



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BABY SAFETY – A PARTNERSHIP

Safe Kids Kansas Reminds Parents: Talk to All Child Caregivers about Safe Sleep

September is Baby Safety Month, and Safe Kids Kansas reminds parents, child care providers, relatives, babysitters and all caregivers to make sure infant sleep environments are safe during every sleep period, both at home and away from home. Infants should be placed to sleep on their back, alone in a crib, with no soft objects or loose bedding

Communication regarding infant care practices at home and away from home can reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), as well as unintentional suffocation and strangulation. Two way communication between parents and caregivers, such as relatives and child care providers, regarding safe sleep practices may very well save a child's life. This important conversation needs to take place before the very first day the child is in cared for by the relative, babysitter, or child care provider and should be reinforced by both the parent and other providers on a regular basis. Information collected by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) on infant deaths in child care reveals that infants who died in child care during calendar year 2007 or at a relative's home were not consistently placed on their backs in an approved crib or playpen. Rather, they were placed to sleep on their stomach or side and/or placed on a soft surface, such as an adult bed or other infant seat or in a baby seat instead of in an approved crib or playpen. Infants should also be supervised during their rest periods and regularly checked while napping.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), two-thirds of U.S. infants younger than 12 months are in nonparental child care, such as in day care or in the care of a relative. Infants of employed mothers spend an average of 22 hours each week in child care, and 32 percent of infants are in child care full-time. Many parents may not be aware that according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), in the U.S. approximately 20 percent of SIDS deaths occur while the infant is in the care of a nonparental caregiver.

Unaccustomed sleep position is also an issue. The AAP states parents and child care providers need to be aware that infants normally placed to sleep on their backs, who are then placed to sleep on their stomachs to sleep, are as much as 18 times more likely to die from SIDS. The safest way for an infant to sleep, whether at night or during the day, is on his or her back, in an

approved crib or playpen, with no soft bedding or pillows. Infants who are regularly placed to sleep on their stomachs have a five times greater risk of dying, according to the AAP.

"Fortunately, educating both parents, relatives, and child care providers and improving the communication between these groups has the potential to save many young lives," said Jan Stegelman, Coordinator, Safe Kids Kansas. "Safe Kids Kansas, in partnership with a task force of child care and health organizations, is making available a tip sheet and numerous resources about safe sleep in child care for parents and caregivers, relatives, and child care providers at www.kansassafekids.org. Every person taking care of an infant needs to remember the ABC's of safe infant sleep: always place your infant Alone, on their Back, in a Crib."

Kristi Vogt, a parent of twin boys in Olathe, KS and Tiffany Mannes, a child care provider in Overland Park, KS know how important good communication is. "Communicating with my child care provider about safe sleep makes me worry less about my child's safety," said Vogt.

"SIDS can occur in child care just like it can occur at home. Therefore, I always place the children in my care on their back, alone in a crib to help protect them," said Mannes. "I also talk to the parents to make sure they are following safe sleep practices at home."

In addition to educating parents, relatives, and child care providers about safe sleep, Safe Kids Kansas is calling on state governmental leaders to make safe child care initiatives a priority. This includes support for an initiative to redesign the Kansas child care licensing system to meet the needs of children and families in the 21st century. While many health departments provide child care providers with SIDS information and guidance on safe sleep practices throughout the licensing process, one of the issues that must be addressed is the complete review and revision of the current child care regulations and policies, including those addressing safe sleep for infants.

"We know more about protecting our children now than we did 20 years ago," said Jeffrey Colvin, M.D., pediatrician and Safe Kids Kansas spokesperson member. "Regulations that adequately protect our children and assure that child care providers have the most current and correct information are crucial to improving the quality of child care in our state."

The following guidelines about safe sleep could have a major impact on children's safety:

- Child care providers are encouraged to develop a safe sleep policy and discuss it with all parents and staff before the first day of care.
- Healthy infants should always be placed on their back to sleep, unless a physician advises otherwise. Babies who usually sleep on their backs and then are suddenly placed on their stomachs to sleep are 18 times more likely to die of SIDS.
- Place infants in a crib or playpen that meet current safety standards (Check for recalls at www.recalls.gov). The mattress should be on a firm and tight-fitting mattress covered by a tight-fitting sheet. Do not use old, broken or modified cribs; regularly tighten hardware to keep sides firm.
- Remove all bedding bumpers, stuffed animals, toys, or other objects from the infant's sleep area. Do not use sleep positioning devices or blankets.

- Make sure nothing is covering the infant's face or head.
- Sleep only one infant baby per crib. Ideally, the room temperature should be approximately 68 to 72 degrees to avoid overheating the infant.
- Do not allow smoking around infants.
- Use clothing designed for sleep, such as a one-piece sleeper, instead of a blanket. The safest sleepwear is a snug-fitting garment made of 100 percent polyester or labeled as flame resistant.
- Ensure that children in child care are within hearing distance at all times and visually checked every 10-15 minutes. Do not rely solely on a baby monitor. Child care providers should be very cautious about placing infants in a back bedroom or basement with the door shut.

Baby Safety Month is an annual observance led by the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association since 1991. The theme of this year's program is "Baby Safety – A Partnership," is a reminder that baby safety is a shared responsibility of product manufacturers, retailers, health care providers, child advocacy organizations, government agencies and the community at large as well as parents and caregivers. For more information about safe sleep visit www.kansassafekids.org.

Safe Kids Kansas, Inc. is a nonprofit Coalition of 67 statewide organizations and businesses dedicated to preventing accidental injuries to Kansas children ages 0-14. Local coalitions and chapters are located in Allen, Anderson, Atchison, Clay, Coffey, Dickinson, Doniphan, Douglas, Elk, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Franklin, Geary, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Labette, Leavenworth, Marion, Marshall, McPherson, Meade, Mitchell, Montgomery, Osage, Pottawatomie, Republic, Rice, Riley, Saline, Smith, Shawnee, Wilson and Woodson Counties, as well as the cities of Chanute, Emporia, Leavenworth, Pittsburg, the Wichita Area and the Metro Kansas City Area. Safe Kids Kansas a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury. The lead agency for Safe Kids Kansas is the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

www.kansassafekids.org

www.kansasboosterseat.org

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