



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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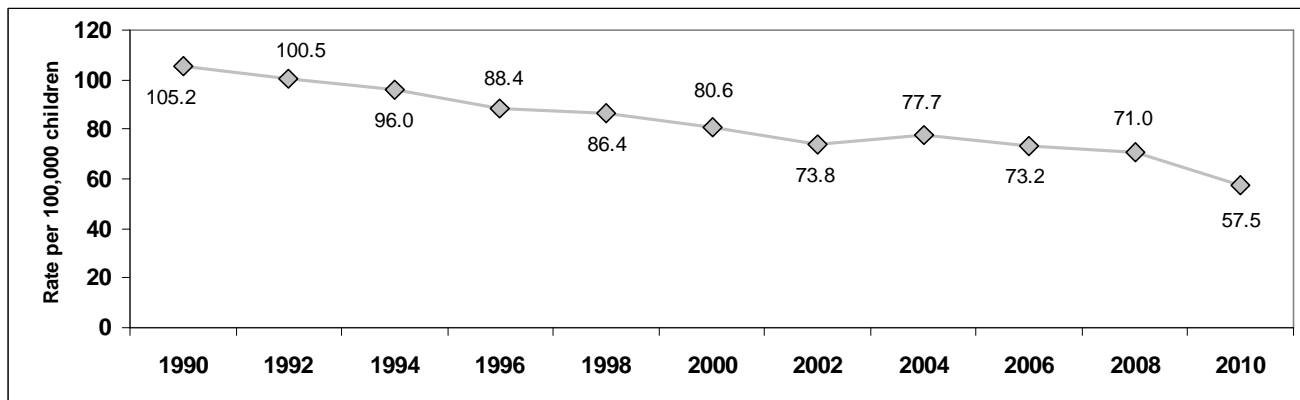
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### North Carolina Child Death Rate Lowest Yet

RALEIGH – Data released today by NC Child Fatality Task Force show that child death rates in North Carolina continue to decline and 2010 rates are at the lowest level recorded.

Official figures gathered by the State Center for Health Statistics and the Child Fatality Prevention Team Research Staff show a rate of 58 deaths per 100,000 children from birth through 17 years of age, compared to 67 deaths per 100,000 children in 2009. In addition to a substantial reduction in infant mortality, the number of deaths due to motor vehicles crashes and suicides also declined.

2010 Child Deaths in North Carolina  
Trend in Rate of Child Deaths 1991 to 2010  
Ages Birth Through 17 Years



“The future prosperity of our state depends on the health and well-being of our next generation. This continued improvement in this basic indicator of child well-being shows the value of focused public policies and sustained and strategic investments for improving outcomes for our children,” noted Elizabeth Hudgins, Child Fatality Task Force Executive Director.

“We should recognize and build on the progress we’ve made,” added Karen McLeod, Task Force Co-chair and Benchmarks President/CEO. “Nine thousand more children and youth are alive today than if 1991 death rates had continued. But recent budget changes may make it harder for women in Eastern North Carolina with at-risk pregnancies to get prenatal care needed to deliver healthy babies and teens to receive driver education and practice safe driving.”

In 2010, as in previous years, the leading cause of injury death was motor vehicle crashes. Infants under age one comprised about two-thirds of overall child deaths.

Highlights of the 2010 data include:

- The 2010 death rate of 58 deaths per 100,000 children is the lowest recorded rate. It represents a decline of almost 12% since 2009 and 46% since 1991 (the inception of the Child Fatality Prevention System).
- While motor vehicle crashes remains the leading cause of injury death for children, the number of fatalities related to these crashes continues to decline. Many public policies are effective at keeping children more safe on the roads, including strong and accessible driver education programs, backseat buckling laws, and graduated driver license requirements.
- As reported in November, the infant mortality rate dropped substantially from 2009 to 2010, largely driven by a decline in the mortality rate among African American babies. Almost half (48%) of all child deaths are attributable to birth defects and other birth-related conditions.
- Illnesses are also a leading cause of death, accounting for 23% of child deaths in 2010. For children aged 5 to 14, illness (often cancer) caused 39% of the deaths.
- There are place-based differences. Data show that urban children are more likely to die in fires than children in rural counties while rural children are more likely to drown.
- The number of suicides, which was atypically high in 2009 at 35 deaths, returned to a more historically consistent 23 deaths. However, suicide was the second leading reason for injury death for teens 15 to 17.
- The number of drowning deaths increased to 37 from 28. As with suicide deaths last year, one year of data cannot predict a trend. More than half (20) of the children who drowned were ages 1-4 and about a quarter (9) were teens aged 15 to 17. Most (65%) child drowning fatalities were in rural counties.

“Over the past two decades, the Child Fatality Task Force has recommended a number of policies that have then been championed by members of the General Assembly,” concluded Dr. Peter Morris, co-chair of the Child Fatality Task Force and Wake County Human Services Medical Director. “As a pediatrician, I know that it takes more than one shot in the series or a single office visit to assure that children grow up healthy and strong. As members of the Task Force, we all know that it takes a range of strategies and on-going commitment to assure the well-being of our next generation.”

The NC Child Fatality Task Force also released the number of child deaths for each county by cause and age. Because the numbers for each county are relatively small, rates are not computed and all data should be used and interpreted with caution. State and county data can be found online at <http://www.epi.state.nc.us/SCHS/>

*In 1991, the NC General Assembly adopted a child fatality prevention system. This system includes the NC Child Fatality Task Force, the policy arm of the system; the State Child Fatality Prevention Team (under the direction of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner), which reviews individual cases and identifies statewide trends; and local child fatality prevention teams in all 100 counties, which review local cases and recommend local changes needed to prevent future child deaths. For more information about the Child Fatality Task Force, please see <http://www.ncleg.net/DocumentSites/Committees/NCCFTF/Homepage/>.*