**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As a member of the Missouri Safe Sleep Coalition, Infant Safe Sleep is one of Children’s Trust Fund’s (CTF) primary public education campaigns. The campaign is driven by a shared statewide goal to substantially decrease sleep-related infant injuries and deaths in Missouri and reduce unsafe sleep health equity disparities. The Safe Sleep Grant Program is a four-year funded initiative, beginning in 2021, to provide increased education, awareness, practice, and training of safe sleep recommendations. An evaluation of the Safe Sleep Grant Program was developed by the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare (KUSSW) in collaboration with CTF to measure knowledge gain, experience with programming, and recommendations for improvement.

**Purpose**

Decrease sleep-related infant injuries and deaths in Missouri and reduce unsafe sleep health equity disparities.

**Program Delivery**

***Deliver consistent education, training, and information***

that aligns with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations and the Missouri Safe Sleep Strategic Plan

***Enhance access to support***

through the distribution of safe sleep equipment; and

***Address systemic barriers***

to adoption of safe sleep recommendations

**Background**

**The SAFE SLEEP GRANT PROGRAM**

The Safe Sleep Grant Program serves families throughout Missouri by providing caregivers with safe cribs and education about infant safe sleep. The project includes five regional partners:

* **Safe Sleep Safe Babies Community Network**, Children’s Mercy, *Kansas City, MO*
* **Nap Time, Bed Time, Every Time – Safe Sleep for Babies,** The Community Partnership of Rolla, *Rolla, MO*
* **Southwest Missouri First Birthday Safe Sleep Project**, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, *Springfield, MO*

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* **Safe Sleep First,** Nurses for Newborns, *St. Louis, MO*
* **Safe Sleep 4 Babies**, St. Joseph Youth Alliance, *St. Joseph, MO*

These partners are committed to a) Developing and delivering consistent education, training, and informational messaging content that aligns with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations for infant safe sleep and the Missouri Safe Sleep Strategic Plan; b) Enhancing access to support through the distribution of safe sleep equipment; and c) Addressing systemic barriers to safe sleep recommendation adoption by incorporating a health equity lens in the targeted engagement of the most impacted communities.

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**Design**

In collaboration with Children’s Trust Fund, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare (KUSSW) developed a program evaluation of the Safe Sleep Grant Program to examine changes in rates of sleep-related infant injuries and deaths as it relates to increased knowledge, awareness, and practice in the funded communities. Through the administration of pre- and post-training surveys and focus groups with caregivers (completed XXX 2024) and providers *(results expected early 2025)*, this evaluation examines families’ experiences with program operations and messaging and gathers recommendations for strengthening safe sleep programming.

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**What Was Learned**

The Safe Sleep Grant Program has been effective in reaching caregivers across the most populous regions of Missouri, as well as into many rural communities. Since January 2023, the Safe Sleep Grant Program has served 69 of Missouri’s 114 counties. These counties represent over 80% of the state’s population. Gaps in service areas remain in the Northeast and Southeast regions of the state.

The Cribs for Kids’ National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program recognizes hospital systems with a commitment to infant safe sleep. Currently, 19 hospitals across 12 Missouri counties hold certifications, including 9 hospitals in the Kansas City region, 7 hospitals in the St. Louis region, and 3 hospitals in the south-central part of the state. For more information about the National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program, visit https://cribsforkids.org/hospitalcertification.

Caregivers gained knowledge of safe sleep from the trainings.

Caregivers agree it is important to discuss safe sleep with anyone who might care for their infant.

Caregivers agree the safest sleeping practice for their infant is alone, on their back, in an empty crib.

Providers gained knowledge of safe sleep from the trainings and report more confidence in delivering safe sleep education to caregivers.

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**SNAPSHOT OF EVALUATION FINDINGS**

**The Evaluation Found**

Beginning in April 2023, standard caregiver and provider surveys were regularly administered before and after caregivers and providers received safe sleep education. Caregiver pre- and post-training surveys measured a change in knowledge of safe sleep recommendations, agreement with safe sleep recommendations, and their intent to practice safe sleep. Provider pre- and post-surveys were administered to newly trained hospital staff, direct service providers, including home visiting programs, and other community members. Provider surveys measured a change in knowledge of safe sleep recommendations, confidence in delivering safe sleep education, and their agreement with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations.

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Analysis of caregiver and provider surveys found that:

* Overall, caregivers gained knowledge of infant safe sleep after completing the training program, as measured by analysis of a pre- and post-training survey.

* Over 80% of caregivers agree it is important to discuss safe sleep with anyone who might assist with their baby’s nap time or nighttime sleep routine, and over 90% of caregivers surveyed can identify a family member or other caregiver who will support safe sleep if they are not present.

* After receiving safe sleep education, over 95% of caregivers surveyed agree or strongly agree the safest sleeping practice for their baby is when they sleep alone, on their back in an empty crib with a safe, firm mattress, fitted sheet, and no loose blankets, clothing, or toys. ​

* Overall, providers gained knowledge of infant safe sleep after completing the training program, as measured by analysis of a pre- and post-training survey. Additionally, providers self-reported their confidence in providing safe sleep education to caregivers was higher after completing the training.

**6000**

caregivers trained in safe sleep recommendations

**5000**

portable cribs distributed to families

**700**

professionals trained in providing safe sleep education to caregivers

In addition to findings from caregiver and provider pre- and post-training surveys, the evaluation described the capacity of safe sleep partners to educate families on the recommendations for safe sleep, distribute safe sleep materials to caregivers, and promote consistent messaging from providers. Since July 2021, safe sleep partners have provided education to over 6000 caregivers and distributed almost 5000 portable cribs and wearable blankets and just under 4000 crib sheets to qualifying families across the state of Missouri. Additionally, safe sleep partners have trained nearly 700 professionals to provide clear and consistent safe sleep messaging to caregivers in home, hospital, and community settings.

**THE NUMBERS**

***“I think also it's easy to be in the class and be in 100% agreement with everything that's said. But when you're going on your third night of no sleep, it's much harder to follow safe sleep.”***

***– Caregiver***

**Caregivers Said**

In October and November 2023, the KUSSW hosted focus groups with caregivers who previously had completed safe sleep education with one of the five Safe Sleep Grant Program partners. Twenty-nine caregivers participated, representing 4 out of 5 grantee partners. Analysis of caregiver focus groups found:

* Overall, caregivers had positive experiences with the safe sleep education program and found the trainers and materials to be effective.

* Access to additional resources and concrete supports reinforced safe sleep practice and fostered family well-being.
* Caregivers experienced challenges with adhering to recommended safe sleep practices, including fatigue, night feedings, beliefs held by older generations, and navigating single parenting.

**Key Takeaways**

Evaluation of the Safe Sleep Grant Program highlights important findings regarding safe sleep partner reach and capacity to serve families across Missouri, as well as caregivers’ experiences with safe sleep programming and practice. ​Analysis of pre- and post-training surveys, focus groups with caregivers, and Safe Sleep Grant Program data reveals the following strengths and opportunities for future programming:

**Strengths**

* Access to safe sleep materials (e.g., portable cribs, sleep sacks, etc.) supports family adoption of safe sleep recommendations and reduces the financial impact of caring for an infant.
* Overall, caregivers gained knowledge of safe sleep recommendations following completion of a training program, and over 95% of caregivers surveyed intend to follow safe sleep practices with their infant.
* Easy to follow program materials, effective messaging, and knowledgeable trainers increased caregivers’ knowledge and retention of safe sleep recommendations.
* Following the safe sleep programming, over 95% of surveyed caregivers agree with the following statement: The safest sleeping practice for my baby is when they sleep alone on their back in an empty crib (or bassinet) with a safe, firm mattress with a fitted sheet and no loose blankets, clothing, or toys.
* Overall, surveyed providers gained knowledge of infant safe sleep after completing the training program and reported higher confidence in providing safe sleep education to caregivers.

**Opportunities**

* Safe Sleep Grant Program partners provided education to families in the most populous regions of Missouri, but there is opportunity to expand services into the Northeast and Southeast parts of the state.
* There is opportunity to incorporate discussion around navigating the challenges of life with a newborn into safe sleep programming, including harm reduction and the impact of fatigue, night feedings, and the challenges of single parenting on adherence to safe sleep recommendations.
* Many caregivers are not provided safe sleep education until after they have given birth in a hospital. There is an opportunity to partner with local OBGYN practices and other prenatal courses (e.g., childbirth classes, breastfeeding courses, etc.) to provide safe sleep programming prenatally to caregivers.

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