

I'm writing to you to let you and your department know about an important new program that will be starting in the Women and Children's Service Line next month. It is an infant safe sleep initiative developed by Cribs for Kids® National Infant Safe Sleep Initiative and Wellspan to provide a consistent and repetitive safe sleep message to the community, so we can reduce the number of accidental infant sleep-related deaths in York County. As you probably know, SIDS is the leading cause of death in infants age one month to one year, and in the US over 4500 babies will die unexpectedly each year. We see about five of these deaths each year right here in York. Research is revealing that many and perhaps most of these deaths are related to an unsafe sleeping environment. We don't know what causes SIDS, but we do know there are many modifiable risk factors. Two important strategies to reduce these deaths are making sure an infant has a safe place to sleep, and providing education to families. That is the essence of the Cribs for Kids® initiative. .

We have discovered that it is imperative that we get the message out to the entire community. That is why we have developed this program to provide comprehensive infant safe sleep information to all new families delivering at our hospital. We chose the Shaken Baby Program as our model based on the research of Mark Dias, a pediatric neurosurgeon at HMC. His study in Pediatrics demonstrated a 50% reduction in shaken baby injuries after starting an intensive education program for new parents. The safe sleep program consists of 3 components: watching a DVD on infant sleep safety which is available on the hospital network, direct reinforcement of the message by nursing staff on maternity, and having the parents sign a voluntary commitment statement which confirms that they have received this information and understand it.

The Back to Sleep Campaign brought about a 50% reduction in SIDS deaths in the US. We believe our education program has the potential to reduce the rate of infant sleep-related deaths by an additional 50%. The national Cribs for Kids® organization is using this program as a model for the state of Pennsylvania.