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Milwaukee Health Officials Encourage Parents to Follow Safe Sleep Recommendations *Reminder seeks to promote safe sleep practices, respond to increase in infant deaths*

MILWAUKEE – Today Milwaukee officials are urging families to follow safe sleep practices for infants. The reminder comes in response to an increase in the number of sleep-related infant deaths. While a cause of death has not been determined in all cases, preliminary data suggests that more than 30 infants may have died in unsafe sleep environments, a total that has not been recorded since 2007.

“While we have made progress in reducing infant deaths citywide, in 2017 a concerning increase in sleep-related infant deaths have been reported,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “These tragic deaths can be prevented. I urge parents and caregivers to follow safe sleep practices and ask that our partners educate parents about ways to keep infants safe.”

In response to this data, the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) is issuing an alert to area medical providers and reminding parents and caregivers of the safest ways to place an infant down for a nap or at night.

“We thank our partners citywide who help us share the ABC’S of Safe Sleep: That babies are safest when they sleep alone, on their backs, in a crib, and in a smoke-free home for every nap and every night,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “But we know that a new generation joins the ranks of parenthood each year, and we must continue to pass along the knowledge and recommendations that will help keep every infant safe.”

On average, approximately 15-20 Milwaukee infants die in their sleep each year, making it the third leading cause of infant deaths behind complications of prematurity and birth defects. Sleep-related infant deaths include infants who died while sleeping on an adult bed or other unsafe sleep surface such as a sofa, car seat or air mattress; placed to sleep with pillows or extra blankets; and those who were placed on their stomachs or side to sleep.

The MHD urges all parents and caregivers to follow the recommendations issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics and practice safe sleep in their homes. This means that at **every nap and every night** an infant should sleep in an environment that follows the ABC’S of Safe Sleep:

- A = Alone**, never on the same sleep surface as a parent, caregiver, or other children
- B = On his/her back**, never on their stomach or side
- C = In a crib** that is free of bumper pads, pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals
- S = In a smoke-free** home

Since 2009, the MHD has operated a citywide Cribs for Kids program, providing free safe sleep environments to more than 800 families annually. Anyone in need of a safe place for their infant to sleep can dial the MHD Cribs for Kids program at (414) 286-8620.

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