safe sleep heroes

toolkit for practitioners

First Year Cleveland
You can be a hero.

Too much is at stake to do otherwise.

Preventable, sleep-related deaths are the second leading cause of infant death in Cuyahoga County. Annually, we lose an average of 21 infants to preventable sleep-related death-- the equivalent of the number of children in a kindergarten classroom.

This toolkit includes resources for systems leaders, clinicians, social workers, community health workers, and other professionals operating in the spheres of public, population, maternal, and infant health. We also offer a Safe Sleep Heroes training, both online and in-person. For more information, contact Kathleen Newsome via email knewsome@metrohealth.org.

We are seeking a cultural shift in the ways we practice and talk about infant sleep. Safe sleep numbers have plateaued in recent years. It is time to change the ways we approach families and communities. Now is the time to innovate, for institutions and communities to work hand-in-hand to build a movement.

We are all in this together. Share these resources with colleagues and peers. There is a baby depending on it.
Safe Sleep Basics

Preventable, sleep-related deaths are the second leading cause of death for children under one year of age in Cuyahoga County. To learn even more about Safe Sleep, become a Safe Sleep Hero. Visit firstyearcleveland.org.
Safe sleep is easy as ABCD

A. Alone

- Nothing and no one else in the sleep space
- No toys or stuffed animals
- Baby should never sleep with parents, siblings, pets or anyone else

B. Back

- Baby should be placed to sleep on their back
- Babies are actually at less risk for choking on their backs than when on their stomachs
- Babies breathe easier when they are on their backs

C. Crib

- Baby should be in a naked crib with only a fitted sheet
- Never use other bedding or soft items like bumpers, sleep wedges, pillows, or blankets

D. Don't smoke

- Secondhand smoke increases the risk of sleep-related death
- Never smoke in a baby’s environment, even when they are awake!
Creating a Safe Sleep Environment

Crib Safety
- No drop sides, no gaps between the mattress and crib, no broken/loose parts.
- Sleep positioners (such as wedges) are not recommended.
- Be sure there is no loose bedding, toys, or any other items in baby's crib, or that could potentially fall into the crib.
- The only thing in the crib should be a fitted sheet and baby.
- Keep pets away from baby's sleeping area.
- If you have multiples, such as twins or triplets, each should use their own sleep surface.

Feeding Baby in Bed
- Be sure to place her on her back on her own separate surface once feeding is finished and if you are tired, do not feed the baby on a soft surface, such as a couch or chair. Babies can become wedged and suffocate in the gaps around cushions of a couch or chair, or on the person feeding him or her. A couch or chair can be one of the most dangerous places to fall asleep with your baby.

Other Tips
- Babies should not sleep with siblings, even toddlers, as the other child or may accidentally roll onto or reposition the baby.
- Mobiles should be removed from a sleeping area once a baby is rolling over. Try using them in a changing area or consider skipping altogether.
- Remember to share the room, not the bed!
In 2017

- 13 infants died from preventable, sleep related causes
- **All of these infants were surface sharing with at least one other person**
- **All of these infants had hazards in their sleep environment**
- 11 of the 13 had a crib or other safe sleep space available
- 12 of the 13 infants were African American
- 5 were sleeping either on their sides or stomachs; while 8 were sleeping on their backs, these infants were also surface sharing and had soft bedding in the sleep environment

In the past decade

- 203 infants have died from preventable, sleep related causes
- **All of these infants had hazards in their sleep environment**
- Nearly 2/3 (62%) of these infants were surface sharing with at least one other person
- 67% of these infants were exposed to secondhand smoke
- Nearly 75% of these infants had a crib or other safe sleep space available
- More than 3/4 (76%) of these infants were African American
- 66% of these deaths were in the City of Cleveland (n=134)
- Outside of Cleveland, the cities of East Cleveland, Euclid, and Maple Heights had the highest number of deaths (n=27)

Cleveland Neighborhoods Most Sleep Related Infant Deaths, 2008-2017 (n=134)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broadway-Slavic Village</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union-Miles</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collinwood-Nottingham</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenville</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kammis</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Safe Sleep Risks, 2008-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surface Sharing</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface/Environmental Hazard (soft bedding)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke Exposure</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Protecting Our Future 2017, Cuyahoga County Board of Health
Picturing Safe Sleep

Social media and marketing images too frequently normalize dangerous sleep environments for infants. The following information can help identify what to look for in order to design intentional public spaces promoting Safe Sleep.
Checklist for Safe Sleep Images

Baby
- is depicted alone
- is on his or her back
- has head and face uncovered
- is not on fuzzy or soft surface
- is not wearing loose mitts (unattached to clothing)
- if swaddled, baby should appear to be younger than two months and swaddle should be with a thin blanket, wrapped tightly and no higher than the shoulders
- if using a pacifier, it should be cordless and not attached to a stuffed animal or clothing
- is not wearing a non-medically necessary heart or breathing monitor
- is not depicted on an adult bed, sofa, chair, in baby sitting device such as a swing, or near electrical or drapery cords
- is within arm's reach of caregiver if depicted together, but never on same surface

Environment
- absolutely no blankets, quilts, pillows, bumper pads, sheepskin, padded surfaces, positioners, toys or stuffed animals
- surface should only be a firm mattress with a tight fitting sheet, never an adult bed, sofa, chair, baby sitting device such as a swing
- not near electrical or drapery cords, windows, crib mobile, canopy, or anything that could fall or be pulled into sleep space
- mattress should appear snug in crib or bassinet
- crib should have narrow slats, with no drop sides
- nothing should be hung from or tied to the crib
- if baby appears old enough to sit up or stand, the crib should be at its lowest level

- Have someone review all images of sleeping infants in your work environment and on marketing materials to promote safe sleep
- Use your voice! Call out unsafe sleep images when you see them used for marketing or on other materials
- Ask caregivers to identify the components of a safe sleep environment: Use ABCD

Where to Find Safe Sleep Images

It can feel as though finding images of infants sleeping safely or in safe sleep environments is harder than finding a needle in a haystack—trust us, we've tried. But it is not impossible.

Some reliable resources for safe sleep images are:

**National Institute for Children's Health Quality**
Safe Sleep and Breastfeeding Image Gallery
[Link]

**Safe to Sleep**
Downloadable and shareable media files and images from National Institutes of Health
[Link]

**Ohio Department of Health**
Downloadable and shareable media files and images from the Ohio Department of Health
[Link]

Contact First Year Cleveland for other Safe Sleep images featuring diverse environments, infants, and families.
Discussing Safe Sleep

It can be difficult to know where to begin talking about Safe Sleep. This guide was designed to provide a few conversation starters and talking points.
Culture

To address cultural norms which promote keeping babies warm, using soft and fluffy items in the sleep environment, or co-sleeping, community partnership is key. Safe sleep champions who are trusted community members are better able to spread the message. Provide these champions with evidence, empower them to work in their communities.

Before telling families not to co-sleep, ask why a family would prefer to co-sleep.

Stomach Sleepers

If a parent or caregiver mentions that their child only sleeps or sleeps better on their stomach, first, acknowledge their frustration. Give them resources about safe sleep, soothing their baby, and other helpful strategies. Explain that the risk is not something that their baby becomes immune the more frequently he or she sleeps on their stomach.

It Takes a Village

Think beyond parents. Other caregivers and people who influence the ways babies are put to sleep include grandparents, siblings, aunts, babysitters, and child-care providers. Nearly everyone knows a baby, encourage others to talk to the people they know about the ABCDs of Safe Sleep.

Bedsharing

For committed co-sleepers, it is important to acknowledge that there are instances where people have co-slept with their infant and those infants survived—but there are many families for whom that has not been the case. Just like car seats and seatbelts, we know that Safe Sleep saves lives. Parents and caregivers want to do what is best for their baby. We have better information now and we hope they will choose to act on it. When you know better, you do better.
• “Every nap and night time is an opportunity!”

• “I see you’re setting up the crib (or bassinett, Pack and Play, etc.) Have you heard about the ABCDs of Safe Sleep?”

• “I know it is hard, but your baby is worth it.”

• “Being a parent is full of worries, but here is something that might make it easier. Just remember ABCD!”

• “I heard a catchy way to remember Safe Sleep for babies—ABCD!”

• “These sleep sacks are so cute. Did you know they’re part of Safe Sleep recommendations?”

• “Safe sleep can be hard, but I know where you can find some tools!”

• "Have you had any issues with practicing the ABCDs of Safe Sleep?"

• "What questions and concerns do you have about Safe Sleep with your baby?"

• "Let's talk about a plan for handling sleep challenges, to make sure you and your baby are sleeping safely."

• "Let's talk about what support you need for Safe Sleep challenges."
Resources

Improving Infant Safe Sleep Conversation webinar presented by NICHQ
Role playing exercises to engage families from diverse background in conversations about safe sleep.
Link

National Action Partnership to Promote Safe Sleep Improvement and Innovation Network (NAPPSS-IIN)
Includes an organizational self-assessment and a safe sleep and breastfeeding image gallery.
Link

Safe Sleep Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN) to Reduce Infant Mortality
Active in Arkansas, Mississippi, New York, and Tennessee, this network is testing evidence-based strategies and quality improvement methods. This group builds on the original NICHQ-led Infant Mortality CoIIN, which concluded in 2017.
Link

How Safe Sleep Savvy Are You? Teaching tool
Link

American Academy of Pediatrics Healthy Child Care Portal
Link

American Academy of Pediatrics, Ohio Chapter's Injury Prevention Safe Sleep Collaborative
Web-based learning collaborative that includes screening tools for birth-4 months and 6-12 months, and recommended talking points.
Link

National Institutes of Health Safe to Sleep Campaign
Includes their own toolkit, campaign materials, publications, and shareable images.
Link

First Year Cleveland provides these links as a resource, and does not claim any ownership of these resources. These resources are provided for informational purposes and does not imply endorsement of any organization, person, or product.
The Safe Sleep Toolkit is provided for education and informational purposes only and does not constitute providing medical advice or professional services. The information is provided on an “as-is” basis and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health condition. Individuals seeking medical advice should establish a patient-provider relationship with a licensed health care provider and follow up with that particular provider. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information at the time of original publication, The MetroHealth System and First Year Cleveland do not accept any liability, with respect to loss, damage, injury or expense arising from any such errors or omissions in the contents of the Safe Sleep Toolkit, or from any individual or entity’s use, viewing or reliance upon the Safe Sleep Toolkit or its content information in any manner.