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October is Safe Sleep Awareness Month in Illinois

Health and Child Welfare Officials Gather at Memorial Medical Center to Remind Parents and Caregivers about the ABCs of Safe Sleep for Infants

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. --The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) and Memorial Medical Center have joined forces to kick off Safe Sleep Awareness Month in Illinois.

The month-long prevention and education campaign is aimed at reducing one of the leading causes of death for children ages one and younger – accidental sleep suffocation.

“Safe Sleep is all about the ABCs: Babies should always sleep Alone, on their Backs in a safe Crib in a Smoke-free Environment,” said DCFS Acting Director Bobbie Gregg. “We need the public’s help to spread the word about what a safe sleep environment looks like: a crib with a firm mattress covered by a tightly-fitted sheet and free of stuffed animals, toys, blankets, bumpers and all other potential hazards.”

“Providing a safe sleep environment is key in reducing the risk of SIDS and accidental suffocation,” said IDPH Director Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck. “The latest statistics show SIDS is the fifth leading cause of infant death in Illinois with 40 infant deaths in 2011. During Safe Sleep Month, I encourage not only parents, but anyone who takes care of infants, including grandparents, family members, friends and babysitters, to learn about the importance of back sleeping and the dangers of sharing a bed. These simple steps can help save the lives of infants everywhere.”

“The ABC approach to safe sleeping should begin in the hospital and continue into the home,” said DHS Acting Associate Director for Family Wellness and Chief of the Bureau of Maternal and Infant Health Glendean M. Burton, RN, BSN, CRADC, MPH. “Illinois is a member of the national Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (COIIN) striving to improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality through focus on key impacts, such as the sleep environment. By January 2016, we hope to have standardized policies on Safe Sleep education in every birthing and pediatric hospital, an education toolkit that can be used across an array of public health programs and assure that every substitute caregiver for DCFS-involved families has received

comprehensive education related to Safe Sleep education, as well as have a statewide Safe Sleep public awareness campaign developed.”

“Safe sleep awareness is an important focus during the education of patients and families at Memorial Medical Center’s Family Maternity Suites. Education on safe sleep for infants begins during prenatal classes, continues throughout the postpartum period, and is reinforced by staff during the discharge process,” said Memorial Medical Center Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer Marsha Prater, PhD, RN. “Instruction on infant sleep positions and crib safety is crucial for parents, grandparents and daycare providers to lower the rate of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths.”

“As hospitals increasingly focus on population health, the Illinois Hospital Association (IHA) and the hospital community understand the critical need for one of our most vulnerable populations, our infants, to be placed in safe sleeping situations,” says Illinois Hospital Association President and CEO Maryjane Wurth. “IHA has been a partner with DCFS, and works to inform hospitals about crib product recall notices that can be posted in hospital locations visible to new parents before they go home with their infants.”

In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, follow these Safe Sleep recommendations:

- Infants should be placed on their backs to sleep.
- Use a firm sleep surface and firm mattress covered only with a fitted sheet.
- Remove soft objects and loose bedding from the crib, including all pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed toys, bumper pads or other soft objects.
- Don't smoke before or after your baby is born, and don't let others smoke around your baby.
- Avoid allowing baby to become overheated: Dress him/her lightly for sleeping, and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.
- Practice supervised “tummy time” while your baby is awake to build strong neck and shoulder muscles.

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