child fatalities in Clark County is the first step in a statewide child welfare effort; the process will be replicated in Washoe County, and the balance of the state.

**Editor's note:** Media interested in contacting representatives for Clark County should try Public Communications Director Erik Pappa at (702) 455-3548 (office), (702) 378-8970 (cellular phone) or [epappa@co.clark.nv.us](mailto:epappa@co.clark.nv.us).

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