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Children's Services Hosts Second Annual Infant Safe Sleep Symposium

"Safe Sleep: Cross-Systems Strategies for Reducing Infant Deaths"

NEW YORK, December 16, 2014 - The New York City Administration for Children's Services, in collaboration with our public and private partners, today hosted the second annual Infant Safe Sleep Symposium. Funded through a partnership with Casey Family Programs, the symposium addressed strategies to reduce preventable, infant fatalities related to unsafe sleeping conditions across the multiple systems that interact with families – hospitals, schools, the child welfare system, shelter system, public housing, and community based organizations.

Safe Sleep: Cross-Systems Strategies for Reducing Infant Deaths sought to deepen participants' understanding of these tragic and preventable deaths, to look at the communities most impacted, and to elicit input on ideas for a coordinated New York City cross-system model for prevention and education.

Attendees included policy and decision making leaders and practitioners, representing city and provider agencies, community leaders and advocates. The interagency planning committee included, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Department of Aging, Department of Homeless Services, Health and Hospitals Corporation, and the NYC Housing Authority.

"It takes an entire city to raise healthy and safe children and this symposium is a testament to the importance of a collaborative multi-system response to this public health issue," **said ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrión**. "Through an integrated approach, we can raise awareness and empower families with life-saving information and resources to promote safe sleep and reduce infant injury."

"Placing babies to sleep in unsafe conditions is a leading cause of infant suffocation deaths in New York City," **said First Deputy Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. "We must do all that we can to make sure our youngest New Yorkers sleep safely, every night. We're proud to partner with other City agencies and community partners to raise awareness, educate families, and develop strategies to prevent infant fatalities."

"Education is provided to mothers before the birth of their newborns," **said Dr. Warren Seigel, Chair of the Pediatric Council at HHC**. "The safest place for a baby to sleep is alone in their bassinet or crib. No soft toys or other objects should be with them when they sleep."

"The Department of Homeless Services works closely with its government and community partners to educate new parents about keeping their new born infants safe when they sleep," **said DHS Commissioner Gilbert Taylor**. "There are over 25,000 children in shelter, and it is critical that we work collaboratively to ensure the safety of infants and children."

“It is important that all members of the family and other caregivers be knowledgeable about Infant Safe Sleep practices, even as grandparents or as an occasional babysitter,” **said NYC Department for the Aging Commissioner Donna M. Corrado.** “Unknowingly, practices used by previous generations or cultures may have put infants at risk. The new guidelines for Infant Safe Sleep, if practiced broadly, are an important step in making sure our infants sleep safely each day and that the number of SIDS fatalities continue to decline.”

Over the past several years, ACS has made it a priority to raise awareness of the safe sleeping practices to families we serve, especially through our preventive services and early care & education provider partners. Today’s symposium highlighted the importance of working together to raise awareness, educate families, and develop strategies to prevent infant fatalities.

The overwhelming majority of infant injury deaths in the city are sleep-related. We also know that while unsafe sleep deaths cross cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic demographics, several communities in the Bronx and Brooklyn are particularly impacted.

According to data supplied by the NYC Department of Health and presented in the New York City Child Fatality Review Advisory Team’s 2013 report, Understanding Child Inquiry Deaths, between 2004 and 2011:

- 80% of infant injury deaths in New York City were sleep-related, defined as deaths in which the infant was asleep when last seen alive;
- An average of 48 infants died every year from a sleep-related injury at a rate of 38.5 deaths per 100,000 live births;
- Infants between 28-days and four months old, black non-Hispanic infants, babies born pre-term, and babies born to adolescent mothers, are at a higher risk for sleep-related death than other infants, and;
- Overall, infant injury death rates are highest in for black non-Hispanic infants, infants living in the Bronx and infants living in very high poverty neighborhoods.