

## Promoting Safe Sleeping Policy and Practices: Reducing the Risk of Sudden Infant Death in Child Care

By Maggie Baker R.N., Finney County Health Department ~ Guest Writer

The death of a child in childcare is a tragic event. It saddened our community in Finney County, in August 2009. Sudden Infant Death (SIDS) is the unexpected death of a seemingly healthy infant under one year of age for whom no cause of death can be determined. It is the leading cause of death in children from one to twelve months of age. SIDS is unpredictable, unpreventable and irreversible; however, there are steps to reduce the risk factors.

Prospective childcare providers in Finney and Kearny Counties must attend a Child Care Orientation. During that time I present material to become a licensed or registered provider. Now, as part of the orientation process, they must also attend SIDS training. I have developed a Power Point presentation outlining safe sleeping practices for infants in childcare and I highly recommend a Safe Sleep Policy. The providers receive multiple handouts, a Back-to-Sleep door hanger and a Safe Sleep Policy. I encourage providers, who offer care to infants, to speak with their parents regarding sleep practices at home.

Some staggering statistics regarding SIDS:

- Approximately 20 percent of SIDS deaths occurred while the infant was in the care of a non-parent caregiver
- Babies who sleep on their tummies are at five times greater risk of SIDS death
- Babies put on their tummies to sleep who usually sleep on their backs are at an 18 times greater risk of SIDS death
- 95 percent of SIDS deaths occur before six months of age

Ways to reduce risk factors

- Always place your baby on his/her back to sleep, for naps and at night. The back sleep position is the safest, and every sleep time counts.
- Place baby on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet. Never place your baby to sleep on pillows, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces.
- Keep soft objects toys and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area. Don't use pillow-like crib bumpers in your baby's sleep area and keep all items away from your baby's face.
- Do not allow smoking around your baby. Don't smoke before or after the birth of your baby, and don't let others smoke around your baby.

- Keep your baby's sleep area close to, but separate from where you and others sleep. Your baby should not sleep in a bed or on a couch or armchair with adults or other children, but baby can sleep in the same room as you.
- Think about using a clean, dry pacifier when placing your infant down to sleep, but don't force the baby to take it
- Do not let your baby overheat during sleep. Dress your baby in light sleep clothing, and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.
- Avoid products that claim to reduce the risks of SIDS because most have not been tested for effectiveness or safety.
- Do not use home monitors to reduce the risk of SIDS. If you have questions about using monitors for other conditions talk to your health care provider.
- Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on your baby's head: provide "tummy time" when your baby is awake and someone is watching, and avoid too much time in car seats, carriers, and bouncers. Tummy time helps your baby's head, neck and shoulder muscles get stronger and help to prevent spots on the head.

Some excellent sources of information and training (many free or reproducible) include:

- SIDS Network of Kansas [www.sidsks.org/](http://www.sidsks.org/)
- SIDS Resources Inc., [www.sidsresources.org/Contactus.HTM](http://www.sidsresources.org/Contactus.HTM)
- Back-to-Sleep Campaign [www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS)
- Healthy Child Care America [www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org)
- First Candle/SIDS Alliance [www.firstcandle.org](http://www.firstcandle.org)



### Meet Our Guest Writer!

Maggie is a Child Care Surveyor and a Kansas Child Care Health Consultant serving Finney and Kearny Counties. To learn more about Maggie, her colleagues and services at the Finney County Health Department, be sure and visit their website at [www.finneycounty.org/index.aspx?NID=139](http://www.finneycounty.org/index.aspx?NID=139). If you would like to know more about Maggie's program and the training that she conducts with child care providers and families in her communities, contact her at [mbaker@finneycounty.org](mailto:mbaker@finneycounty.org).