



## **SAFE SLEEP EDUCATION, KITS PROVIDED FOR PARENTS OF NEWBORNS**

HICKORY, NC – Catawba County Public Health has launched a safe sleep initiative to help new parents provide a safe sleeping environment for newborn babies.

Through the program, nurses and social workers from Public Health’s Pregnancy Care Management, Care Coordination for Children, and Postpartum Newborn Home Visiting programs identify soon-to-be parents who are eligible to receive a Safe Sleep Kit.

The Safe Sleep Kit consists of a portable “pack and play” crib, which is a safe alternative to a traditional crib; two fitted crib sheets; and two infant sleepers.

Parents who receive kits also participate in the North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation’s Baby’s Easy Safe Sleep Training Program, which provides information about safe sleep practices. Public Health staff members follow up with participants after three months to learn how they have maintained their baby’s safe sleep environment.

Information about the initiative and how families can participate will be available at Public Health’s booth during the Smart Start Family Fair Saturday, May 9 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Catawba County Partnership for Children, located at 738 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW in Hickory. Additional questions about program eligibility can be directed to Dana Lynch, Catawba County Public Health program supervisor, at (828) 695-5771.

The Children’s Advocacy and Protection Center of Catawba County recommends the following practices for creating a safe sleep environment:

- Always put babies on their backs to sleep
- Place baby alone in his or her own crib or bassinet
- Use a firm mattress with a tight-fitting sheet
- Remove toys, stuffed animals, pillows, crib bumpers, and other objects from sleeping area
- Keep face and head uncovered
- Use a wearable blanket or sleeper rather than a loose blanket
- Keep cigarette smoke away from the baby

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 3,500 infants die each year of sudden unexpected infant death (SUID). This includes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS, which is the leading cause of death for infants between 1 to 12 months old. Most of these deaths occur while

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the infant is in an unsafe sleep environment, which is associated with accidental suffocation or strangulation from things such as soft bedding or a person rolling too close to or on top of the infant while sleeping.

“New parents may not realize that seemingly innocent practices such as sleeping in bed with their baby or placing a pillow in their newborn’s crib can have tragic consequences,” said Lynch. “We hope this program will increase awareness and utilization of simple but vitally important safe sleep practices and help prevent infant deaths.”

Funding for the safe sleep initiative is provided through a Wolfe Mini Grant awarded to Public Health by the North Carolina Public Health Association. The program aims to provide Safe Sleep Kits and training to more than 80 local families.

Located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., Catawba County Public Health provides health and education services to eligible men, women, and children in the community. For more information, please visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

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**ELECTRONIC PHOTO CAPTION (SafeSleep\_NCHealthyStartFoundation.jpg):** Mom Anjelica places her daughter, Annabelle, in the ideal safe sleep environment for babies: her own crib with a fitted sheet but without any other objects, such as blankets, toys, or pillows, that can cause harm. **PHOTO CREDIT:** North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation.

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