



Practice Alert

Infant and Toddler Safety

Infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable to injury.

- Nationwide, deaths of children younger than age 4 that were due to child abuse and neglect accounted for 77% of all child abuse fatalities in 2005, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Child Maltreatment 2005*.

Missouri has seen an alarming number of infants and toddlers who have been injured critically or fatally.

- In 2006, **19** of the **27** (70%) Missouri children who died from inflicted injuries at the hands of a parent or caretaker were four years of age or younger. Of those, **nine** (47%), were infants under the age of one year (Child Fatality Review Program, 2006).

Whenever the Children's Division is involved with a family who has young children, it is vitally important that the Children's Service worker monitor safety regularly, even when law enforcement or other agencies are involved. When safety concerns exist, a safety plan should be developed in a manner that addresses age specific vulnerabilities related to the child or caregiver. A good safety plan:

- Utilizes as many people as possible
- Indicates when the plan is to be implemented
- Offers alternatives
- Is likely to be followed

Information on the assessment of safety can be found in [Child Welfare Manual Section 2, Chapter 9](#).

Physical abuse and neglect occurring over a period of time may also lead to a child's death. Information about the accumulation of harm to children due to chronic neglect can be found in Child Welfare Manual Section 2: [Chapter 4.1.1.2](#) and [Chapter 5.3.1](#).