



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## 2006 Travis County Child Fatality Findings Reported

### *Largest Threats to Children Come from Suffocation and Motor Vehicle Accidents*

**AUSTIN, Texas—April 27, 2007**—The Center for Child Protection today announced the 2006 Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) Annual Report findings. In 2006, Travis County marked 140 child deaths, a 20 percent increase over the 117 child fatalities recorded in 2005. This number is significantly higher than the annual average of 127 child deaths recorded since 1996 and is, therefore, unlikely due solely to the county's population increase. Children in Travis County ranged in age from pre-term infants to age 17. In addition to historical numbers on natural and accidental deaths, this year's report focuses on suffocation prevention for young children and the use of proper safety seat restraints.

Thirty-eight children died in 2006 due to accidents. This number reflects an 81 percent increase from 2005 when there were 21 deaths, and more than twice the number of accidental deaths (17) from 2004. Of the accidental deaths documented last year, children died as a result of asphyxia/suffocation (17), motor vehicle accidents (13), drowning (3), fire (1), a gunshot wound (1), and other accidents (3). No children died as a result of hyperthermia last year.

The largest number of accidental child deaths resulted from asphyxiation. It is important to note that 2006 marks the first year that another cause of accidental death exceeded the number of deaths due to motor vehicle accidents. Seventeen children died from asphyxiation in 2006 compared to only 3 such deaths in 2005. This is the highest annual total since 13 deaths occurred in 1997. Seven of the deaths in 2006 were the result of overlays (asphyxia caused by an adult or child), 9 were due to positional asphyxia (asphyxia due to a child's position in relation to an object), and 1 was caused by choking. All of these children were less than a year old, except for the choking victim who was two years old.

The second largest category of fatal accidents involved motor vehicle accidents. In 2006, 13 children died as a result of motor vehicle accidents (MVA), reflecting an 18 percent increase in child MVA fatalities from the 11 deaths reported in 2005. Out of the 13 MVA child fatalities in 2006, 9 (69 percent) were teenagers defined as children between ages 13 and 17. Though no child MVA victims had consumed alcohol, 3 fatalities (23 percent) were caused by alcohol-impaired adults.

Of concern was the disproportionate percentage (85 percent) of MVA child victims who were Hispanic as compared to the Hispanic child population (41 percent). Eleven of the 13 MVA child fatalities were Hispanic, while the remaining 2 were Anglo. Of the 8 Hispanic victims where restraint information was available, none was properly restrained (e.g. wearing a seatbelt or seated within a safety seat).

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In 2006, 2 child deaths were ruled homicides resulting from abuse, the lowest number of homicides in the last decade. Last year much like the year before, two teenage boys committed suicide.

This information is part of the tenth Annual Report presented today during a press conference conducted by the Center for Child Protection and the Travis County Child Fatality Review Team. The findings collected in the report provide information about why children in our community are dying so we can prevent future deaths. This joint effort is the result of a collaboration of the Center for Child Protection, Austin Police Department, Travis County District Attorney's Office, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Travis County Medical Examiner's Office, Travis County Sheriff's Office, Texas Department of Public Safety, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services, Austin-Travis County Health and Human Services and Children's Hospital of Austin. Community professionals and child advocates also took part in the review. The complete 8-page report can be downloaded at [www.centerforchildprotection.org](http://www.centerforchildprotection.org).

### **About the Travis County Child Fatality Review Team**

The Travis County Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) meets every other month to review the circumstances associated with every child fatality occurring in the county. Over the past several years, a valuable record of information has been generated to provide greater clarity in answering the question of why Travis County children are dying and how the community can respond to prevent those deaths. By sharing this information, the Team hopes to increase public awareness of the causes of death among children in the hopes that children can be saved.

### **About the Center for Child Protection**

The Center for Child Protection, an accredited children's advocacy center, is the first stop for children in Travis County who are suspected victims of sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and for children who have witnessed a violent crime. The Center is a child-friendly, specially equipped facility where children go for recorded forensic interviews, medical exams, counseling and intervention during the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. All services are provided to children and their protective caregivers at no charge. In 2006, the Center served more than 1,400 children and 900 adults.

The Center for Child Protection serves as the community representative to the Child Protection Team (CPT). The Child Protection Team is a public collaboration established in 1989 to more effectively and quickly coordinate the investigation and care for abused children and their families to reduce child re-victimization and promote healing. Other team members include the Travis County District Attorney's Office, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Children's Hospital of Austin, Austin Police Department, Travis County Sheriff's Office, Austin Independent School District Police Department, Pflugerville Police Department, Jonestown Police Department, Lakeway Police Department, Cedar Park Police Department, Leander Police Department, Sunset Valley Police Department, Lago Vista Police Department, Manor Police Department, Rollingwood Police Department, Bee Cave Police Department, West Lake Hills Police Department, and Mustang Ridge Police Department. For more information, please call 512/472-1164 or visit [www.centerforchildprotection.org](http://www.centerforchildprotection.org).

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