



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Adopt safe sleep practices for infants, ADPH urges

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health urges parents and caregivers to learn about the risk factors that lead to the sudden deaths of infants, especially during October, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Safe Sleep Awareness Month.

Every year in the United States, more than 3,500 otherwise healthy babies die suddenly and unexpectedly. The causes of these infant deaths are not immediately obvious following a complete investigation. Most of these infant deaths are full-term normal birth weight infants, according to the Alabama Department of Public Health's Center for Health Statistics. In 2013, 107 Alabama infants died from SIDS/ Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) and unsafe sleep-related causes.

In 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recorded more than 1,500 infant deaths from SIDS, the leading cause of death for babies 1 month to 1 year of age. The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that 50 to 60 percent of SIDS and SUID cases are from co-sleeping, unsafe sleeping, or accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed.

Parents and caregivers are reminded to follow key steps to reduce infant deaths from unsafe sleep-related causes. The ABCs to remember are as follows:

- **A**lone – always place baby in his or her own sleep space (room sharing without bed sharing)
- **B**ack – always place baby to sleep on his or her back (naptime and nighttime), not on side or stomach
- **C**rib – always place baby to sleep in a crib with a firm surface, free of bumper pads, pillows, toys, heavy blankets, or other people

The combined SUID death rate declined more than 50 percent following the release of the American Academy of Pediatrics safe sleep recommendations in 1992, the initiation of the Back to Sleep® campaign in 1994, and the release of the Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigation Reporting Form in 1996. However, the rate has reached a plateau in recent years. These infant deaths accounted for 20 percent of the total infant mortality rate in 2013 in Alabama.

The State Perinatal Program, in collaboration with national, state and local partners, is working to educate the public about ways to reduce the risks of SIDS/SUID and other unsafe sleep-related causes of infant death.

“We are extremely excited about the opportunity to work directly with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development *Eunice Kennedy Shriver Safe to Sleep*® campaign to develop Alabama’s Safe Sleep Outreach Project over the next three years,” states Amy Stratton, State Perinatal Program Director. A SIDS Sunday church program and community grants to address unsafe sleep are just a couple of the projects taking place because of the partnership.

Additionally, work is being conducted in Alabama with the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs to develop a Direct On Scene Education (DOSE) program. This program will train first responders to conduct safety checks when answering emergent and non-emergent calls in households where a pregnant woman or infant resides.

If in conducting the safety check, an unsafe sleep environment is identified, the first responder will provide a safe sleep kit with information on the ABCs of Safe Sleep. First responders have the unique opportunity to enter a home environment and assess risk factors that can contribute to SIDS, SUID, and unsafe sleep, potentially saving a life.

“Losing one infant from SIDS, SUID and unsafe sleep is one too many,” states Mrs. Stratton. “We can all help reduce the risk by remembering three simple things: Alone, Back and Crib.”

For additional information please visit:

- [adph.org/perinatal](http://adph.org/perinatal)
- <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/Sleep.cfm>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/SIDS/index.htm>
- <http://www.sidsalliance.org/>