

What Community Non-Profit & Service Agencies Need to Know About Safe Sleep

By working for or volunteering at a community agency that provides for families in need, you come in contact with many families who face challenges that can be overwhelming at times. When a new baby enters the picture, although it is a joyous occasion, sometimes it adds to the family's stress. You can help these families by being sure they know the steps to keeping their baby safe in two critical areas: Safe Sleep and prevention of abusive Head Trauma (Shaken Baby Syndrome.)

Why is Safe Sleep Important?

Sleep-related deaths are the major cause of death in infants between one month and one year of age. In Kentucky, every five days there is another baby who dies from unsafe sleep. Over half of these are sharing a bed with an adult. Others die sleeping in something not designed for infant sleep (soft bedding, recliner, swing, etc.) Most of these deaths are preventable. Currently in Kentucky, a baby is 70 times more likely to die from unsafe sleep than from a motor vehicle collision.



ALONE

Stay Close,
Sleep Apart



BACK

On their Back for
Nights and Naps



CRIB

Clean, Clear Crib



DANGER

Be Aware,
Not Impaired

What to Do

Families can decrease the chances of their baby dying from SIDS by following the ABC's of Safe Sleep:

- Babies need their own Safe Sleep Space. A crib, bassinet or pack & play with a firm mattress (one designed for that device) and a snug fitting crib sheet.
- Babies should always sleep alone and close to their parents by sharing a room, but not the bed. Sharing a bed with a sleeping adult puts the baby at high risk for suffocation or overlay.
- Babies should always sleep on their back for every sleep period, both naps and nights.
- The crib, bassinet, or pack & play should not have anything in it but the baby—no added soft bedding, blankets, pillows, bumper pads or toys.
- Babies should use a footed sleeper, infant sleep sack, or gown for added warmth if needed.
- Babies should never be around cigarette smoke, even e-cigarettes.



- Drinking and drug use (even some prescription drugs) impair one's ability to care for a baby, making bed-sharing and other unsafe sleep even more dangerous for the baby. In Kentucky's child abuse deaths, this a common finding among infant deaths. Be sure to counsel families in which there is substance abuse to always follow the ABC's and that they understand the potential consequences of not following them.

When you work with families that have a baby (any baby less than 1 year old), specifically ask, "Where does your baby sleep?" Discuss why the ABC's (Alone, Back, Crib) of Safe Sleep are important. If they don't have a crib or other Safe Sleep Space, you can check with Cribs for Kids at cribsforkids.org/find-a-chapter or call your local health department. If the family has a crib, check the safety of the crib on the Consumer Product safety website: cpsc.gov/cribs. You may also want to provide things for families like footed sleepers and infant sleep sacs. Tell them not to buy bumper pads or other soft items for the crib.

Other Dangers

Sometimes babies cry without reason, especially in the first 2-4 months of life. This can be nerve-wracking for even the best of parents, and families under stress may find it even harder to tolerate. When the caregiver gets frustrated, there are steps to take to avoid the impulse to shake a baby to calm the crying. No matter how frustrated, a caregiver should NEVER, NEVER, NEVER shake a baby! This can cause brain damage, and even death.

Educate families on the things that can trigger abusive head trauma and how to avoid it. To keep the baby safe when they cry continuously and won't sleep, the caregiver should:

- Check to see if the baby is hungry, tired or needs changing
- Cuddle the baby
- Walk and sing with the baby
- Take the baby outside for a walk (weather permitting)
- Give the baby a warm bath
- Call a friend or family member to come watch the baby
- Talk with the baby's doctor
- NEVER, NEVER, NEVER shake the baby

Babies totally rely on adults for their safe care. A baby may not stop crying no matter what is tried. No matter how frustrated a caregiver gets, they should NEVER shake a baby. If a caregiver needs to take time to calm themselves, the baby should be placed in their Safe Sleep Space using the ABC's (Alone, on their Back and in a Crib) and check on them every 15 minutes.

More Information

Free Safe Sleep information for families can be obtained at The National Safe to Sleep Campaign at safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov or the Safe Sleep Kentucky website at SafeSleepKY.org.

If you would like more information for families on prevention of pediatric abusive head trauma, contact us at SafeSleepKY@ky.gov or Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky at pcaky@pcaky.org.



From the Kentucky Department for Public Health
visit safesleepky.org for more information