

Parents Model Safer Infant Sleep Practices

Problem Overview

*The lives of many babies are cut tragically short by sleeping in an unsafe environment. In 2011, 131 infants died as a result of an unsafe sleep environment; this represents almost 20% of the total number of infant deaths in Tennessee. These deaths are preventable by following simple safe sleep guidelines. The primary message for parents and others who care for infants is to "**Remember the A-B-Cs of Safe Sleep.**" There are three critical measures to follow when it's time for an infant to sleep. "**A**" is for **Alone**: always let the baby sleep alone, never in a bed with another person where the baby could be smothered. "**B**" is for on the baby's **Back**; an infant should be placed to sleep on his or her back, not on his or her side or stomach. "**C**" is for **Crib**: always put your child to sleep in a crib with only a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet. In 2009, PRAMS data showed only 66% of mothers placed their baby to sleep on their back. PRAMS data support the need for increased education about infant sleep positioning and sleeping practices.*

Program Activity Description

The Tennessee Department of Health Developed the safe sleep campaign message in 2012. The campaign message continued to be promoted in the community during 2013. Posters, flyers and door hangers were developed and distributed to healthcare providers, daycare workers, Department of Children's Services and other community and state agencies. In addition, in 2013 cribs were ordered and made available at local health departments for families that could not afford one.

Hospitals were also targeted in 2013 and offered an incentive to create a safe sleep policy. Hospitals that create a policy received enough copies of the safe sleep board book "Sleep Baby Safe and Snug" for all of their births for the year. They also received a signed certificate from the Commissioner of Health, recognition on the TDH website and safe sleep educational materials. Almost 40 hospitals had already signed a pledge by the end of 2013 agreeing to create a safe sleep policy for their hospital.

Some of the funding for TDH safe sleep efforts comes from a CDC Core Violence and Injury Prevention Grant. One of the injury indicators we report on each year for this grant is the percent of mothers placing their baby to sleep on their back.

Program Activity Outcome

Over 80,000 pieces of educational materials were distributed to health care providers and caregivers throughout 2013. Presently, 37 birthing hospitals signed a pledge in 2013 to create a hospital safe sleep policy and we are still working to get more hospitals involved in 2014.