



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

DFPS News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Give Babies Room to Breathe

Many Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths May be Preventable

Almost 400 Texas babies die each year - either suddenly without a clear explanation or due to accidental suffocation or strangulation. While the exact causes of many of these deaths are unknown, many might have been prevented by simply giving babies "Room to Breathe" when they sleep.

The Texas Departments of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and State Health Services (DSHS) are working together to improve the understanding of sudden, unexpected infant death and to educate parents and caregivers on the importance of giving babies "Room to Breathe".

These efforts include:

- Developing "Room to Breathe" TV and radio ads in 2010.
- A study of how Texas parents put their babies to sleep.
- Learning more about sudden unexpected deaths during CPS investigations.
- Safe sleep training for child care workers, child care licensing inspectors, and CPS caseworkers.
- Adding "Room to Breathe" information to materials given to parents by prenatal care providers and hospitals.
- An outreach and parent education pilot project in three Texas counties in early 2010.

Last year, the DFPS' Child Protective Services program investigated 166 infant deaths that occurred while the infants slept with adults or older children. Also, a recent British study found that more than half of all

sudden, unexplained infant deaths occurred while infants slept with an adult in an unsafe environment. Recent alcohol or drug use by the parent was a common factor, as were pillow use, swaddling, and maternal smoking.

"Parents need to know the risks and always give babies room to breathe when they sleep," said DFPS Commissioner Anne Heiligenstein.

"There are safe sleep practices that parents and caregivers can use to help lower the risk of these types of infant deaths," said DSHS Commissioner Dr. David Lakey.

To decrease the risk of infant deaths, parents and other caregivers should:

- Never put babies to sleep with soft bedding, pillows, bumper pads, or stuffed animals that may interfere with a baby's ability to breathe.
- Never sleep with their infants while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any medications that cause sleepiness as this increases the likelihood of accidental suffocation. Accidental suffocation is also higher when adults are obese or extremely fatigued.
- Never expose an infant to second hand smoke.
- Always place infants on their backs to sleep because this decreases the risk of sudden, unexpected infant death.