

Safe Sleep Initiatives

Objective 2.2: Promote and support safe sleep practices and cross-sector initiatives to reduce the SUID rate by 10% by 2030.

Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network Infrastructure

Sleep-related deaths, such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), are the leading cause of death for infants over 28 days and claim 3,500 lives each year in the United States. Furthermore, in Kansas, sleep-related Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID) outnumber all other causes of child deaths, occurring 10 times more than drowning, twice as often as homicides, and even exceeding motor vehicle fatalities—one of the leading causes of death across childhood (0-18 years of age). Despite this, SUID rarely receives the same public attention. While the media frequently highlights other risks, there is little awareness about the dangers of unsafe sleep. This data underscores the urgent need to prioritize safe sleep education and prevention efforts.

To promote and support safe sleep practices and cross-sector initiatives to reduce the sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) rate, Title V will continue its strong partnership with the Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network through organizational infrastructure support and to strengthen/enhance the KIDS Network Safe Sleep Certification Project. The Safe Sleep Instructor (SSI) Certification training builds a statewide network of safe sleep champions who strengthen healthcare professionals' ability to deliver consistent, comprehensive safe sleep education to caregivers. Certified SSIs, including nurses, home visitors, health department staff, and other community partners, are often from areas with high infant mortality rates and are equipped to help address and reduce infant deaths in their communities. Program components use implementation science strategies that include didactics, PowerPoint presentations, hands-on demonstrations, a workbook with safe sleep educational activities, and a World Café format is used in small group settings to address myths, barriers, infant products, and best practices, Q&A sessions, and pre/post-test evaluations as well as other resources originally developed by the KIDS Network to promote a consistent safe sleep message. Materials are updated and customized to meet the needs of diverse populations, including those with disparate backgrounds, low literacy levels, and visual impairments. Additionally, the KIDS Network will continue its Safe Sleep Instructor (SSI) Train-the-Trainer program, Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers and Crib Clinics; Cribs for KIDS Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program; and Safe Sleep Star Outpatient Certification Program.

The KIDS Network will accomplish the above by providing semi-annual train-the-trainer classes, quarterly technical assistance webinars, bi-monthly virtual office hours, advanced training opportunities for seasoned certified SSIs, and annual reporting requirements for recertification of all program models. During the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period, little traction was made in expanding the Cribs for KIDS Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program and Safe Sleep Star Outpatient Certification Program models throughout the state. Reenergizing these efforts will be an ongoing focus during FY27.

KIDS Network-MCH-BaM-KPCC Collaboration

While efforts to provide training opportunities, curriculum content, and other resources across programs to ensure message consistency have been very successful over the past several years, Title V and the KIDS Network are committed to continuing this work in FY27. Safe sleep curriculum, presentations, lesson and activity plans, and other resources originally developed for the BaM group prenatal education program will continue to be adapted and shared for implementation in other settings and with diverse populations. Special focus will continue to be given to developing a version of these resources for low-literacy and English language learners through the BaM Curriculum Adaptation project. Integration efforts between BaM and MCH programs, such as home visiting, Teen Pregnancy Targeted Case Management (TPTCM), and Pregnancy Maintenance Initiative (PMI), will be a continued focus of the Perinatal/Infant (P/I) Consultant workplan in FY2027. Safe sleep education and support will be a primary component of these efforts. In addition, support will be provided to local KPCC to strengthen provider and birth facility partnerships, engaging these entities in safe sleep initiatives such as the Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program and Safe Sleep Star Certification Program.

KIDS Network Family Bereavement Support

KDHE will continue to contract with the Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network using Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund - Children's Initiative dollars to promote and provide a statewide support system to help families, relatives, friends, caregivers, and all others who are affected by the sudden death of an infant, based on the individual or family needs. They will conduct safe sleep education and bereavement services statewide. The KIDS Network serves individuals or organizations who strive to reduce the risk of infant death or sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) by providing supportive services, community education, professional training, and supporting associated research.

The KIDS Network will ensure outreach, education, and ongoing support for pregnant women (especially underserved populations) and promote public-private partnerships. KDHE will work with the KIDS Network to promote safe sleep and reduce infant deaths by providing culturally tailored safe sleep resources, toolkits, educational materials, and training for home visitors, health care providers, and childcare providers, with a focus on consistent messaging.

- Provide training and support resources for KPCC/BaM to address barriers to safe sleep, as requested.
- Continue to assess behavior change from Community Baby Showers/Crib Clinics within frontier, rural, and urban counties.
- Train Certified Safe Sleep Instructors to provide respectful, client-centered education, honoring cultural practices, and offering practical, judgment-free guidance. Empower families with solutions that fit their realities while promoting safe sleep.
- Oversee the development, execution, and ongoing management of social media campaigns focused on safe sleep, stillbirth, miscarriage, and Infant Loss

Awareness Month, ensuring consistent and effective messaging across multiple platforms.

Child Care Professional-Led Safe Sleep Outreach

Title V aims to expand safe sleep education and resource distribution to a broader range of professionals who interact with parents throughout the infant's first year of life. One key group of interest is childcare providers and childcare centers. These professionals engage with families regularly and are uniquely positioned to build trusted relationships with parents. As such, they have the potential to play an important role in sharing safe sleep information, offering resources, and creating supportive environments for discussing challenges related to maintaining safe sleep practices—particularly as infants grow older and caregiver fatigue increases.

During FY27, the Title V team will initiate discussions with Kansas' new Office of Early Childhood, Child Care Aware of Kansas, Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), and other childcare agencies and providers to understand better the types of training childcare providers currently receive, as well as their comfort and confidence in engaging parents in conversations about safe sleep, particularly around challenges.

Based on these insights, Title V intends to partner with the KIDS Network and KCCTO to develop and enhance, as needed, training opportunities to ensure childcare providers are equipped to support and problem-solve sleep-related challenges with families. Additionally, in collaboration with these partners, Title V will explore and identify resources—such as safe sleep kits—that may be beneficial for childcare providers to distribute to parents when appropriate.