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SIDS Awareness and Safe to Sleep Campaign

West Virginia, along with 20 other states, has been recognized by the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) as states with higher rates of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related causes of infant death. According to the most recent 2009 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), West Virginia has the third highest rate of SIDS and other sleep-related deaths in the country.

The Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health is adapting the new phase of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Back to Sleep Campaign which has been renamed the Safe to Sleep Campaign. The new campaign now encompasses all sleep-related, sudden unexpected infant deaths.

The NIH-led Back to Sleep Campaign began in 1994, to educate parents, caregivers, and health care providers about ways to reduce the risk of SIDS. The campaign name was derived from the recommendation to place healthy infants on their backs to sleep, a practice proven to reduce SIDS risk. SIDS is the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age that cannot be explained, even after a complete death scene investigation, autopsy, and review of the infant's health history. Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) includes all unexpected infant deaths: those due to SIDS, and those from other causes.

Many SUID cases are due to such causes as accidental suffocation and entrapment, such as when an infant gets trapped between a mattress and a wall, or when bedding material presses on or wraps around an infant's neck. In addition to stressing the placement of infants on their backs for all sleep times, the Safe to Sleep Campaign emphasizes other ways to provide a safe sleep environment for infants. This includes placing infants to sleep in their own separate sleep area and not in an adult bed, couch, futon, and without any soft bedding such as blankets or quilts. Safe to Sleep also emphasizes breast feeding infants when possible, which has been associated with reduced SIDS risk, and eliminating such risks to infant health as overheating, exposure to tobacco smoke, and a mother's use of alcohol and illicit drugs.

"Every ten days we have a sudden unexpected infant death with unsafe sleep conditions in West Virginia," said Joan Phillips, MD, FAAP, WV Child Fatality Review Team, Co-Director, Child Advocacy Center at CAMC, Clinical Director of Children's Services, Women's and Children's Hospital.

The NICHD's new brochure, *Safe Sleep for Your Baby*, provides more detailed information on ways that parents and caregivers can reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. A new one-page fact sheet, "What does a safe sleep environment look like," shows how to provide a safe sleep environment, and lists ways that parents and caregivers can reduce the risk for SIDS. The *Safe Sleep for Your Baby* new brochure is available for order at 1-800-

505-CRIB (2742) or at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS>. The new one-page fact sheet is available at http://nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs_details.cfm?from=&pubs_id=5795.

Additional information can also be found on the Office of Maternal, Child and Family website at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/mcfh> or by calling 1-800-642-8522.