



CENTER FOR THE RIGHTS  
OF ABUSED CHILDREN

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Groundbreaking Reform Brings Transparency and Oversight to the Department of Child Safety**

**Phoenix, Ariz.** - Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs signed a groundbreaking reform created by the Center for the Rights of Abused Children to improve transparency and oversight of the Department of Child Safety (DCS). The reform requires DCS to include external, independent experts in child fatality reviews. These experts will recommend systemic changes and enhance transparency with state policymakers and the public.

The fatality rate for abused and neglected children has [increased](#) over the last decade. Recent data shows that 59% of Arizona children who died from abuse or neglect were known to the system prior to their deaths - children like [Chaskah Davis-Smith](#), about whom DCS had received multiple prior reports alleging child abuse. The new law will enable legislators to review child abuse fatality cases and determine clear steps to improve child safety moving ahead.

Prior to the new law, DCS fatality reviews were purely internal. Fatalities and near fatalities involving child abuse and neglect were reviewed by DCS staff only and were missing impartial oversight to boost accountability and bring about stronger reforms.

Senate Bill 1235, sponsored by Senator Janae Shamp, is designed to turn the tide of maltreatment fatalities by critically analyzing the child protection system and identifying opportunities for systemic improvements. The bill creates the Child Safety Fatality and Near Fatality Review Team in DCS; involves five external, independent experts in child safety improvement who will review reports, select cases for systemic learning and order systemic critical incident reviews, and make recommended policy changes; and empowers the legislature with greater oversight of child maltreatment fatalities, including making the team responsive to legislative requests for information within 90 days, providing an annual report that includes systemic trends, and provides details of individual cases that present opportunities for policy changes.

With the Governor's signature, Arizona will be deploying best practices, improving oversight, and increasing accountability and transparency by aiding policymakers in making well-informed, systemic reforms with the goal of ending these unnecessary tragedies.

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**About the Center for the Rights of Abused Children:** The Center for the Rights of Abused Children fights for better futures for America's abused children with a pro bono Children's Law Clinic, common-sense reforms, and public interest litigation. Join our life-saving work to end violence against children today, [thecenterforchildren.org](http://thecenterforchildren.org).

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