

## What Home Visitors Need to Know About Safe Sleep



### **ALONE**

Stay Close,  
Sleep Apart



### **BACK**

On their Back for  
Nights and Naps



### **CRIB**

Clean, Clear Crib



### **DANGER**

Be Aware,  
Not Impaired

When your work with families includes visiting in the home, the Home Visitor has a unique opportunity to help families minimize the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) for their baby. Unlike other providers, you are in the home and can see where the infant is sleeping and under what conditions. You can easily teach your families about the ABCs of Safe Sleep.

Before the baby is born, discuss the ABCs of Safe Sleep with families so they can prepare, find an appropriate crib, and not waste money on items that are not recommended for safe sleep. After the baby is born, you should ask to see where the baby sleeps and be sure it is appropriate (see handout: [“What does Safe Sleep Look Like”](#).) The baby should have their own bed (crib, bassinet, or pack & play) that is in good shape. Be sure the family is putting the baby down to sleep on their Back in a clean, clear Crib. For free handouts to provide to the family to reinforce safe sleep messages, go to [SafeSleepky.org](#), or [safesleep.nichd.nih.gov](#).

### **Why is this important?**

Sleep-related deaths are the major cause of death in infants between 1 month to 1 year of age.

In Kentucky, every 5 days there is another baby who dies from unsafe sleep. Over half of these are sharing a bed with an adult, and others are sleeping in something not designed for infant sleep (soft, recliner, swing, etc.). Most of these deaths are preventable. Currently in KY, a baby is 70 times more likely to die from unsafe sleep than from a motor vehicle collision.

### **Recommendations for 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, without any added soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads, or toys.
- Babies should always sleep alone. Babies should sleep close to their parents by sharing a room, but not the bed. Sharing a bed with a sleeping adult puts the baby at a high risk for suffocation or overlay.



- Babies should always sleep on their back for every sleep period, both nights and naps.
- Babies should use a footed sleeper, infant sleep sac or gown for added warmth if needed.
- 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 families where there is substance abuse are counseled to always follow the ABCs.
- Babies need "Tummy Time" every day, while they are awake and an adult is watching them. This helps with muscle development when awake, not for sleep!
- Babies should NOT be placed on their side or stomach to sleep. This has been proven to be very dangerous and raises the likelihood of SIDS.
- Babies should never be around cigarette smoke, including e-cigarettes.
- Avoid overheating the baby. If the caregiver is comfortable, baby needs no more than one layer more than the adults in the room.
- Never have the baby share a bed with another adult or child. Especially someone who has been using alcohol or drugs, even if the drugs are by prescription.

#### **Things for Families to Avoid:**

- Babies should not sleep in car seats, swings, infant seats or other items not designed for infant sleep.
- The baby's crib should not have bumper pads, blankets, pillows, toys, or other items in the crib. These things are hazards and increase the risk of suffocation.
- **An adult bed is never a safe place for an infant to sleep.** Neither on a couch, recliner, or chair, with or without another person.

Be sure the families you work with have a safe sleep space for their baby—and that they use it correctly. Baby should always sleep Alone, on their Back, and in a clean, clear Crib (bassinet or pack & play). The only thing that can be in the bed with the baby is a pacifier (after breastfeeding is established).

Free information for families can be obtained at: The National Safe to Sleep Campaign [www.safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov) or Safe Sleep Kentucky Campaign [SafeSleepky.org](http://SafeSleepky.org).

#### **Other Resources:**

If families you work with don't have a crib or other Safe Sleep Space, you can check with the nearest Cribs for Kids program at [www.cribsforkids.org/find-a-chapter/](http://www.cribsforkids.org/find-a-chapter/) or call your local health department.