

# Promoting Safe Sleep Practices Through Modeling and Education in the NICU

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## BUDGETS AND RESOURCES

The yearly cost of this project is approximately \$6,000.\* Training for staff was conducted by SIDS Mid-Atlantic and funding for sleep sacks has been provided by a personal donation, and corporate donations from TechSystems, Inc and the Dulles Greenway.\* Educational materials are provided by the national Back to Sleep Campaign and March of Dimes NICU Family Support.

\* Update: Now a free program from HALO Innovations

## BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

The Safe Sleep Project in the NICU was initiated as a result of needs identified through the Northern Virginia Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR). FIMR cases demonstrated that unsafe sleep practices were an ongoing problem in this area, particularly for infants born prematurely.

In addition, it was observed that while safe sleep was an item on the discharge checklist, NICU staff were not consistently modeling safe sleep or providing consistent education on safe sleep practices. The purpose of this project was to create an environment in the NICU that promotes safe sleep practices through modeling and education.

## IMPACT/RESULTS

Evaluation is integrated into the quality assurance follow-up calls conducted by NICU nurses to all families several days after discharge. From December 2009 through June 2010, **209 out of 210 parents who were successfully contacted after discharge reported knowledge of safe sleep practices.** There has been observable change in daily practice since the beginning of the Safe Sleep Project.

## PROGRAM MATERIALS OR METHODS

The **Safe Sleep Project** uses a multi-faceted approach to promote safe sleep practices among NICU families.

**Staff training** was initially provided to 65 nurses on their role in promoting safe sleep practices among NICU families. Safe sleep is now incorporated into the curriculum for all new nursing fellows and was included as a required competency during the annual 2010 skills fair for all 32 core intermediate care nurses.

**Staff model safe sleep** by removing items from the crib, placing the baby on his or her back to sleep, and using a sleep sack. A model crib is in the intermediate care rooms with labels and a teaching doll showing a safe sleep environment.

**Family education** is provided using a *Safe Sleep Kit* in English or Spanish when the baby transitions to an open crib. The kit includes: a sleep sack, Back to Sleep Campaign materials, and a March of Dimes *HOME* booklet. The sleep sacks provide a visual cue for staff to reinforce safe sleep education and model appropriate safe sleep practices while families are still in the NICU. March of Dimes risk reduction classes and written materials in the family waiting room are also provided.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT

This project provides a practical framework for integrating risk reduction strategies among NICU families that could be replicated in various NICU settings.

## LEARNER OBJECTIVES

1. Attendee will be able to identify at least two ways to integrate messages and risk reduction strategies on safe sleep practices into their work with families in the NICU.
2. Attendee will be able to describe at least two strategies to increase modeling of safe sleep practices in the NICU.

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

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