Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition of Simcoe County
SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES FOR INFANTS

March 2020

WHAT?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is defined as the sudden death of an infant less than one year of age that remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including examination of the death scene, completion of an autopsy, and review of the clinical history" (Joint Statement on Safe Sleep Preventing Sudden Infant Deaths in Canada, Health Canada, 2018). While the rate of (SIDS) has declined in Ontario, it remains the second leading cause of death of healthy infants, with a higher rate amongst vulnerable populations. Current evidence demonstrates that unsafe infant sleep environments play a role in sudden infant deaths.

A recommendation from the coroner's report on the death of an infant in the local region recommended that the Coalition undertake an awareness campaign around safe sleep practices for infants.

SO WHAT?

Every baby deserves a safe place to sleep. Current evidence shows that factors associated with unsafe sleeping environments include infants sharing a sleeping surface with an adult or another child, and the presence of soft bedding. We need to ensure that when all children in our community are put to bed at night, they are not at risk.

Many vulnerable families that Coalition agencies work with, cannot afford the costs of cribs and crib mattresses for their infants. As a result, babies sleep on couches, adult beds, or in other inappropriate and unsafe sleeping arrangements.

By advocating for safe sleep practices and acknowledging that some families may need additional supports (i.e. financial) for creating optimal safe sleeping environments, we can help ensure every baby can be put safely to sleep in a crib, cradle or bassinet that meets current Canadian safety regulations.

We support the Health Canada Sleep Safe Baby Program. Safe sleep is as easy as A, B, C: Alone, Back, and Crib.

Evidence-based recommendations for reducing the risk of sleep-related deaths have been published, but some caregivers resist adoption of these recommendations. It is advised that a multiple interventions approach be taken to change infant sleep-related practices of parents and professionals.

Fast Facts

- Second leading cause of death of healthy infants
- Provide a smoke-free environment
- Breastfeeding can provide a protective effect
- Room-sharing in a crib, cradle or bassinet (not bed sharing) is recommended for the first six months of a baby's life
- Place a baby on back to sleep
- Sleep on a firm surface and no pillows, comforters
- Overheating baby is a risk factor, dress baby comfortably
- A,B,C: Alone, Back, Crib
- immunizing babies provides protection to fight of vaccine-preventable diseases and help them stay healthy

NOW WHAT?

AWARENESS METHODS

HEALTH MESSAGING – The goal of broad health messaging is to make it credible, feasible, and a priority. Members of the public are more likely to follow a health recommendation if they understand the rationale. The approach needs to answer questions that pose a barrier to adherence and provide messages that promote the realization that every infant is potentially at risk.

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SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES

PARENT/CAREGIVER EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS – Evidence suggests that parents/caregivers are more apt to adopt the behaviour changes if they have had their questions answered. Hosting in-person educational sessions allows for the sharing of information as well as the ability for participants to answer frequently asked questions about safe sleep practices. (e.g. won't they choke if they are lying on their back?) It is recommended that such education take place within natural gathering places and sessions (e.g. CAPC program, EarlyON program, library story time) or through virtual means and/or during interactions with service providers.

VIDEOS – Success Consider compelling videos featuring local parents who have lost babies while bed sharing, interspersed with additional information from parents and health professionals. Representing families from diverse backgrounds (e.g. socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, gender, ability, etc) also reinforces the idea that no infants are "immune" to SIDS and that safe sleep practices are relevant for all families. It is suggested that videos be shown to all parents/caregivers prenatally and soon after birth, for example, through pre-natal classes, in spaces where parents-to-be or parents of infants are likely to frequent, as well as on social media.

EDUCATION OF PROFESSIONALS – Establishing policies reflective of safe sleep best-practices and providing education for professionals who work with families are also important strategies. Healthcare professionals and childcare providers may have concerns similar to those expressed by parents, including concerns about the risk of aspiration or diminished sleep quality of infants when placed supine. Providing ongoing education and training can help increase professionals' knowledge of safe sleep practices, support consistency in messaging among providers, build skills for role modelling with families, and increase their overall confidence when speaking with parents about safe sleep.

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CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS – Another important approach is to utilize cultural traditions and social norms that are protective for health. There are a growing number of effective methods of safe sleep awareness that incorporate cultural norms and family traditions to encourage safe sleep practices. Examples include offering board books with stories that encompass safe sleep practices that can be read by new parents to their infants/childrent, offering a safe sleep baby shower gift list to be used for new parent gatherings, and engaging elders in Indigenous communities to provide information about safe sleeping practices through talking circles and traditional craft making.

The Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) Coalition of Simcoe County is a countywide alliance of organizations providing services to children, youth and their families in Simcoe County.

Vision

All children, youth and families thriving in a strong, nurturing community.

Mission

To maximize the capacity, effectiveness and cultural uniqueness of the child, youth and family service system through collective efforts.

www.simcoecountycoalition.ca

CYFS Member Agencies

Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle
Barrie Police
Barrie Public Library
Canadian Mental Health Association-Simcoe Branch
Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County
Catulpa Community Support Services
Child Advocacy Centre Simcoe/Muskoka
Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York
Community Connection/211 Central East Ontario
Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
Conseil scolaire Viamonde
County of Simcoe
CSC Chigamik CHC
Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services
E3 Community Services
EarlyON– Simcoe North
Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe County
Empower Simcoe
Georgian College
Gilbert Centre
Gilda's Club of Simcoe Muskoka
John Howard Society
Kerry's Place
Kinark Child and Family Services
La Clé d'la Baie en Huronie
Mackenzie Health
Morton Youth Services
New Path Foundation
New Path Youth and Family Services
NSM LHIN
Orillia Public Library
Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre
Seasons Centre for Grieving Children
Simcoe County District School Board
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions
United Way Simcoe Muskoka
Waypoint Centre for Mental Health
YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka
Youth Haven