

# News Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 6, 2017

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## Alone, On Their Back, In a Crib - Helping Babies Sleep Safely

***Hospitals Achieve Safe Sleep Champion Status as Part of DHHS Initiative***

Note: Sound bites on this topic are available - [www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio)

Photos of Mary Lanning Healthcare and York General Hospital receiving Safe Sleep Champion certificates -  
[www.dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/newsroom\\_SafeSleepPhotos.aspx](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/newsroom_SafeSleepPhotos.aspx)

**Lincoln** – There were 45 sudden unexpected infant deaths in Nebraska during 2012 and 2013. The deaths occurred in 16 different counties, covering both urban and rural areas. At least 35 occurred in an unsafe sleep environment.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) worked with the Nebraska Hospital Association, the Nebraska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative to launch the Nebraska Safe Sleep Hospital Campaign. The campaign provides evidence-based education and training to parents of newborns as well as birthing hospital staff.

"Providing consistent training and education on safe sleep for all hospital personnel caring for children under a year old ensures the same safe sleep message is shared with the parents of more than 26,000 babies born in Nebraska every year," said Dr. Tom Williams, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS. "An increase in safe sleep awareness will result in more babies sleeping in safe environments and reaching their first birthday."

DHHS is pleased to announce that Mary Lanning Healthcare in Hastings and York General Hospital are the first Safe Sleep Hospital Champions in Nebraska and 30 other hospitals have pledged and are working through the process to become a safe sleep hospital - <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/MCAH/Pages/HospitalCampaign.aspx>.

"It was important for Mary Lanning to become a Safe Sleep Champion because we put a large emphasis on education for our patients and staff," said Shana Schultz, Director at Mary Lanning Healthcare. "The benefits of having the

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formal education for the staff and patients allows us to reinforce best practices for safe sleep and helps us achieve the highest quality of care for our patients built on evidenced-based practices."

"We chose to be a Safe Sleep Champion pilot hospital because we want to provide the safest care possible for our tiniest patients," said Nancy Hengelfelt, BSN, RN, OB Director at York General Hospital. "Through the initiative our staff has completed Safe Sleep training and models the techniques for our patients. Our new parents see firsthand the proper way to put baby down to sleep, how to dress baby so they aren't too warm and what a safe sleep environment looks like. It has been beneficial to staff as well as our patients."

The Safe Sleep Campaign starts within the hospital setting, encouraging all Nebraska birthing hospitals to become a Safe Sleep Hospital Champion. To be considered a Safe Sleep Champion, the hospital signs a pledge, creates or updates a Safe Sleep Policy, provides yearly education to hospital personnel, models safe sleep recommendations, and educates parents with evidence-based safe sleep materials in accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute 71-2103 and the 2016 American Academy of Pediatrics Safe Sleep Recommendations.

Resources are available to help hospitals become Safe Sleep Hospital Champions including a Safe Sleep Toolkit - [dhhs.ne.gov/HospitalCampaign](http://dhhs.ne.gov/HospitalCampaign)

The ABCs of Safe Sleep:

- A** – Your baby should always sleep **alone**.
- B** – Your baby should always sleep on his or her **back**.
- C** – Your baby should always sleep in a safe **crib**.

Learn more about safe sleep and how to create a safe sleep environment -

[dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/MCAH/Documents/SafeSleepofBaby.pdf](http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/MCAH/Documents/SafeSleepofBaby.pdf).

DHHS collaborated with University of Nebraska Medical Center to produce the ABCs of Safe Sleep video that is available to all Nebraska birthing hospitals as well as parents and caregivers. The video is available in English and Spanish and can be found here - [dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/SIDS/Pages/Resources.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/SIDS/Pages/Resources.aspx).