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Practice Summary & Implementation
Guidance

Safe Infant Sleep Shelter Program

This program helps to address safe infant sleep for families at a higher risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) due to social determinants of health.



Location

Georgia



Topic Area

Birth Outcomes, Equity and Antiracism, Health Promotion and Communication, Injury Prevention and Hospitalization



Setting

Community



Population Focus

Families and Caregivers, Infant, Women and Maternal



NPM

NPM 5: Safe Sleep



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Contact Information

Terri Miller, Georgia Department of Public Health, (404)-825-4304

Section 1: Practice Summary

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

In the State of Georgia, sleep-related infant deaths are the leading cause of death during the post-neonatal period (from 1 to 12 months of age). Child fatality review data indicate that among 794 sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID) that occurred between 2015-2019, many included risks in the sleep environment: 56% of deaths occurred in an adult bed, 62% while sharing a sleep surface with another person, and 46% of infants were found on their stomachs. A population-based survey of mothers in Georgia found that risky sleep practices were common: 40% of mothers reported their infant slept prone and 67% shared a sleep surface with their infant. These data suggest a continuing need in Georgia to educate families on infant sleep recommendations. Less research has been done on the infant sleep practices of families that are unhoused or underhoused and those leaving interpersonal violence.

As part of its Georgia Safe to Sleep campaign, the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has been providing group safe sleep education sessions across the state, delivered mainly to expectant mothers and other caregivers. DPH wanted to extend resources and education to families that were unhoused and underhoused, regardless of the circumstances. If families are moving often, or quickly, cribs are likely an item unable to be transported. Case workers often report that families living in extended stay hotels will bed share with their infants and children due to a lack of space and safe sleep equipment. Over the last couple of years, housing costs have been rapidly increasing in Georgia exposing more families to the threat of eviction and homelessness. In addition to the stress and other difficulties faced by families experiencing housing concerns, research shows a direct link between evictions and prematurity. Prematurity is a risk factor for SUID and in Georgia, babies born premature have a 3 x higher risk of SUID than those born full term. Additionally, families with Medicaid as their primary insurer, have a 4x higher risk of SUID than those with any other insurer.

DPH developed the Safe Infant Sleep Shelter Program to expand and focus the Georgia Safe to Sleep campaign efforts. The program focused on housing support agencies and domestic violence shelters serving caregivers who were pregnant or with young infants. Resources for the shelters included provision of portable cribs for agency use, DPH's safe sleep education, and assistance with creating or updating agency safe sleep policies. Agencies could also request portable cribs for the families to take with them when transitioning to more permanent housing as well as "Safe sleep baby bundle" care packages. The baby bundles contained educational support materials such as a "this side up" onesie, a wearable blanket, "Sleep Baby Safe and Snug" board book and other educational materials. The Shelter Program was designed to address the unique needs of families with unstable housing. Only providing education on the safe infant sleep recommendations for families that were experiencing homelessness, or the threat of homelessness, potentially ignored the fact that families in these situations have a risk of not having the equipment necessary to room share.

CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

The goal of our program was to support those community-based organizations/agencies that work with unhoused and under housed families to aid in providing resources to, 1) meet their needs in the shelter, 2) provide resources for the families transitioning to more permanent housing, 3) provide tools to practice recommendations and educational support resources and, 4) address the health inequities associated with unstable housing for pregnant persons. Agencies were invited to apply for the shelter program utilizing a short



application that collects basic information such as shipping address, main contact person, number of people served each year, etc. These agencies were asked if they had enough cribs for families to practice room sharing within their shelter and whether they needed cribs for their facility. The agencies were also able to order a supply of new cribs to keep on-hand for families to take with them whenever they transitioned to more permanent housing.

Along with the cribs, baby bundle care packages were also ordered. The bundles included the “This side up” onesies which are not only a clothing option but also a visual tool to help remind caregivers about the supine sleep recommendation for infant sleep. The wearable blanket was another clothing option that helps to keep loose items from the crib space. The book was meant to encourage reading to children and is also more durable than a brochure, so the safe sleep message can be reread. Agencies were offered educational materials and training for staff as needed to ensure that safe infant sleep recommendations are being communicated accurately and consistently.

Core Components & Practice Activities

Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Portable cribs for agency use	Portable cribs to stay at the agency and to be used by individuals with infants 6 months or under. This allows for room sharing and not surface sharing.	Upon signing up for the shelter program agencies provided information about how many moms with they serve a year and requested how many cribs they needed to have on hand to provide moms with a safe space for infants to sleep.
DPH’s train-the-trainer safe sleep education	Webinar to be attended by agency staff.	DPH hosted an online webinar so that agency staff could be knowledgeable on safe infant sleep. Webinar conducted on a routine basis to ensure attendance.
Assistance with creating or updating agency safe sleep policies	Review agency safe infant sleep policy.	Offered each agency that participated in the Safe Infant Sleep Shelter Program the opportunity to have a meeting with us to review current policy around safe infant sleep. The meeting would happen via zoom upon request so that policy could either be created around safe infant sleep or revised based on current safe infant sleep recommendations.
Portable cribs and Baby Bundle Safe Sleep kits to distribute to caregivers	Send portable cribs and baby boxes when the agency signs up for the program.	As agencies signed up for the program, they indicated how many individuals they serve yearly. This allowed us to get a baseline for



		expected number of individuals reached. An order of cribs and baby bundles was sent.
Evaluation	Provide feedback surveys for both the agency and families.	Agencies were given an online survey to complete to give feedback on their experience with our shelter program. Families had a QR code in the baby bundle box so that they could provide feedback on their experience with the baby bundle box. Both surveys have allowed us to make informed changes to the program.
Expansion	Expand to more shelters, as well as, beyond only shelters to reach more families.	Offer portable cribs/baby bundle care packages to additional shelters. Also expand to include maternal substance misuse programs so families can also receive education and materials.

HEALTH EQUITY

Our practice is working towards reducing health inequities and systemic oppression that impact persons with newborns who are without housing by providing them with key materials needed to keep baby safe while sleeping. Shelters can utilize limited resources to meet the housing needs of their families while our program helps to support housing advocates to become safe sleep advocates as well. Research shows that pregnant persons experiencing unstable housing have higher risk for a preterm and/or low birth weight baby. Preterm birth is a risk factor for SUID.

Additionally, lack of space, overcrowding and lack of safe infant sleep spaces can contribute to unsafe sleep practices. Shelter based program materials include a portable crib for use while they are in the shelter along with one for them to take with them when they find stable housing. They are also provided with a baby bundle that has educational information on proper sleeping techniques for baby, a wearable blanket, a “this side up” onesies, and a safe sleep book. This allows families to feel more confident in their ability to keep baby safe while they sleep.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Success for our practice was measured by the number of families served and the satisfaction of the shelters that have participated in the program. Participation has been tracked on an ongoing basis and shelters complete a distribution form when distributing cribs and baby bundles. A yearly evaluation has been implemented to seek feedback from participating shelters on the program, it’s effectiveness and, any areas for improvement.



Section 2: Implementation Guidance

COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

Practice Collaborators and Partners			
Partner/ Collaborator	How are they involved in decision-making throughout practice processes?	How are you partnering with this group?	Does this stakeholder have lived experience/come from a community impacted by the practice?
Homeless Shelters	To reach unhoused and under housed families that were expecting or had an infant 6 months or younger.	Sending baby bundles, portable cribs for use at the shelter and for families to take with them, providing safe infant sleep training to staff, and providing feedback on safe sleep policy that they have in place at their shelters.	Yes, shelters provide a safe place for families and baby to live while they work on transitioning to more stable housing.
Domestic violence shelters	To reach persons that were leaving interpersonal violence and without housing who were expecting or had an infant 6 months or younger.	Sending baby bundles, portable cribs for use at the domestic violence shelter and for mom to take with them, providing safe infant sleep training to staff, and providing feedback on safe sleep policy that they have in place at their domestic violence shelters.	Yes, domestic violence shelters provide a safe place for mom and baby to live while they work on transitioning to more stable housing.
Georgia Commission on Family Violence	To coordinate community response to address family violence and reach shelters.	Utilize their network to reach shelters, to support families in need and provide information that can be used for policy change.	Yes, they work with many families experiencing interpersonal violence and help to advocate for stronger policies to provide necessary resources.



Child Fatality
Review Panel

To gather information
details on sleep-related
infant deaths.

Using data to guide our approach
for safe infant sleep programs.

No, the review panel
reviews deaths but is
not part of the
community.

REPLICATION

This program has not been replicated. However, we have worked to expand to more shelters/programs.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

Program Manager, MPH (effort – 1 cal month, yearly) The program manager has subject matter expertise in safe infant sleep and experience in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. The program had educational materials already prepared and a contract for cribs and other materials in place. The program required an initial amount of outreach and recruitment with less time necessary to maintain the program.

PRACTICE TIMELINE

For more information on this practice's timeline and specific practice activities, please contact Terri Miller directly at terri.miller@dph.ga.gov.

PRACTICE COST

We are looking forward to expanding the program since we have a better idea of cost and time requirements. The program is not expensive or time consuming to implement after the initial startup costs. We utilized connections and partners to recruit shelters. In the future, we will consider if a communications or marketing plan is a worthwhile option.

Budget			
Activity/Item	Brief Description	Quantity	Total
Portable Cribs	Evenflo Baby Suite	369	\$36,000



Wearable Blankets	Zipper front wearable blanket	195 (purchased in bulk)	\$1,326
“This Side Up” onesies	Short sleeve baby one piece with messaging	195 (purchased in bulk)	\$1,063
Other educational materials	Smoking Cessation, Developmental Milestones, Shaken Baby, Board Book, etc.	195	\$1,000
Shipping & Handling	FedEx & UPS shipping plus boxes	195	\$1,000
Salary & Wages	Program Manager	1 partial-time	\$7,000
Total Amount:			\$47,389.00

LESSONS LEARNED

Feedback from shelter staff suggested making the baby bundles more inviting so that moms feel special when they receive it. Fancier boxes were cost prohibitive but, we were able to add brightly colored tissue paper and bright stickers to the outside to make them more festive and celebratory. The cribs were rated as “most helpful” with the bundles a close second. If cost is an issue, portable cribs would become the priority.

Every participating shelter rated the program as very helpful and 100% would recommend the program to others. We requested one main point of contact for each shelter to streamline communication. The shelters staff didn’t always remember to request more portable cribs before they ran out and delivery took 3-4 weeks to arrive from the manufacturer. This issue was addressed by reminding the point of contact to order cribs before they run out.

NEXT STEPS

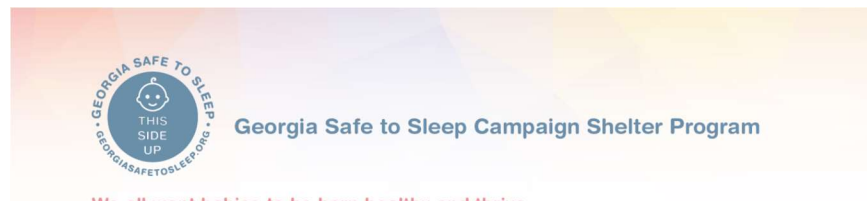
We plan to expand our reach to more shelters in the State of Georgia. This will allow us to reach more families with infants and provide them with safe infant education as well as a place for baby to sleep safely while in the shelter and once they leave. We also plan to make the baby bundle boxes more inviting/exciting as if they were receiving a gift just for them and baby. We also plan to expand the program to other services such as those working to address maternal substance misuse, assisting incarcerated mothers, etc.



Listening sessions are planned to meet with families to learn what information and other resources would be of most value.

We are also considering providing the shelters with safe infant sleep video options to help with education. We will likely implement a quality improvement PDSA to test off how useful or helpful these options are for the families and staff.

RESOURCES PROVIDED



We all want babies to be born healthy and thrive.

Each week, on average, three infants die in Georgia due to sleep-related causes. Together we can reduce this number by helping expectant moms and families with newborns learn about and practice safe infant sleep. The risks for sleep-related infant death are known, but it is possible to reduce those risks by following safe sleep recommendations.

The Georgia Safe to Sleep Campaign is a statewide initiative that provides tools and resources to strengthen policy, provide consistent education, and **change infant sleep environments to achieve four primary objectives:**

- Prevent infant sleep-related deaths in Georgia.
- Empower professionals in multiple disciplines to educate parents about safe sleep environments and ensure proper sleeping practices are modeled.
- Disseminate accurate and consistent messages that empower families to make informed decisions about infant sleep.
- Increase access to resources that support safe sleep behaviors to protect infants.

The Georgia Safe to Sleep Campaign is offering portable cribs with bassinets to be used in family shelters (for domestic violence survivors and the unhoused) to ensure babies have a close but separate and safe sleep space. Participating shelters will receive up to 10 cribs and "Safe Sleep Baby Bundles" which include a "This Side Up" onesie and a wearable cotton blanket. There is no cost to the shelter. When families move to a more permanent living arrangement, they may be provided with a portable crib and a baby bundle to take with them if their infant is less than 6 months old.

Cribs and baby bundles will be resupplied based on need and as requested by the participating shelter. A simple form that uses dates (no names) will track distribution of the cribs and bundles and will need to be filled out prior to additional cribs and bundles being sent. Free trainings and educational materials will be provided for caregivers, shelter staff and volunteers, as requested.

Program participants agree to support the ABC's of Safe Sleep (Baby sleeps Alone, on his or her Back, and in a Crib) and promote the following recommendations:



Eligibility:

- Applicants must be an established shelter providing services to residents of the State of Georgia.
- Applicants must agree to promote the American Academy of Pediatrics 2016 Recommendations for Safe Infant Sleep which include room sharing. Room sharing allows the infant to be next to the parent/caregiver while also maintaining their own safe sleep space. All recommendations are for infants newborn to 12 months; after that time, recommendations no longer apply. By applying for this program, you are agreeing to promote the safe sleep recommendations and to encourage shelter residents to practice the recommendations.
- Applicants must agree to follow the manufacturer instructions on the portable crib with bassinet.
- Applicants must provide a primary point of contact who will submit requests for more items and track distribution of materials via a short de-identified Google form. View it here at: <https://forms.gle/HwPP2deodZH5M3SX8>

Selection Criteria:

- Only one completed application from each location will be accepted for consideration (application link below).
- Award selection will be at the discretion of the Georgia Safe to Sleep Campaign.

Other Information

- Application will remain open until we reach program capacity.
- The Shelter Program will continue as long as funding is available.

Ready to apply and join the Safe to Sleep Campaign Shelter Program?

Follow this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SafeSleepShelters>

Have additional questions?

Contact Terri Miller at, terri.miller@dph.ga.gov or contact, georgiasafetosleep@dph.ga.gov

