

Talking with Parents and Caregivers About Safe Sleep

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUIDs) is the leading cause of death for infants one month to 1 year of age; this includes unsafe sleep-related deaths. This resource contains messaging that providers can use to engage parents and caregivers of infants in a conversation about safe sleep. The suggested language provides realistic and relevant advice on how to adopt safe sleep practices recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.¹



Sleep-Related Death in Delaware

When talking about safe sleep with parents and caregivers, frame messaging with salient data.

In Delaware, about one infant dies every month from unsafe sleep conditions.²

Infant deaths due to unsafe sleep are preventable.

The majority of sleep-related infant deaths in Delaware involve unsafe sleep practices (e.g., not sleeping alone, not sleeping on their back, not sleeping in a crib).²

Stressors (e.g., relationship, financial) increase the likelihood of unsafe sleep practices.³

Safe sleep practices can be improved. In 2019, only 1 in 3 parents reported using a separate approved sleep surface.³

The ABCs of Safe Sleep

ALONE

Babies sleep safely when they are **alone**, without other people and without soft bedding. Babies can share a room, but not a bed.

BACK

Babies sleep safely when they are placed on their **back** for every sleep.

CRIB

Babies sleep safely on a firm flat surface, such as a **crib** or Pack N'Play.



Communicating About the Importance of Creating a Safe Sleep Area

"The ABCs are an important way to help keep your baby alive and healthy."

↳ "What questions do you have about the ABC safe sleep guidelines?"

"When you put your baby to sleep, it is important to make sure that nothing can interfere with your baby's breathing and they are protected from dangers such as choking or suffocation."

↳ "Do you know about the ABCs for safe infant sleep? Could you tell me about your baby's sleep area?"

"It is important that you and caregivers of your baby follow the ABC guidelines **every single time** your baby goes to sleep, even if you or they are exhausted."

↳ "What would it be like for you to do this? Would you like to talk about ways to help you and caregivers of your baby follow the ABC guidelines?"

Discuss Creating A Support Plan

"Caring for your baby can be exhausting at times. When you are tired or feeling stressed, you may be less likely to put your baby to sleep safely. Creating a support plan means having a plan in place to call someone who can lend a hand and take care of your baby, even in the middle of the night, when you need a break."

↳ "Who in your life can you ask to be a part of your support plan? Let's make a plan for talking to them about this."

↳ "Remember, it is ok to ask for help. Having a support plan will keep your baby healthy and safe. How can we support you in developing this plan?"

i For more information and resources on safe sleep, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics web page at www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep

The following strategies can help providers engage parents and caregivers in client-centered counseling about safe sleep practices.

- Ask **open-ended questions** to allow parents to share thoughts, questions, and concerns.
- Respond to beliefs, feelings and questions in a manner that is **non-judgmental, respectful and demonstrates empathy**.
- **Engage in reflective listening** to understand parent preferences, needs and values and provide tailored and culturally responsive guidance on safe sleep practices.