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Infant Safe Sleep Awareness: *Illinois DCFS reminds parents to stay vigilant all year long*

CHICAGO – Unsafe sleep is a leading cause of death for children one year old and younger; and while October’s Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month is coming to an end, Illinois DCFS continues to work year-round to remind parents and caregivers of the importance of putting infants to sleep safely.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic halted plans for in-person awareness events this year, Illinois DCFS credits a multi-faceted awareness campaign and community partnerships that began in 2019 with decreasing the number of unsafe sleep deaths from 143 in 2018 to 108 in 2019. In addition to recording a public service announcement and promoting safe sleep messages across social media, the department collaborated with the Illinois Child Death Review Teams to promote the ABCs of Safe Sleep on billboards in Springfield, Bloomington and Chicago and with Pace bus to place our message on 730 buses visible to daily riders across the Chicago suburbs.



“Infant safe sleep deaths are preventable; and although it is encouraging to see the number of infant deaths due to unsafe sleep decrease from one year ago, parents and caregivers must remain vigilant and put their infant to sleep **Alone**, on his or her **Back**, in a safe **Crib** – every time,” said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Marc D. Smith.

In 2019, 108 infants in Illinois under the age of 1 died as a result of being put to sleep unsafely. 87 were found in locations other than a crib, bassinet or ‘pack and play;’ 76 were found in positions other than on their back; and 71 were co-sleeping with another individual at the time of death.

Infants sleep safest alone in a crib with a firm mattress and tightly-fitted sheet. The crib should be free of pillows, blankets, bumper pads, stuffed animals and toys. Infants should never be placed on an adult bed or

couch to sleep. If parents of young children are traveling, they should call ahead to make sure their accommodations include a crib and bring a 'pack and play' if one is not available.

To listen to the PSA, click [here](#).

To view and print ABCs of Safe Sleep information in English, Spanish, Chinese and Polish, click [here](#).

About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.

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SAFE SLEEP CAMPAIGN DATA FOR 2020



108 TOTAL DEATHS related to unsafe sleep in 2019
143 TOTAL DEATHS related to unsafe sleep in 2018
134 TOTAL DEATHS related to unsafe sleep in 2017

	2019	2018	2017
Cook Region total	40	61	61
Northern Region total	27	30	29
Central Region total	30	27	25
Southern Region total	11	25	19
State totals	108	143	134

2019 Top 4 locations and circumstances of unsafe sleep-related deaths that occurred

No. of infants in adult bed	61 (all beds had pillows and blankets)
No. of infants on couch	11 (3 had blankets/bedding items)
No. of infants in bassinet	9 (8 had a blanket, 1 had a pillow)
No. of infants in Pack-n-Play (Playpen)	8 (5 had a blanket, 2 had a pillow)

2018 Top 4 locations and circumstances of unsafe sleep-related deaths that occurred

No. of infants in adult bed	83 (all beds had pillows and blankets)
No. of infants on couch	15 (5 had blankets/bedding items)
No. of infants in crib	12 (8 cribs had a blankets, toys and/or pillows)
No. of infants in bassinet	10 (6 bassinets had a pillows and/or blankets)

2017 Top 4 locations and circumstances of unsafe sleep-related deaths that occurred

No. of infants in adult bed	78 (all beds had pillows and blankets)
No. of infants on couch	9 (6 had blankets/bedding items)
No. of infants in crib	9 (6 had a blankets/bedding items)
No. of infants in bassinet	6 (2 had blankets)

Source: Illinois Child Death Review Teams

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