

# Child Fatality Prevention Recommendation: Enhanced Safe Sleep Education Practices

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*Developed by the Clark County Child Death Review team, 2019*

## Summary

### Problem Statement

Sudden unexpected infant deaths associated with unsafe sleep conditions are a leading cause of preventable child deaths in Clark County. There are well-established risk factors and practices for preventing sleep-related infant deaths. Parents and caregivers may not be receiving educational information about safe sleep in a way that is retained or applied.

### Primary Recommendations

**For professionals or organizations providing pregnancy, birth, or post-partum services or education.**

- Pregnancy and birth professionals should provide in-person safe sleep education to new parents (and other caregivers if possible) in their primary language
- Pregnancy and birth professionals should provide a distinct and separate handout to new parents with well-presented safe sleep risks and recommendations
- Take-home educational materials should be provided in the language of the parents and any likely caregivers
- Hospitals with birth centers should ensure their providers are trained and up-to-date on safe sleep practices, and should consider becoming a Certified Safe Sleep Hospital.

### Resources Provided

- Digital files including a Safe Sleep informational reference one-pager and door hanger, presented in English, Spanish, Russian, and Chuukese.
- Links to further resources and training tools.

### Issue Description

In 2019, the Clark County Child Death Review team (CDR) reviewed 18 cases of non-natural youth deaths that occurred in the prior calendar year. One third of these cases were attributed to SUID (sudden unexpected infant death). Of these, all but one were strongly associated with infant safe sleep risk factors. The most notable contributing elements for these cases included co-sleeping with an adult, excessive layers or blankets, not using an infant bed or surface, and parental fatigue. Further review of cases and discussions with local hospitals identified additional opportunities for providers and birth centers in Clark County to improve how we deliver safe sleep education to parents or caregivers of infants throughout and after pregnancy, with particular attention to cultural and language minorities.

When mothers give birth in Clark County, they typically receive a lot of information on infant care in a very short period of time surrounding the birth. For many of these mothers, this represents most of the education they will receive from professionals on the subject – especially for those who may limit clinic visits due to cost. When safe sleep education is provided, it tends to be included as a portion of a greater collection of information (such as a page in a booklet, or several bullet points on a large list). In-person education and information handouts are not always provided in the primary language of the parents, and are rarely provided directly to other infant caregivers who were not involved in the birth.

## Recommendation

While all the information parents receive from their care providers is important, the fact that safe sleep-related SUID cases were the primary cause of preventable infant deaths in 2018 warrants that safe sleep education be given special attention. According to the National Action Partnership to Promote Safe Sleep, one of the top three strategies for promoting safe sleep is to ensure that parents and caregivers of infants “have the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to practice safe sleep every sleep” (NICHQ, 2019). To this end, we have prepared and are sharing materials adapted from Cribs for Kids<sup>1</sup> and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development<sup>2</sup> that focus on the fundamental elements of this important issue -- in English, Chuukese, Russian, and Spanish languages.

Clark County CDR recommends that our local pregnancy and birth providers utilize the multi-lingual materials we are providing, and we hope they will be inspired and feel empowered to take further steps in providing enhanced, effective safe sleep education to their providers and patients. We advise birth centers and providers to include these educational materials during pre-natal, birth visit, or post-partum education. We encourage safe sleep to be discussed separate from other high volumes of information, in the primary language of all caregivers present, and that materials are sent home in the languages of any potential caregivers at home.

This information is best delivered through a conversation with the parents, to best understand their initial plans and values, and to personalize advice given. Whenever possible, education should be done in the primary language of the person receiving it. If there is an opportunity to connect with additional caregivers as well (for example at home visits or if they come to the facility), this can increase the chances of safe sleep practices being applied (Edison et al., 2020). In addition to fundamental parent and caregiver education, research indicates that interactions such as 15-minute sessions discussing parental concerns, viewing informational videos, providing cribs or mobile sleep services, and raising their perception of risk and harm decreases sleep-related risk factors (Moon et al., 2016). Every infant is potentially at risk, and helping parents and caregivers understand that is important for retention and implementation from the educational messages.

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<sup>1</sup> Cribs for Kids: Helping every baby sleep safer, <https://cribsforkids.org/>

<sup>2</sup> *Safe to Sleep*, NICHHD, <https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/>

## What are some ways to implement improvements?

The CDR team's scope is limited to providing recommendations and helping make connections to organizations or individuals that can provide technical assistance or partnership opportunities. It is up to the organizations to decide how they will adapt their practice to improve safe sleep practices. The tools we are providing are best applied if the topic of safe sleep is thoughtfully and strategically approached. We have included some suggestions for your consideration, to help get you started.

- Review your organization's policies regarding safe sleep education for pregnant or post-partum mothers. Is there a protocol or standard for what education is given regarding safe sleep, or how it is delivered? Is it enforced? How are cultural differences addressed?
- Create or modify patient education policies to provide education in alignment with these recommendations.
- Review NICHQ's *Successful Strategies Hospitals Can Use to Support Safe Sleep*, and *Promising Practices for Eliminating Disparities in Sleep-Related Infant Deaths* (see references).
- Consider including a video component in safe sleep education and take-home materials.
- If you require the *Period of PURPLE Crying* video or curriculum, treat safe sleep education with the same diligence.
- Incorporate safe sleep education in pre-natal or post-partum visits as a standard.
- Become a certified Safe Sleep Hospital<sup>3</sup>, joining over 350 other hospitals in the US.

## Resources

### Videos

- *Safe Sleep for Your Baby*, NICHD (English and Spanish)  
<https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/resources/caregivers/videos>
- *Safe Infant Sleep for Grandparents and Other Trusted Caregivers*, NICHD (English and Spanish)  
<https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/resources/caregivers/grandparents>
- *Safe Sleep Baby - Alone, Back, Crib. Always!*, First 5 Sacramento Commission  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O8sJLa75Dk>
- *SLEEP SAFE. Alone. Back. Crib. No exceptions.*  
B'more for Healthy Babies videos (they also have PSAs for fathers and caretakers)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJw8Crpl7bw>

### Provider Training Tools

First Candle Straight Talk for Infant Safe Sleep – train-the-trainer curriculum:

<https://firstcandle.org/straight-talk-for-safer-sleep/>

Safe Sleep Cribs for Kids Ambassador -- training materials for individuals, teams, or organizations:

<https://cribsforkids.org/safe-sleep-ambassador/>

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<sup>3</sup> The National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program, <https://cribsforkids.org/hospitalcertification/>

## References

- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2016, November). SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2016 Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment. *Pediatrics*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2938>
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