STATE OF ARKANSAS
House of Representatives

Newsletter From Rep. Glenn Barnes
District 65

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Committee Reviews Reports on Child Safety

This week, the House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, and Legislative Affairs met jointly with the Senate Children and Youth Committee to review important reports focused on child safety and well-being in Arkansas. These committees are charged with addressing issues related to children, youth, adoption, custody, and the challenges facing our aging population. Regular updates and data help lawmakers shape policies that better serve Arkansas families.

One of the featured reports came from the Children's Advocacy Centers of Arkansas (CACar). CACar operates 32 centers statewide, supporting 64 multidisciplinary teams that respond to child abuse cases. In 2024, CACar provided advocacy and crisis services to over 11,000 children and families, completed more than 6,800 forensic interviews, and conducted nearly 1,000 specialized medical evaluations. The organization also reached over 59,000 people through community education and prevention programs aimed at keeping children safe.

The committee also reviewed findings from the state's Infant and Child Death Review (ICDR) Program at Arkansas Children's Hospital. The panel examined 172 child deaths from 2022 involving unnatural or unexpected causes. Leading causes included drownings, firearm incidents, overdoses, and unsafe sleep environments. Many of these deaths were determined to be preventable, and the panel recommended stronger public education efforts around safe sleep, seatbelt use, and firearm safety.

Finally, the Arkansas State Police Crimes Against Children Division (CACD) shared its latest data. From January through March of this year, the child abuse hotline received 16,480 calls, with 9,042 accepted for investigation. Of those cases, 1,593 were handled by CACD and 7,449 by the Department of Human Services.

These reports highlight the continued need for collaboration, prevention, and early intervention to protect children across Arkansas.