

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: CHILDREN'S DIVISION AND CONTRACTED STAFF
FROM: DARRELL MISSEY, DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: DISCUSSING SAFETY CONCERNS WITH FAMILIES

DISCUSSION:

In recognition of [Baby Safety Month](#) in September, we'd like to emphasize the importance of home safety for our team. During home visits, our primary focus typically revolves around identifying critical safety concerns such as abuse, neglect, substance use, and mental health risks. However, it's crucial to also address safety issues within the child's home environment by engaging in conversations with caregivers.

According to the Missouri Child Fatality Review Program [2022 Annual Report](#):

"Leaving small children (less than six years of age) unsupervised around water or moving vehicles or allowing them to ride in the back of pickup trucks or on ATV's, allowing them to get their hands on firearms, letting them get hold of poisons or drugs, placing babies in unsafe sleeping environments, and failing to keep fire-starting items out of the hands of young children are all ill-advised; yet, these actions resulted in the deaths of 127 children in 2022."

As Baby Safety Month comes to a close and we move into October, Safe Sleep Month, we want to encourage you to discuss safety concerns with families during each home visit each month. A quick two-minute conversation could potentially prevent accidents and save lives. Feel free use this [Home Safety Checklist](#) as a tool during your conversations. Additionally, take the time to educate families on making their homes safer by considering the following points:

- **Furniture:** Secure furniture to prevent tipping, avoid lead paint, and cover sharp edges and corners. Ensure flat-screen TVs are mounted securely.

- **Windows:** Discuss how window screens are only strong enough to keep insects out. Remove furniture from windows to prevent accidental falls. Keep cords or strings out of reach to prevent strangulation.
- **Safety Hazards:** Store hazardous materials, medications, and firearms safely out of reach.
- **Emergency Safety:** Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and establish emergency plans for fires and natural disasters.
- **Safe Sleep:** Educate on [safe sleep practices](#), keep cribs free of bumpers, toys, and blankets, and advise against co-sleeping.
- **Vehicle Safety:** Verify correct installation of car seats and talk with caregivers about the correct way to fasten seatbelts, remind them to check the backseat before leaving the car, and if about ATV and pick-up truck best practices.
- **Water Safety:** Test bath and shower water temperatures before bathing the child.
- **Choking Hazards:** Keep small objects out of children’s reach and sight.

Furthermore, promote vigilant supervision by parents and guardians, especially in high-risk areas like kitchens, bathrooms, and outdoor spaces. Offering support and empathy can foster trust and collaboration with the families we serve.

By working together, we can create a safer environment for every child and enhance the well-being of our community. Let's make a positive impact, one home visit at a time.

For more information and resources on safety, visit the [DSS Child Safety Resources webpage](#).

NECESSARY ACTION	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review this memorandum with all Children’s Division staff. 2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below. 3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to: 	
MANAGER CONTACT Ramona Harris Ramona.L.Harris@dss.mo.gov	DEPUTY DIRECTOR CONTACT Tiffany Moore Tiffany.Moore@dss.mo.gov
CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS N/A	
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS N/A	
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES N/A	

RELATED STATUTE
N/A