

What DCBS Workers 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

As a DCBS worker, you work with families who are overburdened and have many challenges. Bringing a new baby home, although a joyful time, may also add to the family's stress. It is very important to the baby's safety that you educate your families with a new baby on preventing infant injury and even deaths. The two most common areas to emphasize are Safe Sleep and Prevention of Abusive Head Trauma.

Sleep-related deaths are the major cause of death in infants 1 month to 1 year of age. Many of these deaths are preventable by following the ABC's of 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.
- Babies should always sleep **ALONE**. Babies should sleep close to their parent by sharing a room, but not the bed. Sharing a bed with a sleeping adult puts the baby at high risk for suffocation or overlay.
- Babies should always be on their **BACK** for every sleep period, both nights and naps.

- The **CRIB** (includes a bassinet or pack & play) should not have anything in it but the baby – no added soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads or toys.
- Babies should always 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 the infant deaths. Be sure families where there is substance abuse are counseled to always follow the ABCs and that they understand the potential consequences of not following them.

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 are a couch, recliner, or chair, with or without another person.
- 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, the 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 You Can Do

Talk to your families and specially ask “Where does your child sleep?” Discuss why the ABC’s (Alone, Back, Crib) of safe sleep are important.

- Use the [“What does Safe Sleep Look Like?” Handout](#) and explain the **ABC’s of Safe Sleep**: Baby should always sleep **Alone**, on their **Back**, and in a clean, clear **Crib** (bassinet or pack & play).
- If families you work with don’t have a crib or other Safe Sleep Space, you can check with the nearest Cribs or Kids program at www.cribsforkids.org/find-a-chapter/ or call your local health department. If the family has a crib check the safety of the crib on the [Consumer Product Safety website](http://www.cpsc.gov/cribs): www.cpsc.gov/cribs.
- Drinking and drug use (even some prescription drugs) can impair a person’s ability to care for a baby. Counsel your families about this.

Educate your families on the things that can trigger abusive head trauma and how to avoid it.

To keep your baby safe when your baby won’t sleep and cries continuously, 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 to the baby’s doctor
- NEVER, NEVER, NEVER shake a baby.

Babies rely totally 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 a time-out to calm themselves, the baby should be placed in their Safe Sleep Space using the ABC’s (Alone, on their Back and in a Crib) and checked on every 15 minutes.

Free Safe Sleep information for families can be obtained at **The National Safe to Sleep Campaign**: safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov or the **Safe Sleep Kentucky Campaign**: SafeSleepky.org

If you would like information for families on prevention of pediatric abusive head trauma, another place where education families can save lives, contact us at SafeSleepKY@ky.gov or Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky at pcaky.org



From the Kentucky Department for Public Health
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