

RCW 70.05.170 Child mortality review. (1)(a) The legislature finds that the mortality rate in Washington state among infants and children less than eighteen years of age is unacceptably high, and that such mortality may be preventable. The legislature further finds that, through the performance of child mortality reviews, preventable causes of child mortality can be identified and addressed, thereby reducing the infant and child mortality in Washington state.

(b) It is the intent of the legislature to encourage the performance of child death reviews by local health departments by providing necessary legal protections to the families of children whose deaths are studied, local health department officials and employees, and health care professionals participating in child mortality review committee activities.

(2) As used in this section, "child mortality review" means a process authorized by a local health department as such department is defined in RCW 70.05.010 for examining factors that contribute to deaths of children less than eighteen years of age. The process may include a systematic review of medical, clinical, and hospital records; home interviews of parents and caretakers of children who have died; analysis of individual case information; and review of this information by a team of professionals in order to identify modifiable medical, socioeconomic, public health, behavioral, administrative, educational, and environmental factors associated with each death.

(3) Local health departments are authorized to conduct child mortality reviews. In conducting such reviews, the following provisions shall apply:

(a) All health care information collected as part of a child mortality review is confidential, subject to the restrictions on disclosure provided for in chapter 70.02 RCW. When documents are collected as part of a child mortality review, the records may be used solely by local health departments for the purposes of the review.

(b) No identifying information related to the deceased child, the child's guardians, or anyone interviewed as part of the child mortality review may be disclosed. Any such information shall be redacted from any records produced as part of the review.

(c) Any witness statements or documents collected from witnesses, or summaries or analyses of those statements or records prepared exclusively for purposes of a child mortality review, are not subject to public disclosure, discovery, subpoena, or introduction into evidence in any administrative, civil, or criminal proceeding related to the death of a child reviewed. This provision does not restrict or limit the discovery or subpoena from a health care provider of records or documents maintained by such health care provider in the ordinary course of business, whether or not such records or documents may have been supplied to a local health department pursuant to this section. This provision shall not restrict or limit the discovery or subpoena of documents from such witnesses simply because a copy of a document was collected as part of a child mortality review.

(d) No local health department official or employee, and no members of technical committees established to perform case reviews of selected child deaths may be examined in any administrative, civil, or criminal proceeding as to the existence or contents of documents assembled, prepared, or maintained for purposes of a child mortality review.

(e) This section shall not be construed to prohibit or restrict any person from reporting suspected child abuse or neglect under chapter 26.44 RCW nor to limit access to or use of any records,

documents, information, or testimony in any civil or criminal action arising out of any report made pursuant to chapter 26.44 RCW.

(4) The department shall assist local health departments to collect the reports of any child mortality reviews conducted by local health departments and assist with entering the reports into a database to the extent that the data is not protected under subsection (3) of this section. Notwithstanding subsection (3) of this section, the department shall respond to any requests for data from the database to the extent permitted for health care information under chapter 70.02 RCW. In addition, the department shall provide technical assistance to local health departments and child death review coordinators conducting child mortality reviews and encourage communication among child death review teams. The department shall conduct these activities using only federal and private funding.

(5) This section does not prevent a local health department from publishing statistical compilations and reports related to the child mortality review. Any portions of such compilations and reports that identify individual cases and sources of information must be redacted. [2010 c 128 § 1; 2009 c 134 § 1; 1993 c 41 § 1; 1992 c 179 § 1.]