



For Immediate Release

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State Launches Safe Sleep Awareness Campaign

47 infants died in 2013 in an Unsafe Sleep Environment in Maricopa County

PHOENIX (Aug. 18, 2015) — Today, in response to an alarming number of infant deaths related to unsafe sleep environments, state and county officials launched a new campaign to educate parents on the ABCs of Safe Sleep: **A**lone, on their **B**acks, in a **C**rib.

“For the last two and a half years, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) has been working closely with the Safe Sleep Task Force Task Force which includes partners such as the March of Dimes, the Arizona Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics, Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) and many other organizations who are committed to impacting this preventable issue,” said Dr. Cara Christ, director of ADHS. “Today’s campaign is just a small piece of the Task Force’s overall effort to reach out to parents, hospitals and caregivers to ensure that safe sleep is being discussed before and after birth.”

In 2013, 74 infants in Arizona died suddenly and unexpectedly, often referred to as SUID (sudden unexpected infant death). The cause of death in 64 of these tragedies occurred while the infant was sleeping in an unsafe sleeping environment. This year, Maricopa County studied its 2013 infant deaths and discovered 47 infants under the age of one died in an unsafe sleep environment.

Furthermore, Maricopa County’s study found that of the 47 infant deaths in 2013:

- Most of these babies were exposed to tobacco before or after birth.
- Almost half were sleeping with another person when they died.
- About half of these babies were not put to sleep on their back.
- African American infants are twice as likely to be affected.

“The saddest part of this study is that the majority of these babies that were put to sleep in an unsafe sleep environment actually did have a bassinet, crib or play pen available,” said Dr. Bob England, director of Maricopa County Public Health. “This is why we all believe that a little education will go a long way in reducing these deaths.”

The Academy of Pediatrics offers clear [recommendations to parents](#) on how to reduce the chance of SUIDs. These include always placing a baby on his/her back for every sleep time and always using a firm sleep surface such as a crib with firm mattress, bassinet or a portable crib (i.e. Pack n Play). The baby should sleep in the same room as the parents, but not in the same bed (room-sharing without bed-

sharing). Also, keep soft objects or loose bedding out of the crib. This includes pillows, blankets, and bumper pads. Wedges, “bumpers” and positioners should not be used.

Maricopa County District 4 Supervisor Clint Hickman was also on hand to raise awareness of this preventable issue and talked about how the County Medical Examiner (ME) actually brought it to his attention.

“The ME was noticing more and more of infant- associated deaths which they believed many could have been prevented if the parents were more aware of safe sleep practices. I was later informed of the important work being done by the Safe Sleep Task Force and wanted to lend my support,” said Supervisor Hickman.

He continued, “I believe this is a community issue and that we can all make an impact. My challenge to everyone is that if you know someone with a newborn, make sure they know the ABC’s of safe sleep.”

For more information, please visit SafeSleepAZ.org.

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MEDIA NOTE: USE THE FOLLOWING LINK TO ACCESS B-ROLL FOOTAGE IN SUPPORT OF THE SAFE SLEEP CAMPAIGN.

https://www.dropbox.com/s/9o906kwcau9pv60/ABCs_%20safe%20sleep%20broll.mp4?dl=0

Footage shows

- A mom taking items out of her crib environment to create a safe sleep environment
- Reading to her child in a chair with a book
- Placing the baby down to sleep, on his back, alone in a crib and Pack n Play

Footage provided by Maricopa County Public Health. Please call Courtney Kreuzwiesner at 602-540-5473 if link does not work.