

FAQs on the *Safe Infant Sleep Policy* for AHS Health Care Professionals

1. Why does Alberta Health Services have key messages and a policy related to safe infant sleep?

A **provincial committee** has been working since February 2010 to develop an Alberta response to sudden unexpected infant deaths in sleep-related circumstances (e.g., Sudden Infant Death Syndrome [SIDS], Sudden Unexplained Infant Death [SUID]). Surveys of Alberta professionals and parents (2010) indicated there is inconsistent knowledge and delivery of safe infant sleep information across the province.

The ***Safe Infant Sleep Key Messages*** are embedded in the brochure [Safe Sleep for Baby's First Year](#). It was launched provincially in 2012 to clarify the evidence-based safe infant sleep recommendations that should be shared with families and caregivers. The key messages are aligned with the recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canadian Paediatric Society, and American Academy of Pediatrics.

The ***Safe Infant Sleep Policy*** will ensure that all AHS health care professionals will be consistent in sharing these key messages, modeling safe infant sleep practices, and helping parents and caregivers make informed decisions to reduce the risk of SIDS and sleep-related injuries and deaths in infants.

2. How can I learn more about what I am expected to do at work related to the policy?

- **Read** the Policy
 - If you have access to AHS Internal Website:
It is available on Insite under Clinical Policy.
 - If you do NOT have access to AHS Internal Website:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7451.asp>
- **Watch** the AHS Education and Policy Webinars (See Question #3).
- **Access** the other educational resources listed below.
- **Discuss** your additional learning needs and the expectations within your worksite with your supervisor. Each program will decide how and when training will occur. It is recommended that the information be provided in orientation and reviewed each year.

3. How can I learn more about safe infant sleep?

The following resources are available for any professional working with expectant parents or parents/caregivers of infant under 1 year of age:

- Webinars: Two Safe Infant Sleep webinars are available for professionals:
 1. **Safe Infant Sleep Policy Webinar:** reviews the components and responsibilities outlined in the AHS Safe Infant Sleep Policy.
 2. **Safe Infant Sleep Educational Webinar – The Issues of Safe Infant Sleep:** for professionals who need to know more about the issues of Safe Infant Sleep in Alberta (statistics, risk factors, trends, provincial response and available resources), the key messages for prevention, and the role of professionals who support expectant parents, and families of infants.

They can be found on the AHS Internal Site on the Clinical Policy page.

OR on the AHS External Site at:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7451.asp>

- **Professional Fact Sheet and Literature Reviews:** Detailed information on the research background of the key messages at:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7498.asp>
- **Alberta Perinatal Professionals Electronic Library (APPEL) module on Safe Infant Sleep** developed in partnership with the Alberta Perinatal Health Program (APHP); available to Alberta Health Services and Health Canada health care professionals. For more information and to register, go to: <http://aphp.dapasoft.com> (using Internet Explorer). The User Orientation Manual on the home page will guide you through the minimum requirements for Window based PCs, how to register, how to access the Safe Infant Sleep Module and how to navigate within the learning module.
- **AHS Injury Prevention’s A Million Messages Online Learning Module** at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7607.asp> includes a section on safe infant sleep. Completion of the module is recommended for orientation for professionals working with parents/caregivers of children under 6 years of age.

4. I am concerned that an infant I am caring for has a condition that makes it too risky to use a supine (back) sleep position. What should I do?

Bring your concern to the attention of the "most responsible health care practitioner" on your team or unit.

5. What does “most responsible health care practitioner” mean?

“Most responsible health practitioner” means the health practitioner who has responsibility and accountability for the specific treatment/procedure(s) provided to a patient and who is authorized by Alberta Health Services to perform the duties required to fulfill the delivery of such a treatment/procedure(s) within the scope of his/her practice. Talk to your supervisor if you are not sure of who this is on your team/unit. Refer to the AHS Clinical Policy on Consent: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/3084.asp>

6. When is a baby ready to transition to supine (back) sleep?

If supine (lying on back) sleep is determined to be medically contraindicated at any stage, the most responsible health care provider will determine when the baby is ready to transition to supine sleep, and a plan for the transition needs to be built into the infant’s care plan. If the transition will occur after the baby is discharged, make referrals and help the family to plan for follow-up. This will ensure that parents/caregivers have the support and encouragement to place your baby on his/her back and reduce the risk of SIDS when the original condition is resolved.

7. What do I do if I provide parents or caregivers with safe infant sleep information and they choose not to follow it?

The main objective is that parents and caregivers are making informed decisions. Ensure all families have been given and understand the safe infant sleep information so they are aware of the risks and benefits. If a family chooses a sleep option that is not supported by our key messages, document their decision in the appropriate health record according to your local clinical and professional guidelines. This may be the infant’s and/or parent/s health record, depending on who is currently a patient.

Documentation must include:

- observations and details about your discussion of current infant sleep practices and key messages about safe infant sleep
- the parent/guardian’s decision on their plan for their infant’s sleep
- any referrals made to support the family to follow through with safe infant sleep practices at home (e.g., public health referral)

8. One of my co-workers is providing information to families/modeling infant care that conflicts with what I have learned about safe infant sleep. What should I do?

First, make sure your co-worker is aware of the AHS policy and key messages. If the issue continues, discuss with your/their supervisor or manager. Management is responsible to ensure employees review the learning materials and follow the AHS Safe Infant Sleep Policy. The expectation to follow AHS policies and guidelines and use evidence-based practice is outlined in:

- AHS Code of Conduct:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/pub-code-of-conduct.pdf>
- Nursing Practice Standards: http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna-Admin/Uploads/new_nps_with_ethics.pdf

9. What materials can I use to educate parents and caregivers?

AHS resources for parents and caregivers include a brochure and a bookmark. They provide the key messages of safe infant sleep; the brochure provides detailed information on the risks of bed-sharing. The bookmark has been designed to be used as a low-literacy option.

Both the brochure and bookmark are available for download at:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7498.asp>

To order these resources in bulk, please click on the link below:

www.datagroup.ca/online2

User name: healthypublic

Password: healthy2013

10. I found a nice pamphlet on-line; I have an older version of the safe infant sleep information. Is it okay if I use these?

The Safe Infant Sleep Policy outlines the approved AHS key messages, and these are the messages contained in the AHS resources for parents. It is important that all staff are consistent in the information provided to the public to avoid confusion. The AHS resources are evidence-based, and resources from another source may contain conflicting information. If you have questions about information you have found from another source, contact the Safe Infant Sleep Project Lead (see contact information below).

11. How do I approach the subject with parents or caregivers?

Our role as health professionals is not to tell parents or caregivers what to do, but to support informed decision-making, and help them come up with solutions that will work for them. Avoid framing the information as directions only. Try to live by the maxim: “Ask instead of tell”. Explore with them what type of sleep environment they are considering. Try to understand the thinking behind their decisions. Help them problem-solve for solutions (e.g., a cradle or bassinet or less elaborate crib that doesn’t take up as much space will help facilitate room sharing; places they can go for help securing a safe crib; how they will cope with the inevitable changes in their sleep patterns, etc.). Clearly, the earlier this discussion takes place, the better – preferably in the prenatal period.

Don’t assume someone else on your team or within AHS has already discussed this issue with families – include safe infant sleep in the routine questions you ask and the supports you provide in your practice.

12. I didn’t find the answer to my question related to safe infant sleep in any of the resources. What should I do?

Additional questions or comments may be directed to the Safe Infant Sleep Project Lead by emailing leslie.barker@albertahealthservices.ca
Your questions and comments are appreciated.