

MC&MEA

MINNESOTA CORONERS' & MEDICAL EXAMINERS' ASSOCIATION

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Dear Primary Health Care Provider:

As President of the Minnesota Coroners' and Medical Examiners' Association, I want to make you aware of an issue of critical importance for infants and families in our state. For several years, we have noted an emerging trend regarding preventable infant deaths related to unsafe infant sleep practices.

Data from Minnesota death certificates, the Minnesota Child Mortality Review Panel, and the Minnesota Sudden Infant Death Center at Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota show that 22 infants died from asphyxia in 2005. These deaths were related to sleeping with an adult, sleeping with soft items in the crib, sleeping on a couch, prone sleep position, or entrapment between an adult mattress and wall. Preliminary data from 2006 show that 15 infants died from asphyxia.

Most parents who have experienced this tragic loss believed that their sleep practices were in their baby's best interest and were not aware of the hazards posed by these sleep environments.

In October 2005, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) acknowledged growing evidence concerning the hazards of adult-infant bedsharing and revised its policy statement to include the recommendation that all babies should be placed in their own crib to sleep on a firm sleep surface without soft objects or loose bedding. The AAP also noted that research suggests a reduced rate of sudden infant death when infants share a room with the parent(s) and recommends that babies sleep in their own cribs in the parents' room for the first 6 months of life. This practice facilitates ease of breastfeeding while also keeping baby safe.

As a primary care provider, you are in a unique position to counsel new parents about safe sleeping. We ask that safe sleep information be discussed with parents and caregivers as anticipatory guidance before infants are discharged from the newborn nursery and when infants are seen for office visits.

I have enclosed two resources for parent education on safe sleep for infants. One is a brochure entitled *Safe Sleep for Your Baby* and the other is an information sheet, *Safe and Asleep in a Crib of Their Own*, developed by the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota SID Center. These are available free of charge by contacting the Minnesota SID Center at 612-813-6285 or 1-800-732-3812.

On behalf of the Minnesota Coroners' and Medical Examiners' Association, I want to express our appreciation for all you do to care for children and their families. I invite you to join with us in promoting policies and practices that will reduce the incidence of preventable infant deaths in Minnesota.

If you have questions or suggestions about how to further disseminate this information, please contact the Minnesota SID Center.

Sincerely,



A. Quinn Strobl, M.D.
President
Minnesota Coroners' and Medical Examiners' Association