

IMPAIRED DRIVING COALITION OF CANADA

10-step Guide to Form a Fatal Collision Review Committee

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION, DECEMBER 2023

A Fatal Collision Review Committee (FCRC) is a multi-disciplinary committee formed to undertake timely reviews of fatal road crashes as they occur within a municipality. This fact sheet provides a comprehensive 10-step guide to forming an FCRC.

An overview of the structure and main features of an FCRC is available as a fact sheet on the TIRF website at: tirf.ca/download/idcc-fcrc-overview



Engage key stakeholders to gauge interest and gather ideas

Identify and connect with key stakeholders in your community to gauge the level of interest in forming an FCRC. Establish a strategy for approaching agencies to gauge interest, discuss ideas, build support and identify potential issues requiring consideration. This can be accomplished by reaching out individually or by hosting a meeting with your local knowledge as a guide on the best course of action. Key stakeholders to include in this process are:

- > Regional coroner's office
- > Police (collision investigations and traffic enforcement)
- > Municipal road safety engineers
- > Ministry of Highways & Transportation
- > Representatives from the local Public Health Unit (PHU)
- > Other road safety stakeholders as appropriate



The value for these stakeholders in forming an FCRC is in how sharing information related to fatal collisions can help coordinate resources to increase efficiency, prioritize issues by building consensus, and guide the development of more targeted and comprehensive initiatives. FCRCs are more common at a municipal level, whereas smaller rural communities within the same geographic area may benefit from a regional approach. However, this latter approach will require increased more in-depth discussions about sharing confidential information among communities.

Developing key talking points to help structure the conversations with individual agencies and groups is useful to focus discussion. Some important topics to include are:

- > a brief overview of an FCRC and its objectives (see fact sheet)
- > a clear ask for each agency and benefits of participation (e.g., enabling agencies to more efficiently identify issues, allocate resources and coordinate action)
- > mechanisms to structure the relationship among partners (e.g., terms of reference)
- > potential mechanisms to facilitate sharing relevant data (e.g., existing legislation/regulation, memoranda of understanding, terms of reference)
- > types of outputs that can be produced and audiences that can be reached (e.g., annual reports as a foundation to develop timely road safety messaging to community)



Prepare a letter of invitation to invite stakeholders

If there appears to be general interest in exploring the formation of an FCRC based on initial discussions, it is recommended to send a formal email or letter to the local coroner's office requesting the establishment of an FCRC in their community or region. In principle, the regional coroner's office has the ability to engage various partners and often the legal authority to facilitate the sharing of confidential fatal crash information within an FCRC. Other provinces and territories may have different legal authority, but the goal of public safety is present in every death investigation system. Engagement with the local or regional coroner's office or the medical examiner's office is a critical step because, in most jurisdictions, fatal crash investigations fall under their authority.



Host a meeting of participating agencies

This first formal meeting of agencies agreeing to participate in the FCRC is essential to create a framework for the activities to be undertaken. Mechanisms needed to formalize the relationship between agencies can be explored. A Terms of Reference or similar document may be the most useful way to structure the partnership and describe its functionality. The contribution of member agencies can be identified so their role in the partnership is clearly delineated.

Another important issue is to identify any perceived challenges and ways they can be addressed. The sharing of data and information related to fatal crashes is likely to be identified as a priority issue. As such, including legal representation from agencies can help them determine appropriate tools and strategies may be needed to facilitate data-sharing. Finally, a structure for meetings and timelines to review fatal collisions as they occur should also be established.



Identify data sources & sharing mechanisms

With guidance and input from legal counsel, agencies should discuss what data sources and data elements (i.e., variables) are necessary to facilitate the work of the FCRC. A good starting point for discussion is the types of data needed to create a complete picture of a fatal crash. Identifying the types of questions the FCRC wants to answer to inform road safety strategy can help provide direction. For example:

- > What are the top contributing factors in fatal crashes in your community?
- > What is the profile and characteristics of persons involved in fatal crashes?
- > Where in the community do fatal crashes most often occur?
- > What are the most common crash configurations?

Another important topic to consider once a list of potential variables has been developed is the ways these variables may be defined across agencies to ensure consistency in definitions or a clear understanding of differences to facilitate data interpretation. The ways in which data may be collected and programs/platforms used to analyze data is another key area to explore.

Some of the potential data sources to consider and their relevance to the work of an FCRC are presented below.

1. Enforcement data

- > Historical enforcement data for the particular location or corridor
 - » enforcement strategies (e.g., automated enforcement, high-visibility enforcement, targeted enforcement)
 - » is the location or corridor known for specific high-risk behaviours (e.g., speeding)
- > driver history of drivers in fatal crashes (e.g., 15+ years)
 - » all charges and convictions
 - » previous suspensions (medical or otherwise)
- > class of driver's licence and year of licensure
- > statements of any witnesses to fatal crashes

2. Engineering data:

- > 10 years of historical crash data per location (e.g., date, time, weather conditions)
- > any roadway improvements at the location in the past five years
- > outcomes of any safety audits underway or completed
- > complaints from residents

3. Municipal data

- > local crash data
- > as needed, recent road work, engineering treatments or repairs in fatal crash locations (e.g., whether roadway was plowed or salted for winter fatal crashes)
- > other data sources related to forestry data, line painting standards, and so forth
- > other safety reviews undertaken such as school audits or local neighbourhood initiatives

4. Medical data

- > medical history of deceased drivers/vulnerable road users in fatal crashes, from medical records or friends/family members (e.g., sleep apnea, medical cannabis, use of glasses, history of mental illness, mobility issues)
- > forensic toxicological results of the deceased
- > some medical history for living drivers, such as substance/alcohol use while driving, may be available, if criminal charges are laid



STEP 5

Develop a Terms of Reference document

A Terms of Reference document (TOR) should contain parameters for the purpose, structure and functionality of the FCRC that are agreed to by all the partners. The TOR should provide a foundation or framework for the FCRC. Key components that should be part of the TOR may include:

- > a description of how the work of the committee is to be completed;
- > which agency is responsible for leading the FCRC and its meetings;
- > the roles and responsibilities of members;
- > how soon after fatal crashes a meeting will occur;
- > how the information collected will be protected and shared among the members; and
- > whether and what information can be shared publicly whether through annual reports or in the event of a particular access to information request.



STEP 6

Review TOR by legal professionals

Protecting the confidentiality of personal information and the privacy of persons involved or killed in road crashes is a paramount concern for government agencies, health professionals and police services. Often the practices related to the management of personal information collected in the performance of duties are governed by local or provincial legislation or regulation such as the Coroners Act or other acts related to death investigation or public health. Similarly, licensing authorities also have clear policies with respect to how, when and with whom licensing data may be shared. As such, inviting legal counsel from each agency involved in an FCRC can guide the development of any TOR and ensure the work of an FCRC is compliant with applicable laws and regulations. This is a critical due diligence step that each agency must undertake to protect its integrity. This work is also necessary to inform the roles and responsibilities of each agency and lay a solid foundation for work processes utilized as part of an FCRC.



STEP 7

Develop a tracking tool for collisions

To track collisions, a tool should be created within the committee. The purpose of this document is to track data collected as part of Step 4. This document will provide an overview of collision data elements to help identify patterns and problem areas that may need to be addressed.

Generally speaking, it is recommended that written information for specific investigations remain in the possession of a member of an FCRC (e.g., coroners/death investigator's office/police) who is responsible for confidentiality. It should not be circulated, nor shared throughout the committee. This ensures that privacy and confidentiality remain intact at all times.

Key data elements to include in a tracking spreadsheet or database include:

- > time of day
- > day of the week
- > contributing factors (e.g., speed, fatigue, distraction)
- > level of impairment
- > make, model and year of vehicle
- > collision location
- > speed limit where the collision occurred
- > previous driver history
- > road conditions
- > any additional contributing factors (e.g., road construction, inclement weather).



STEP 8

Create a structure for an annual report

This discussion should consider the structure of an annual report and types of information it will contain as well as how it will be circulated or shared with politicians and community stakeholders. Other important topics are what contextual data will be included in relation to fatal crashes and whether specific and/or systemic recommendations will be put forward to guide road safety planning and initiatives. With respect to publication, key topics to consider are authorship, internal and external review protocols, annual release dates and any media briefings or talking points by media spokespeople.



STEP 9

Host the first meeting

The first official meeting of an FCRC should occur after an agreed-upon period of time following a fatal crash established during Step 4. Some jurisdictions have a set meeting five business days following the crash as this allows the crash investigation to begin, basic information on the drivers to be collected, as well as time to gather information on the specific crash location.

This facilitates the meeting to start with the collection of data, followed by an initial discussion regarding factors involved in the crash (i.e., alcohol, drugs, speed, pedestrians, location history) and steps needed to prevent future crashes. Follow-up may be required after the initial meeting, based on results obtained over time.



STEP 10

Produce an annual report

It is critical the committee provides the general public with a report on its high-level activities. The report should include:

- > the total number of fatal crashes;
- > the total number of people who were killed;
- > what type of road user (cyclist, driver, motorcyclist, pedestrian, etc);
- > the time of day;
- > day of the week; and,
- > other non-confidential collected information.

Sharing this information helps inform the general community, local decision-makers and community organizations. The information should also be used to chart the progress of a community's road safety initiatives and whether or not progress is being made.

An FCRC Annual Report can provide the general community with timely and insightful information on road fatality trends, such as an increase in specific road user fatalities, spikes in alcohol- or drug-impaired driving and whether specific age groups are impacted. This information can be used by participating organizations to modify their plans and interventions, but it can also be used by others in the community and other levels of government to gain a much more timely understanding of trends.

TRAFFIC INJURY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The vision of the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) is to ensure people using roads make it home safely every day by eliminating road deaths, serious injuries and their social costs. TIRF's mission is to be the knowledge source for safe road users and a world leader in research, program and policy development, evaluation, and knowledge transfer. TIRF is a registered charity and depends on grants, awards, and donations to provide services for the public. Visit turf.ca.

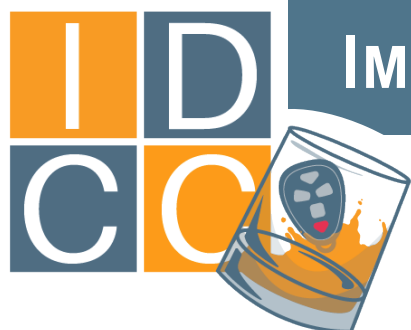


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TIRF & Diageo North America formed the IDCC to tackle impaired driving in Canada.

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