
HELPING FAMILIES PRACTICE INFANT SAFE SLEEP

It is not always easy for families to follow the safe sleep guidelines.

Open, non-judgmental conversations with families are recommended. Two-way conversations can assist in moving toward behavior changes. Hearing directly from families about their views and situation is necessary for meaningful education to occur.


When having an infant safe sleep discussion, consider the following:

Parents are the experts on their baby.

Parents are the decision makers for how their babies sleep. As professionals, it is our responsibility to share knowledge and information to support informed decision making.

Many factors can influence a parent's sleep choices.

It's important to empathize with parents and learn about their situation. Factors may include: a parent's need for sleep, baby's temperament, what is displayed in media, advice from family members and health professionals, cultural norms and practice, views on bonding, and environmental factors.



To learn more about how to support families practicing safe sleep, take the online course at Michigan.gov/SafeSleep.

TIPS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

Use open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions help obtain more information and can begin with how or what, such as, "What do you know about safe sleep?", "What are your plans for where your baby will sleep?", or "How did your baby sleep last night?".

Listen and reflect.

Use attentive listening with reflection. Reflection allows you to acknowledge experiences and fosters non-judgmental conversation.

Share the "whys" behind the guidelines.

Providing families with safe sleep education is more than just telling them the "whats" of safe sleep. If they understand the "whys" behind the guidelines, they can make better choices in how they follow them.

Develop a plan.

It's important to help families anticipate the challenges of following the safe sleep guidelines. Families may give up on their intentions for safe sleep when faced with the stress and fatigue of caring for a newborn. Helping families plan for these challenges can help them stick with their intentions.

Helping families practice safe sleep works best when families have numerous opportunities to explore their decisions about safe sleep - before the baby is born, at the time of delivery, and throughout the first year of life - and if they have support along the way.

Research based on A Better Approach to Conversations about Breastfeeding from the National Institute from Children's Health Quality. For more information, go to www.nichq.org.