



WHAT COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT & SERVICE AGENCIES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SAFE SLEEP



By working or volunteering at a community agency that provides for families in need, you come in contact with many families who may face overwhelming challenges. When a new baby enters the picture, it is a joyous occasion, but can add 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 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. Every year Maine babies die unexpectedly while sleeping. Over half of these are sharing a bed with an adult. Others die sleeping in something not designed for infant sleep (couch, soft bedding, recliner, swing, etc.) Most of these deaths are preventable. A baby is much more likely to die from unsafe sleep than from a motor vehicle collision.



ALONE

Share the room,
not the bed



BACK

On their back
for nights and naps



CRIB

Clean, clear crib



DANGER

Be aware, know the
dangers beyond the crib

WHAT TO DO

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

- Babies need their own Safe Sleep Space. A crib, bassinet or portable playard with a firm, flat 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 risk for suffocation or overlay.

- Babies should always sleep on their back for every sleep period, both naps and nights.
- The crib, bassinet, or portable playard 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 and vaping devices.
- 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. Be sure to counsel families in which there is substance use to always follow the ABCs and that they understand the risk of not following them.

When you work with families that have a baby less than 1 year old ask, “Where does your baby sleep?” Discuss why the ABCs (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/our-partners. 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 sacks. 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 hard for any parent, 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 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 shake the baby

Babies 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 ABCs (alone, on their back and in a crib) and check on them every 15 minutes.

Learn more at PurpleCrying.info.

