HOSPITAL PROGRAMS CAN REDUCE UNSAFE SLEEP DEATHS

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OBJECTIVES

• Describe what constitutes "unsafe sleep"
• Recognize the major causes of child abuse deaths and the need for prevention
• Explain how education in the newborn units might reduce the rate of unsafe sleep deaths

UNSAFE SLEEP

• When a child sleeps in an environment in which they may have compromised breathing
  • Sleep in a bed with an adult
  • Sleep with an adult on a sofa, etc
  • Sleep in a cluttered crib or on their stomach
• Leading cause of child maltreatment death in Florida (followed by drowning and less often – physical abuse)
• Imperative: prevent such deaths. But traditional education has not lessened the number of deaths for years
METHODS – PINELLAS COUNTY

• Safe sleep education was provided to new mothers in various settings:
  • Delivery hospitals
  • WIC offices
  • Pediatrician offices
  • OB/GYN offices
  • Home visiting services
  • First Responders
  • School based health clinics
• Materials such as Welcome Baby Bags and cribs/Pack-n-Plays provided along with education.

RESULTS – PINELLAS COUNTY

• 2016 and 2017 - 10 Medical Examiner and CADR confirmed deaths due to unsafe sleep.
• Safe sleep initiative started on 2018.
  • Deaths due to unsafe sleep went down to 5
• 2019 - 6 deaths
• 2020 efforts were postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.
  • back up to 9 deaths.

METHODS – DUVAL COUNTY

• The Florida Statewide Child Abuse Death Review team identified Duval County (Jacksonville) as having the highest rate of unsafe sleep deaths per capita.
• Along with the local child abuse death review team, a project was created to deliver 15,000 bags with information about unsafe sleep to parents of every newborn born to the 9 birthing hospitals within the county for an entire calendar year.
• Volunteers helped distribute these bags and materials to all the hospitals.
• NICU and labor and delivery nurses received training, and then used the materials to educate all the mothers whose children were born in 2020.
METHODS – DUVAL COUNTY

• Training consisted of:
  • Review of safe sleep
  • Review of handout materials
  • A fact sheet to be discussed with parents and what to say

RESULTS – DUVAL COUNTY

• Averaging about 25 deaths in the previous 5 years, there have only been 8 deaths for children born in 2020 - in 18 months since the initiation of the program from January 1, 2020.
• While the final count will be available December 31, 2021, the results so far indicate a major reduction in unsafe sleep deaths.
• To date for children born in 2021, there have been 3 deaths
CONCLUSIONS

- Deaths from unsafe sleep have been stubbornly resistant to prevention
- A comprehensive, countywide nursery education program with supplemental materials can significantly reduce a major cause of child maltreatment deaths

THANK YOU!

- Vicki Whitfield
- Pinellas staff
- Duval County Hospitals
- UF – Downtown
- UF–North
- Memorial
- St. Vincent’s – Riverside
- St. Vincent’s – Southside
- NAS – JAX Naval Hospital
- Baptist – Downtown
- Baptist – South
- Baptist – Beaches

REFERENCES