

# SAFE SLEEP SAVES LIVES

## South Dakota's Story in Numbers



## Why Safe Infant Sleep Matters

SD loses an average of **19 infants each year** due to unsafe sleep practices (the size of an elementary classroom)

There were **93 sleep-related infant deaths** in South Dakota, between 2020 and 2024

**87%** of all deaths reviewed by the ICDR that occurred in an unsafe sleep environment were **deemed preventable**

**84%** of these sleep-related deaths **occurred in the first 6 months**

*Unsafe sleep is one of the leading causes of preventable infant death in South Dakota.*



### WHAT IS SLEEP-RELATED INFANT DEATH?

Sleep-related infant death is a sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) that occurs during an observed or unobserved sleep period, or in a sleep environment.

## Goals

- Empower parents to make informed decisions about where their babies sleep.
- Share clear, consistent safe sleep messages across South Dakota.
- Build a strong network of professionals and community members who promote safe sleep.

## Promoting Safe Sleep in SD

### CRIB DISTRIBUTION

**1,000 safe sleep kits & cribs** are distributed each year by SD DOH. Families in need can call **1-800-305-3064** or contact their nearest public health office.

### MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

Programs like Pregnancy Care, Bright Start, and WIC provide safe sleep education and assess crib needs

### INFANT HEALTH COMMITTEE

South Dakota's Infant Health Committee works to advance safe sleep efforts and strengthen community engagement across the state.

## Did you know?

### YOU CAN BECOME A SAFE SLEEP AMBASSADOR AT NO COST?

There is a free, online, 20-minute training anyone can take! Make sure to include state information when registering to count toward SD's ambassador numbers!



### HOSPITAL SAFE SLEEP CERTIFICATION

South Dakota has 7 certified safe sleep hospitals with additional hospitals working toward certification.

### INFANT & CHILD DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE (ICDR)

The ICDR meets quarterly to review infant and child deaths in South Dakota, identify preventable factors, and recommend actions to help prevent future deaths.

**For questions or to learn more,** please reach out to Infant Health Coordinator Laurel Rick at [Laurel.Rick@state.sd.us](mailto:Laurel.Rick@state.sd.us)

# Practice these 12 steps

## for the first 12 months



DOWNLOAD  
AND PRINT  
SAFE SLEEP  
RESOURCES

### Safe Sleep Steps

### Why this is important in SD



#### Step 1: Place Baby on Their Back for Every Sleep Until Age 1

Back sleeping protects a baby's airway and reduces choking, suffocation, and sleep-related death. If baby rolls on their own, there is no need to reposition, but always start sleep on their back.



#### Step 2: Use a Safe Sleep Surface

Use a firm, flat, non-inclined surface. Unsafe places include adult beds, couches, chairs, car seats, loungers, swings, rock 'n plays, and unsafe cribs that do not meet Consumer Product Safety Commission standards.

**66%** of sleep-related infant deaths in South Dakota (SD) occurred in adult beds.

**77%** of infants who died had access to a safe sleep space but died while sleeping somewhere else.



#### Step 3: Feed Breast Milk

Breastfeeding for at least 2 months lowers the risk of sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and supports a baby's immune system.

**45%** of SD infants who died due to unsafe sleep were not breastfed.



#### Step 4: Share Your Room, Not Your Bed

Sleep in the same room as your baby but on separate sleep surfaces for at least 6 months. This allows quicker response while reducing the risks of bedsharing.

**68%** of sleep-related deaths in SD occurred while a baby was sharing a sleep surface with another person.



#### Step 5: Use a Bare Crib

Place baby in a crib with only a fitted sheet and pacifier. Items such as blankets, pillows, comforters, stuffed animals, and bumper pads can cause suffocation or strangulation.

**81%** of sleep-related infant deaths in SD involved unsafe soft bedding.



#### Step 6: Offer a Pacifier

Offer a pacifier at sleep times once breastfeeding is established. Pacifiers may help reduce sleep-related death risk. Do not attach pacifiers to clothing or toys.



#### Step 7: Avoid Impairment, Smoking, and Vaping

Avoid alcohol, drugs, smoking, and vaping during pregnancy, after birth, and around your baby. Extreme exhaustion can also impair supervision and increase the risk of SIDS and suffocation.

**24%** of sleep-related infant deaths in SD occurred while the supervisor was impaired.

**27%** of SD's sleep-related infant deaths involved infant exposure to secondhand smoke.



#### Step 8: Dress Baby for Safe Sleep

Avoid overheating. Babies need only one more layer than an adult. Hats should only be worn right after birth, when outdoors, or when medically advised.



#### Step 9: Keep Up With Medical Visits and Vaccines

Attend recommended medical visits and vaccinations for both mother and baby. Research shows vaccinations do not cause SIDS and may help reduce sleep-related deaths.

**36%** of deaths occurred among infants whose mothers had limited prenatal care (6 or fewer visits).



#### Step 10: Use Only Approved Sleep Products

Use only products designed and approved for infant sleep. Be cautious when using commercial sleep products or devices.



#### Step 11: Practice Supervised Tummy Time

Provide supervised tummy time while the baby is awake to build strength and prevent flat spots on the head.



#### Step 12: Share the Safe Sleep Message

All caregivers should know and follow safe sleep practices.

Other caregivers included relatives, friends, babysitters, and hospital staff.

**68%** of sleep-related deaths occurred while the mother was the primary supervisor.

**19%** of SD's sleep-related deaths occurred while the father was the primary supervisor.