



Department of  
Health



Office of Children  
and Family Services

September 11, 2023

Dear Provider:

In New York State (NYS), about 120 babies die each year (approximately two babies per week) from sleep-related incidents<sup>i</sup>, and many of these deaths are preventable. To reduce the occurrence of sleep-related infant deaths, the New York State (NYS) Department of Health (Department) and NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) encourage you to continue to emphasize infant safe sleep practices in the caregiver education you provide, including discussion of those risk factors associated with sudden unexpected infant death (SUID).

In 2022, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome released [updated safe-sleep guidelines](#)<sup>ii</sup> for the first time since 2016. The updated guidelines are more specific and meant to clarify earlier recommendations. Below is a summary of what is new in the updated guidelines.

- Share your room, NOT your bed, with baby for six months. While some parents may find bed sharing preferable, the evidence is clear that bed sharing increases the risk of a baby's injury or death.
- Inclined sleepers of any kind are not acceptable for sleep. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has a [new rule banning certain types of inclined sleepers](#).<sup>iii</sup>
- Swaddling is fine for sleep but should be discontinued with the first signs of rolling over.
- Avoid weighted blankets, weighted swaddles, or weighted sleep sacks.
- Keep pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals, blankets, and any other types of soft bedding out of baby's bed.
- Do not use car seats, bouncers, strollers, carriers, swings, or slings for naps or nighttime sleep. If a baby falls asleep in one of these, the baby should be transferred to a crib or bassinet as soon as possible.
- Heart rate monitors and pulse oximeters are not recommended due to false alarms and concern that they may provide parents with a false sense of safety.

Educational materials developed by the Department and OCFS urge caregivers to "Follow the ABCS of Safe Sleep." The message is: Babies should sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, in a safe **C**rib, and in a **S**moke-free home. A 2019 study in *Pediatrics* estimated that 22% of SUID cases in the United States can be directly attributed to maternal smoking during pregnancy. The study concluded, "if no woman smoked in pregnancy, SUID rates in the United States could be reduced substantially."<sup>iv</sup> In response, the Department and OCFS incorporated the **S** into the ABCs message, to emphasize the importance of a smoke-free home in preventing sleep-related deaths. Additionally, the Department offers a variety of [smoking cessation](#)

[programs](#) for pregnant women. The “ABCs” message is a simple and effective way to introduce safe sleep to parents and caregivers, and research shows the more frequently caregivers hear about safe sleep practices, the more likely they are to adopt them.

Your role in providing infant safe sleep education to caregivers early and often and supporting patients with smoking cessation, is critical to reducing infant mortality. Our vision is that every child in NYS will have the opportunity to reach their first birthday and grow up healthy. Please help make this vision a reality by modeling infant safe sleep and sharing safe sleep materials and education at every opportunity.

The materials developed by the Department, available in English and up to twelve additional languages, are available for your use. Please visit [Safe Sleep for Baby](#) to download and print a brochure to share with the families you serve and to review the list of infant safe sleep resources available to order. Select materials (i.e., magnets, mirror clings, posters, crib cards, coloring sheets, etc.) may be ordered free of charge by completing the [publication request form](#). Additional safe sleep materials are available on the [OCFS website](#).

If you have questions, please email [NYSPQC@health.ny.gov](mailto:NYSPQC@health.ny.gov). Thank you for your commitment to New York’s families.

Sincerely,



James V. McDonald, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner  
New York State Department of Health



Suzanne Miles-Gustave, Esq.  
Acting Commissioner/Executive Deputy  
Commissioner  
New York State Office of Children and  
Family Services

---

<sup>i</sup> New York State Department of Health (2022). Infant Mortality in New York State, 2016-2019. Albany, NY.

<sup>ii</sup> AAP Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Committee on Fetus and Newborn. Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment. *Pediatrics*. 2022; 150 (1): e2022057990.

<sup>iii</sup> Consumer Product Safety Commission Rule Banning Inclined Infant Sleep Products. June 23, 2022. [Trumka-Infant-Sleep-Rule-6-23-22.pdf](#)

<sup>iv</sup> Anderson TM, Lavista Ferres JM, Ren SY, Moon RY, Goldstein RD, Ramirez JM, Mitchell EA. Maternal Smoking Before and During Pregnancy and the Risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death. *Pediatrics*. 2019 Apr;143(4):e20183325.