



State of Wisconsin  
2023 - 2024 LEGISLATURE

LRB-0521/1  
SWB:skw

## 2023 SENATE BILL 177

April 3, 2023 - Introduced by JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Referred to Committee on Health.

1     **AN ACT** *to amend* 48.396 (1), 48.396 (2) (a), 48.78 (2) (a), 48.981 (7) (a) 15.,  
2           938.396 (1) (a), 938.396 (2) (a) and 938.78 (2) (a); and *to create* 51.30 (4) (b) 29.,  
3           146.82 (2) (d), 250.22 and 961.385 (2) (cm) 5. of the statutes; **relating to:**  
4           fatality review teams and granting rule-making authority.

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***Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau***

This bill is explained in the NOTES provided by the Joint Legislative Council in the bill.

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***The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:***

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PREFATORY NOTE: This bill was prepared for the Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Uniform Death Reporting Standards.

Current law does not address fatality review teams, though several types of such teams currently exist in Wisconsin based on voluntary efforts primarily organized by counties, with state-level technical assistance available for certain types of teams. The bill establishes fatality review teams under state law.

Under the bill, a fatality review team is defined as a multidisciplinary and multiagency team reviewing one or more types of death among children or adults and developing recommendations to prevent future deaths of similar circumstances. The bill generally governs a team's responsibilities, ability to access certain records, confidentiality requirements, and disclosure of information.

**SENATE BILL 177***Duties and Authority of the Department of Health Services (DHS)*

Under the bill, DHS must establish a fatality review program comprised of local fatality review teams established at the option of a county, a local health department, or a tribal health department, or a combination of these entities. The bill also authorizes, but does not require, DHS to create state fatality review teams.

The bill requires DHS to perform various duties, in consultation with other state agencies as appropriate, such as: (1) facilitate local team development; (2) identify training needs and make available training resources; (3) provide technical assistance and support; (4) in the absence of a local team or upon request, assign review of deaths to a state fatality review team, if established; (5) educate the public on causes and recommendations for prevention of reviewable deaths; and (6) provide information to the legislature, state agencies, and local communities on the need for modifications to law, policy, or practice. The bill allows DHS to contract with an entity to perform any of its duties under the bill.

Under the bill, DHS must create and make available to fatality review teams a confidentiality agreement for use by team members to ensure confidentiality consistent with the bill's provisions. The bill requires DHS to promulgate administrative rules to develop and implement a standardized form for review of suicide deaths, and allows DHS to promulgate rules to develop and implement standardized forms for other types of reviewable deaths. The bill further grants general rule-making authority to DHS to implement the bill's provisions.

*Fatality Review Teams*

The bill contains general provisions governing any type of fatality review team. The bill identifies examples of the types of deaths that may constitute a reviewable death, including those caused by unintentional injury, overdose, suicide, and homicide, among other causes. The bill also provides a non-exhaustive list of potential team members.

Under the bill, a fatality review team has the purpose of gathering information about reviewable deaths to examine risk factors and understand how deaths may be prevented, through identifying recommendations for cross-sector, system-level policy and practice changes, and promoting cooperation and coordination among the agencies involved in understanding causes of reviewable deaths or in providing services to surviving family members.

If established, each fatality review team must: (1) establish and implement team protocols; (2) collect and maintain data; (3) create strategies and track implementation of prevention recommendations; and (4) evaluate the team's process, interagency collaboration, and implementation of recommendations. The bill requires teams to assign, as appropriate for a specific review, a team member to complete any standardized form developed by DHS, and to enter data regarding each reviewable death into any secure database designated by DHS or its contracted entity.

*Record Access and Confidentiality*

The bill authorizes a fatality review team to access records from a variety of sources, such as certain state agencies, law enforcement, medical examiners and coroners, health care providers, human service agencies, schools, and the prescription drug monitoring program, among others, subject to certain restrictions under the bill and current law.

Information and records provided to or created by a fatality review team are confidential, subject to limited exceptions provided under the bill, and are not subject to Wisconsin's public records laws. The bill requires team members, and other individuals invited to attend a team meeting, to sign a confidentiality agreement before participating in or attending a fatality review team meeting. The bill prohibits team members, persons in attendance at team meetings, and others providing records to teams from testifying in any civil or criminal action as to the information specifically obtained through participation in the team's meeting.

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The bill authorizes disclosure of information if such disclosure serves a team's purpose and certain other conditions are met, such as the information does not allow for identification of individuals and does not contain conclusory information attributing fault. The bill further specifies that a team's information and records are not subject to discovery or subpoena, or admissible as evidence, in a civil or criminal action, unless obtained independently from a team's review. The bill also provides that a person participating in a fatality review team is immune from civil or criminal liability for any good faith act or omission in connection with providing information or recommendations.

The bill exempts fatality review team meetings from Wisconsin's open meetings law. However, the bill allows for public meetings to share summary findings and recommendations, but limits the types of information that may be disclosed in public meetings.

1           **SECTION 1.** 48.396 (1) of the statutes is amended to read:

2           48.396 (1) Law enforcement officers' records of children shall be kept separate  
3           from records of adults. Law enforcement officers' records of the adult expectant  
4           mothers of unborn children shall be kept separate from records of other adults. Law  
5           enforcement officers' records of children and the adult expectant mothers of unborn  
6           children shall not be open to inspection or their contents disclosed except under sub.  
7           (1b), (1d), (5), or (6) or s. 48.293 ~~or~~, 250.22, or 938.396 (2m) (c) 1p. or by order of the  
8           court. This subsection does not apply to the representatives of newspapers or other  
9           reporters of news who wish to obtain information for the purpose of reporting news  
10          without revealing the identity of the child or adult expectant mother involved, to the  
11          confidential exchange of information between the police and officials of the public or  
12          private school attended by the child or other law enforcement or social welfare  
13          agencies, or to children 10 years of age or older who are subject to the jurisdiction of  
14          the court of criminal jurisdiction. A public school official who obtains information  
15          under this subsection shall keep the information confidential as required under s.  
16          118.125, and a private school official who obtains information under this subsection  
17          shall keep the information confidential in the same manner as is required of a public  
18          school official under s. 118.125. This subsection does not apply to the confidential  
19          exchange of information between the police and officials of the tribal school attended

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1 by the child if the police determine that enforceable protections are provided by a  
2 tribal school policy or tribal law that requires tribal school officials to keep the  
3 information confidential in a manner at least as stringent as is required of a public  
4 school official under s. 118.125. A law enforcement agency that obtains information  
5 under this subsection shall keep the information confidential as required under this  
6 subsection and s. 938.396 (1) (a). A social welfare agency that obtains information  
7 under this subsection shall keep the information confidential as required under ss.  
8 48.78 and 938.78.

9 **SECTION 2.** 48.396 (2) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

10 48.396 (2) (a) Records of the court assigned to exercise jurisdiction under this  
11 chapter and ch. 938 and of courts exercising jurisdiction under s. 48.16 shall be  
12 entered in books or deposited in files kept for that purpose only. Those records shall  
13 not be open to inspection or their contents disclosed except by order of the court  
14 assigned to exercise jurisdiction under this chapter and ch. 938 or as required or  
15 permitted under this subsection, sub. (3) (b) or (c) 1g., 1m., or 1r. or (6), or s. 48.375  
16 (7) (e) or 250.22.

17 **SECTION 3.** 48.78 (2) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

18 48.78 (2) (a) No agency may make available for inspection or disclose the  
19 contents of any record kept or information received about an individual who is or was  
20 in its care or legal custody, except as provided under sub. (2m) or s. 48.371, 48.38 (5)  
21 (b) or (d) or (5m) (d), 48.396 (3) (bm) or (c) 1r., 48.432, 48.433, 48.48 (17) (bm), 48.57  
22 (2m), 48.66 (6), 48.93, 48.981 (7), 250.22, 938.396 (2m) (c) 1r., 938.51, or 938.78 or by  
23 order of the court.

24 **SECTION 4.** 48.981 (7) (a) 15. of the statutes is amended to read:

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1           48.981 (7) (a) 15. A fatality review team established under s. 250.22, a child  
2 fatality review team recognized by the county department, or, in a county having a  
3 population of 750,000 or more, the department or a licensed child welfare agency  
4 under contract with the department.

5           **SECTION 5.** 51.30 (4) (b) 29. of the statutes is created to read:

6           51.30 (4) (b) 29. To an authorized member of a fatality review team established  
7 under s. 250.22. The recipient of any treatment records under this subdivision shall  
8 keep the records confidential in accordance with s. 250.22.

9           **SECTION 6.** 146.82 (2) (d) of the statutes is created to read:

10           146.82 (2) (d) Notwithstanding sub. (1), patient health care records may be  
11 released, upon request, to a fatality review team, as defined in s. 250.22 (1) (a), acting  
12 as a public health authority for the purpose of reviewing a death as described under  
13 s. 250.22. Records that may be released under this paragraph for the public health  
14 purposes under s. 250.22 may be disclosed to a fatality review team only in  
15 accordance with that section, and the recipient of any records released shall keep the  
16 records confidential.

17           **SECTION 7.** 250.22 of the statutes is created to read:

18           **250.22 Fatality review teams. (1) DEFINITIONS.** In this section:

19           (a) “Fatality review team” means a multidisciplinary and multiagency team  
20 examining one or more types of reviewable death among children or adults and  
21 developing recommendations to prevent future deaths of similar circumstances.

22           (b) “Local fatality review team” means a fatality review team that examines  
23 reviewable deaths from a specific county or counties. A “local fatality review team”  
24 may include a team formed by a collaboration of two or more counties, local health  
25 departments, or tribal health departments.

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1 (c) "State fatality review team" means a fatality review team that examines  
2 reviewable deaths of residents across the state.

3 (d) "Reviewable death" includes a death for which any of the following has been  
4 determined to be the cause of death:

- 5 1. Undetermined.
- 6 2. Unintentional injury.
- 7 3. Suicide.
- 8 4. Homicide.
- 9 5. Motor vehicle incident.
- 10 6. Overdose death.
- 11 7. Child abuse or neglect.
- 12 8. Sudden unexpected death.
- 13 9. Stillbirth.
- 14 10. Fetal death or infant death.

15 **(2) DEPARTMENT DUTIES AND AUTHORITY.** (a) The department shall establish a  
16 fatality review program comprised of local fatality review teams established at the  
17 option of a county, a local health department, a tribal health department, or a  
18 combination of these entities. The department may also establish a state fatality  
19 review team.

20 (b) In coordination with the department of justice, the department of children  
21 and families, or other state agencies, as appropriate, the department shall do all of  
22 the following:

- 23 1. Facilitate the development of local fatality review teams under this section.

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1           2. Identify training needs and make training resources available to local  
2 fatality review teams, statewide professional organizations, advocacy groups, and  
3 others.

4           3. Respond to requests from local fatality review teams and provide any  
5 necessary technical assistance and support.

6           4. Upon request of a local fatality review team, or if a county does not have a  
7 fatality review team, assign review of deaths to a state fatality review team, if  
8 established.

9           5. Provide information to the legislature, state agencies, and local communities  
10 on the need for modifications to law, policy, or practice.

11           (c) The department may enter into a contract with an entity to perform any of  
12 the department's duties under this section.

13           (d) The department shall promulgate rules to develop and implement a  
14 standardized form for use by fatality review teams when reviewing suicide deaths.  
15 The department may promulgate rules to develop and implement standardized  
16 forms for use by fatality review teams when reviewing other types of reviewable  
17 deaths.

18           (e) The department may educate the public regarding the incidence and causes  
19 of reviewable deaths, including recommendations that identify needed policy  
20 changes or action to prevent future deaths.

21           (f) The department or its contracted entity shall create and make available to  
22 fatality review teams a confidentiality agreement to be used by fatality review team  
23 members to ensure confidentiality consistent with this section.

24           (g) The department may promulgate rules to implement this section.

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1           **(3) FATALITY REVIEW TEAMS; PURPOSE, DUTIES, MEMBERSHIP, AND RECORD ACCESS.** (a)

2           Fatality review teams shall have the purpose of gathering information concerning  
3           reviewable deaths to examine the risk factors and circumstances leading to  
4           reviewable deaths and understand how the deaths could have been prevented  
5           through all of the following:

6           1. Identification of recommendations for cross-sector, system-level policy and  
7           practice changes to address the identified risk factors and prevent future reviewable  
8           deaths.

9           2. Promotion of cooperation and coordination among agencies involved in  
10          understanding the causes of reviewable deaths or in providing services to surviving  
11          family members.

12          (b) 1. If established, each fatality review team shall do all of the following:

13          a. Establish and implement a protocol for the fatality review team and, to the  
14          extent the department or its contracted entity is involved with the type of review  
15          undertaken, consult with the department or its contracted entity regarding the  
16          protocol.

17          b. Collect and maintain data to the extent requested by the department or its  
18          contracted entity for the type of review undertaken.

19          c. Create strategies and make and track the implementation of  
20          recommendations for the prevention and reduction of reviewable deaths in the area  
21          served by the fatality review team.

22          d. Evaluate the fatality review team's review process, interagency  
23          collaboration, and development and implementation of recommendations to ensure  
24          adherence to the purpose described in par. (a).



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1           2. A fatality review team may address a reviewable death that occurred in the  
2           area served by the fatality review team or that relates to a resident of the area served  
3           by the fatality review team if the incident or death occurred elsewhere in the state.

4           (c) When conducting a fatality review under this section, a fatality review team  
5           may be provided with information from the records held by any of the following, if  
6           the records pertain to a person or incident within the scope of the review:

- 7           1. The department of health services or a local health department.
- 8           2. The department of children and families.
- 9           3. A law enforcement agency.
- 10          4. A medical examiner or coroner.
- 11          5. A treatment provider for substance use or mental health.
- 12          6. A hospital or health care provider.
- 13          7. Emergency medical services, including a fire department.
- 14          8. A Women, Infants, and Children program under s. 253.06.
- 15          9. The department of corrections.
- 16          10. A district attorney's office.
- 17          11. A circuit or municipal court.
- 18          12. A social services agency.
- 19          13. Child protective services.
- 20          14. A school or university.
- 21          15. If the fatality review team is an overdose fatality review team or a suicide  
22          fatality review team, prescription drug monitoring program records.
- 23          16. Any other agency or organization identified as necessary for the review by  
24          a specific fatality review team.

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1 (d) If established, the members of a fatality review team may include any of the  
2 following types of individuals, organizations, agencies, and areas of expertise:

3 1. Public health.

4 2. Tribal health centers.

5 3. Medical examiners and coroners.

6 4. Funeral directors.

7 5. Law enforcement.

8 6. The district attorney with jurisdiction, or his or her designee.

9 7. Medical professionals, including physicians, physician assistants, and  
10 nurses.

11 8. Emergency medical responders, as defined in s. 256.01 (4p), or emergency  
12 medical services practitioners, as defined in s. 256.01 (5).

13 9. Behavioral health professionals.

14 10. Individuals with relevant personal experience.

15 11. Education professionals, including school counselors and school  
16 representatives.

17 12. Any other person requested by members of the team.

18 (e) A fatality review team shall enter data regarding each reviewable death  
19 under review into any secure database designated by the department or its  
20 contracted entity.

21 (f) A fatality review team shall assign, as appropriate for the specific type of  
22 review, a member of the team to complete any standardized form developed by the  
23 department under sub. (2) (d).

24 **(4) DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION; IMMUNITY.** (a) Information and records  
25 provided to or created by a fatality review team are confidential, except as otherwise

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1 provided in this section, and are not subject to inspection or copying under s. 19.35.  
2 Before a member of a fatality review team may participate in the review of a  
3 reviewable death, the member must sign a copy of the confidentiality agreement  
4 described under sub. (2) (f) and review the purpose and goals of the fatality review  
5 team. Any person who is invited to a fatality review team meeting must sign a copy  
6 of the confidentiality agreement described under sub. (2) (f) before attending or  
7 participating in the meeting.

8 (b) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a member of a fatality review  
9 team may share information disclosed to the fatality review team regarding a  
10 reviewable death with other members of that fatality review team or with another  
11 fatality review team conducting a review of the same individual's death, except that  
12 the member may not distribute additional, printed copies of any information or  
13 record that is disclosed to him or her to other members of the member's fatality  
14 review team.

15 (c) Any person participating in the review of a reviewable death by a fatality  
16 review team, including any member of a fatality review team, a person attending a  
17 fatality review meeting, or a person who presents information to the fatality review  
18 team, and any person providing information or records to the fatality review team  
19 for the purpose of reviewing a reviewable death, may not testify in any civil or  
20 criminal action as to the information specifically obtained through the person's  
21 participation in the fatality review team's meeting or to any conclusion of the fatality  
22 review team regarding a reviewable death. This paragraph does not prohibit a  
23 person from testifying to information that is obtained independently of a fatality  
24 review team or that is public information.

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1 (d) A person who attends a fatality review team meeting or presents  
2 information to a fatality review team is not prohibited under par. (a) or (b) from  
3 disclosing information or records obtained independently of the review if that  
4 disclosure is otherwise permitted under state or federal law.

5 (e) 1. A fatality review team may disclose information if the disclosure is made  
6 for the purpose of fulfilling a purpose of the fatality review team and if the  
7 information meets all of the following criteria:

8 a. The information does not contain any information that identifies the names  
9 or identifying numbers of individuals and does not contain other information for  
10 which there is reasonable basis to believe that the information could be used to  
11 identify an individual or entity.

12 b. The information does not contain addresses other than zip codes.

13 c. The information does not contain dates of birth, death, or incident other than  
14 the year.

15 d. The information does not contain conclusory information attributing fault,  
16 not including findings or judgments by law enforcement agencies, courts, or child  
17 welfare agencies.

18 2. Any of the following items, if the item does not contain any information that  
19 would allow the identity of an individual to be ascertained, may be disclosed or  
20 treated as public information:

21 a. Statistical or aggregate compilations of data.

22 b. Reports from fatality review teams.

23 (f) Information and records provided or obtained in the course of a fatality  
24 review under this section are not subject to discovery or subpoena in a civil or  
25 criminal action or an administrative proceeding and are not admissible as evidence

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1 during the course of a civil or criminal action or an administrative proceeding, except  
2 that information and records obtained independently of a review under this section  
3 are not immune from discovery merely because the information or records were  
4 presented to a fatality review team.

5 (g) Any person participating in a fatality review team's meeting under this  
6 section is immune from any civil or criminal liability for any good faith act or  
7 omission in connection with providing information or recommendations relevant to  
8 review of a reviewable death to the fatality review team in accordance with this  
9 section or any conclusions or recommendations reached by the fatality review team  
10 made in good faith. The immunity granted under this paragraph applies to persons  
11 conducting the review as well as persons providing information or records to the  
12 fatality review team for the meeting. For the purpose of any civil or criminal action,  
13 any person participating in a review under this section is presumed to be acting in  
14 good faith.

15 **(5) MEETINGS.** (a) Meetings of a fatality review team shall be closed to the  
16 public and are not subject to subch. V of ch. 19. A fatality review team may hold a  
17 public meeting to share summary findings and recommendations of reviews by  
18 fatality review teams.

19 (b) During a public meeting under par. (a), no person may disclose information  
20 on or agency involvement with any of the following:

- 21 1. A deceased individual.
- 22 2. A family member, guardian, or caretaker of a deceased individual.
- 23 3. An individual convicted of a crime or adjudicated as having committed a  
24 delinquent act that caused a death or near fatality.

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1 (c) This subsection does not prohibit a fatality review team from requesting the  
2 attendance at a team meeting of a person who has information relevant to the team's  
3 exercise of its purpose and duties, provided that any person attending the meeting  
4 signs the confidentiality agreement as described under sub. (2) (f).

5 **SECTION 8.** 938.396 (1) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

6 938.396 (1) (a) *Confidentiality.* Law enforcement agency records of juveniles  
7 shall be kept separate from records of adults. Law enforcement agency records of  
8 juveniles may not be open to inspection or their contents disclosed except under par.  
9 (b) or (c), sub. (1j), (2m) (c) 1p., or (10), or s. 250.22 or 938.293 or by order of the court.

10 **SECTION 9.** 938.396 (2) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

11 938.396 (2) (a) Records of the court assigned to exercise jurisdiction under this  
12 chapter and ch. 48 and of municipal courts exercising jurisdiction under s. 938.17 (2)  
13 shall be entered in books or deposited in files kept for that purpose only. Those  
14 records shall not be open to inspection or their contents disclosed except by order of  
15 the court assigned to exercise jurisdiction under this chapter and ch. 48 or as  
16 required or permitted under sub. (2g), (2m) (b) or (c), or (10) or s. 250.22.

17 **SECTION 10.** 938.78 (2) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

18 938.78 (2) (a) No agency may make available for inspection or disclose the  
19 contents of any record kept or information received about an individual who is or was  
20 in its care or legal custody, except as provided under sub. (2m) or (3) or s. 48.396 (3)  
21 (bm) or (c) 1r., 250.22, 938.371, 938.38 (5) (b) or (d) or (5m) (d), 938.396 (2m) (c) 1r.,  
22 938.51, or 938.57 (2m) or by order of the court.

23 **SECTION 11.** 961.385 (2) (cm) 5. of the statutes is created to read:

24 961.385 (2) (cm) 5. An overdose fatality review team or a suicide review team  
25 under s. 250.22 (3) (b) 15.

