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CAPITAL REGION JOINS STATE CAMPAIGN TO STOP CO-SLEEPING DEATHS

Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady Counties Launch Campaigns

BABIES SLEEP SAFEST ALONE

Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties today joined the New York State **"BABIES SLEEP SAFEST ALONE"** education campaign to stop a preventable crisis: infants dying when sharing a bed with an adult.

"Just over a dozen small children died so far this year in beds they were sharing with their caregivers," said OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrión. "These may have been preventable deaths. New York, the counties, and health care providers are joining together to educate parents and avoid another co-sleeping tragedy."



SAFE SLEEPING -- OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrión addresses media in Albany May 29, explaining the dangers of parents co-sleeping with infants. She is joined by officials from St. Peter's Hospital and Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties for the Capital Region's kickoff of the "BABIES SLEEP SAFEST ALONE" education campaign

There have been 90 infant or small child death reports to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment since 2006, where the child was co-sleeping with a parent, sibling, or caregiver, according to the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

The Capital Region kickoff took place in Albany this morning at Mercy Cares for Kids, a day care center operated by St. Peter's Health Care Services. OCFS Commissioner Carrión and Kathleen Marsch, director of Women and Children's Services at St. Peter's Hospital, were joined by Albany County Executive Michael Breslin, Rensselaer County Executive Kathleen M. Jimino and Schenectady County Legislator Karen Johnson.

Co-sleeping is risky. If an adult or child rolls over on a baby, the baby can be hurt or even suffocated. Babies also can become entangled in bedding, or caught between the bed and wall or headboard. Sleeping with an infant or small child can be dangerous, especially if the caregiver has been drinking, taking a drug that makes him or her especially drowsy, is overweight, smokes, or is sleeping on a couch. The safest way to keep a baby close at bedtime is to put his crib or bassinet near the adult bed.

The Office of Children and Families estimates that co-sleeping is involved in approximately 20 percent of the child fatalities reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

Three-quarters of the children in co-sleeping incidents were newborn to three months old. Adult co-sleepers involved in these incidents were most likely to be the child's mothers, age 18 to 24 years old. Nearly 40 percent of these co-

sleeping incidents occurred on the weekend.

Ms. Marsch of St. Peter's Hospital said: "Babies are planned for and loved from before they are born. Parents who place babies in their beds do so because they want to be close to their child, but they really don't realize the danger."

Schenectady County Legislator Karen Johnson said: "There is no greater tragedy than the death of a child. These are preventable fatalities and we need to work together to get the message out to as many parents as possible about this risk."

"Children are our most precious resource and deserve the safety and security of a loving and stable home. A first step in this direction is making sure they are safe when they are asleep," said Albany County Executive Mike Breslin.

Rensselaer County Executive Jimino said: "Ensuring public health and safety is a primary function of government, and we in Rensselaer County have been proactive on this issue by reminding all parents of newborn babies of the risks associated with co-sleeping and of an infant sleeping in an adult bed. These dangers are avoidable and we will continue to work with other local governments and the state to help prevent these tragedies."

Counties across the state are participating in the "**BABIES SLEEP SAFEST ALONE**" public education campaign. Niagara County's kickoff was held May 7, followed by a New York City launch May 8, and one in Broome County May 12.

The "**BABIES SLEEP SAFEST ALONE**" statewide campaign includes the distribution of 200,000 English and Spanish-language posters, 200,000 English and Spanish pamphlets, and 15,000 baby bibs with a safe-sleeping message; the airing of messages on television and radio stations across the state; and launch of a special webpage at www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/babiessleepsafestalone . This OCFS website also includes "**BABIES SLEEP SAFEST ALONE**" information in Russian, Arabic and Chinese, as well as English and Spanish. The public can also obtain information and order materials by calling 1-800 345-KIDS or using the [on-line order form](#).

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