

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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County of Albany
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Daniel P. McCoy
County Executive

County Executive McCoy Joined By Partners for Launch of “Safe Sleeping” Campaign to Prevent Infant Deaths

Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy, local health, child welfare and law enforcement officials have launched a joint campaign to prevent infant deaths due to “unsafe sleeping,” which commonly occurs when an adult shares a bed with an infant and rolls over onto them which leads to the death of the child.

The County Executive has determined that a comprehensive approach is needed to help the county’s Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) develop collaborative strategies to prevent infant deaths in the county due to “unsafe sleeping” through public education and other means. Since 2009, 12 infant deaths reviewed by the CFRT have been directly attributed to “unsafe sleeping.” That number represents 75 percent of the child fatality cases reviewed by the team.

The CFRT is supervised by the county’s Department of Children, Youth and Family, which has engaged government and community partners to access critical resources and expertise for the campaign.

At the news conference the County Executive also announced the establishment of the Safe Sleeping Task Force, which will determine how the county can work with the state and caregiver community to ensure that parents and caregivers know the importance of creating a safe sleep environment for babies. The Task Force will hold its first meeting on March 12th at noon at the Children’s Advocacy Center at 260 S. Pearl Street in Albany.

“It is our responsibility to take action now to protect children and help families,” said McCoy. “By working together with our state and community partners the Safe Sleeping Task Force will help provide workable solutions. It will also serve as a model to be used statewide to prevent the tragic death of infants. I want to thank OCFS for providing needed resources for the bus ads and for their guidance as we move forward.”

In conjunction with today’s news conference the county has launched a media campaign for CDTA bus shelters and buses to draw attention to this issue and risk reduction. The ad campaign highlights that babies should be placed on their backs when sleeping and that they should sleep by themselves in a crib or other suitable sleep furniture. The ads feature the tag line “Even one child’s death is too many.”

“As a first responder, I have encountered firsthand the tragic results of unsafe sleeping conditions in the home, especially when it comes to infants,” said Shawn Morse, Chairman of the Albany County Legislature. “These tragic outcomes can and must be prevented. I am happy to partner with the County Executive and our Department of Children Youth and Families to raise awareness and promote safe sleeping.”

Gladys Carrión, Commissioner of the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, said, “Over half of the infant deaths reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, involved unsafe sleeping. These deaths were preventable. I commend Albany County for bringing this critical safety issue to the public’s attention. By investing in this campaign, the state joins with Albany County in taking action to educate caregivers and save children’s lives.”

New York State Department of Health Deputy Commissioner, Office of Public Health, Guthrie Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H said, "Each year in New York State, far too many babies die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other injuries in their sleep areas. Efforts by Albany County and other partners to educate the public about the National Safe to Sleep Campaign is an essential step toward reducing infant deaths in New York State."

“The death of an infant is one of the most devastating experiences a family can face,” said Albany Police Chief Steven Krokoff. “Together we can help prevent the next terrible tragedy through intervention and education. Through a collaborative effort, we will continue to build awareness of the risks associated with unsafe sleeping conditions and help parents and caregivers provide safe sleeping environments for infants.”

“The death of children because of unsafe sleeping is something that happens in our community. These tragedies are preventable. I am proud to support the Safe Sleeping Task Force and the Albany County Child Fatality Review Team as they work to educate the community on the dangers of unsafe sleeping environments for infants and how parents can create a safe environment for their children to sleep,” commented District Attorney P. David Soares.

Safe Sleeping Task Force Members

Jennifer Matrazzo, Prevent Child Abuse
Robin Christenson, Albany Law School
Sister Mary Ann Lo Giudice, CCCMS
Faye Sperber, Parsons/Healthy Families AC
Ruth Simmons, RN, CNM, Albany Medical Center
Abbe Kovacik, MS Ed, Capital District Child Care Council
Shenita Green, Parsons Prevention Program
Amanda Mulhern, Perinatal Program Coordinator Community Cradle
Debbie Allen, Community Member Past Child Protective Supervisor
Mary Whittridge, NYS Sudden Infant Child Death Resource Center
Maggie Kruegler, Albany County Dept. of Health
Kerri Barber, NYS Office of Children and Family Services
Kathleen Rosecrans, Alpha Pregnancy Care Center
Eivion Williams, Alpha Pregnancy Care Center
Christina Calabrese, District Attorney David Soares
Vince Colonno, Catholic Charities
Colette Poulin, Albany County DCYF
Lynn Tubbs, Albany County DCYF
Christine Zappone-Lenaghan, Albany County DCYF