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## **THIS YEAR ALONE, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS PROVIDED NEARLY 11K 'SAFE SLEEP TOOLKITS' TO NEW PARENTS**

*More Than 40 Infants in NYC Die Each Year From Preventable Unsafe Sleep Conditions; Toolkits Put "Safe Sleep" Resources Into the Hands of New Parents Before Even Leaving the Hospital*

NEW YORK, NY –Today, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and NYC Health + Hospitals announced that, as part of a new initiative, nearly 11,000 'Safe Sleep Toolkits' were distributed in 2019 to parents of newborns at 11 public hospitals citywide. The program, which launched in February, is part of an ongoing citywide effort to reduce preventable sleep-related deaths. Specifically, the toolkit contains a wearable blanket to keep the baby warm, infant onesie, netting and educational materials about breastfeeding and best practices for infant safe sleep.

On average, more than 40 babies a year in New York City die from a sleep-related injury; this represents almost one death every week. According to New York State, 47 percent of infant deaths across the state are attributable to unsafe sleeping practices. A sleep-related injury death is the sudden death of an infant less than 1 year old that occurs because of where and/or how they were placed to sleep.

Sleep-related infant injury death is not the same as SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) or "crib death." SIDS is the natural death of a baby that cannot be explained after a careful medical review of the case. Unlike SIDS, sleep-related infant injury deaths involve accidents that can be explained and are mostly preventable.

As part of practicing safe sleep, it is critical that parents avoid bringing babies or infants into their beds or placing loose blankets and other materials in the infant's crib or sleep area. These seemingly natural acts can be dangerous, and at worst can lead to suffocation. While these deaths touch all ethnicities, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds, communities with inequitable access to resources and opportunities are disproportionately affected.

The items in the Safe Sleep Toolkit were thoughtfully selected based on barriers to practicing safe sleep that parents and caregivers identified in focus groups convened by ACS and the Health Department. Those barriers included poor heating and pest infestations in the home. Parents disclosed that they often shared a bed with their babies as a protective measure. The toolkit addresses those concerns by providing netting to prevent insects from getting in the crib, and a wearable blanket to keep babies warm instead of using a loose blanket that can interfere with breathing. Additionally, parents of newborns at NYC Health + Hospitals are shown a brand new safe sleep educational video before being discharged. The educational video is included in

the toolkit as well. Working together with the Health Department, ACS launched the video to help debunk myths and misconceptions about sleep-related infant safety practices. [View the full video here.](#)

“Infant deaths related to unsafe sleep practices are preventable, and New York City is committed to educating families and caretakers about practices that can help keep babies safe. We are proud that, thanks to our partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals, nearly 11,000 new parents in 2019 were provided with safe sleep resources before even leaving the hospital. I strongly urge parents of infants citywide to practice the ABCs of Safe Sleep: infants should sleep alone, on their backs and in a safety-approved crib,” **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.**

“It takes an entire city to raise healthy and safe children and reducing preventable sleep-related fatalities is a public health issue,” said **Chief Medical Officer Machele Allen, MD, NYC Health + Hospitals.** “Through an integrated and collaborative approach in partnership with ACS and DOHMH, we continue to raise awareness, empower families, and ensure equitable access to life-saving information and resources to promote safe sleep and reduce infant injury. We’re proud to help families sleep easier knowing their newborns are sleeping more safely.”

In 2015, the City took an important step in expanding and energizing its work to improve infant safe sleep practice among New York City residents by creating a dedicated Safe Sleep Team with outreach members focused in neighborhoods in high risk areas. Additionally, together with its city and community partners, the Health Department has been making great strides to provide safe sleep education and resources – such as portable cribs, fitted sheets, crib netting, and wearable blankets – to parents, grandparents, child care providers, hospitals and shelters throughout the city through its Cribs for Kids Program, Katz’s Cradles Initiative, Champions Project, Family Wellness Suites, home visiting programs, and 311. The Health Department’s Newborn Home Visiting Program and Healthy Homes Program has also partnered with HPD and NYCHA to help families with infants to address environmental conditions in their homes, such as the presence of pests and lack of heat, with the support they need to address them.

ACS and H+H are reminding parents of newborns to practice the **ABCs of Safe Sleep**: Infants should sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, in a safety-approved **C**rib. Below are specific ways in which families can create a safe sleep environment:

- Avoid bringing the baby into bed with you, even if you think it will keep the baby warmer.
- A baby must never sleep in an adult bed, on a couch or on a chair with anyone. Babies may suffocate if another person accidentally rolls on top of them or covers their nose and mouth.
- Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any other items that could increase the risk of suffocation out of the baby’s sleep area. If parents are worried about their baby getting cold, dress them in a wearable blanket, such as a sleep sack, or in another layer of infant clothing.
- Place babies on their backs to sleep. Babies breathe better on their backs than on their stomachs or sides
- Put babies to bed in a flat, firm sleep surface with a fitted sheet made for that specific product. Though it might seem more comfortable to put a pillow on top of the mattress, babies may suffocate on the soft surface.

For more information on infant safe sleep best practices or resources in your community, visit: [nyc.gov/safesleep](https://nyc.gov/safesleep) or call 311 and ask for Safe Sleep.