

## Child Fatality Task Force



The Child Fatality Task Force recommends an appropriation of \$50,000 to fund a firearm safety education and awareness campaign and to fund a program for distribution of free or discounted gun locks and/or lock boxes

### Firearms are a significant source of death and injury to North Carolina Children

For North Carolina children ages 0 to 17 during the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, there were 279 firearm-related hospitalizations, 777 firearm-related emergency department visits, and 210 firearm-related deaths. Of those firearm-related deaths, 15% were to children age 9 and under; 35% were to children age 14 and under.<sup>1</sup> During the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, firearms were the lethal means used in almost 45% of suicides and over 50% of homicides to children ages 0 to 17.<sup>2</sup>

### Approximately half of firearms in NC are kept unsecured and accessible to children

For the 2011 North Carolina Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, approximately half of North Carolina residents with a firearm reported that the firearm is unsecured (secured = gun cabinet, trigger or cable lock). (2011 was the last year this data was collected.) Nationally, approximately one in three handguns is kept loaded and unlocked and most children know where guns are kept by their parents.<sup>3</sup>

### This funding is meant to support the work of a firearm safety stakeholder group that is being convened by the Child Fatality Task Force and Safe Kids North Carolina

In 2016, the North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention Team recommended to the Child Fatality Task Force establishing a stakeholder group to address a firearm safe storage campaign. The Task Force approved an administrative (non-legislative) item on its 2017 Action Agenda for the NC Child Fatality Task Force and Safe Kids NC to convene a group of firearm safety stakeholders to examine and make recommendations related to firearm safety, reporting back to the Task Force in the fall of 2017. Two of several components of the group's work will include development of a statewide approach to firearm safety education and awareness and addressing programs that distribute gun locks or lock boxes.

**Implementation:** Safe Kids NC, a co-leader of this group, has a state office at the Department of Insurance and has 46 local coalitions covering 60 counties. It is the largest Safe Kids network in the nation, and its work has made NC a national leader in various safety efforts such as Operation Medicine Drop, a safe drug disposal initiative.

- **Gun locks/boxes:** The existing state and local coalition structure of Safe Kids NC is a natural fit for leading statewide distribution of gun locks and/or lock boxes. As an example, the per-item cost of the type of gun lock to be distributed is thought to be between \$6 and \$10, so \$25,000 could potentially provide over 3,000 gun locks.
- **Awareness campaign:** Safe Kids NC has extensive experience in safety messaging and would help this work group tap existing communications channels in partner agencies as well as seek expert advice to create a marketing and social media campaign to raise and maintain public awareness of the issue of firearm safety. Funds would be used for creation and implementation of the campaign.

**The Child Fatality Task Force** is a Legislative Study Commission that recommends policy solutions to reduce child death, prevent abuse and neglect, and support the safe and healthy development of children. It is part of NC's Child Fatality Prevention System under Article 14 of the NC Juvenile Code. Since creation of the Task Force and Child Fatality Prevention System in 1991, child death rates in NC have decreased by 46%.

**Website:** <http://www.ncleg.net/DocumentSites/Committees/NCCFTF/Homepage/index.html>

**Executive Director:** Kella Hatcher, [kella.hatcher@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:kella.hatcher@dhhs.nc.gov)

**Co-Chairs:** Karen McLeod, [kmcleod@benchmarksnc.org](mailto:kmcleod@benchmarksnc.org); Buck Wilson, [bwilson@co.cumberland.nc.us](mailto:bwilson@co.cumberland.nc.us)

---

<sup>1</sup> Death data according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, NC Department of Health and Human Services; other data according to NC Violent Death Reporting System, NC Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, NC Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>3</sup> *Gun Violence: Facts and Statistics*, from the Center for Injury Research and Prevention, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute.

Note: This fact sheet was revised 4/27/17