



Safe Sleep for Infants

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Effective Date: November 1, 2026

Applicability: All Licensed and Funded Child Care Programs

BACKGROUND

Infants under the age of 12 months are at risk of Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is committed to supporting educators and families in their efforts to reduce this risk and keep infants safe in early education programs. Therefore, in accordance with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (June 2022), EEC establishes the following Safe Sleep policy to be followed by all individuals caring for infants younger than 12 months old.

AUTHORITY

- 606 CMR 7.11(13)(e): Programs serving infants must:
 1. Place infants on their backs for sleeping, unless the child's health care professional orders otherwise in writing;
 2. Nap infants in an individual crib, portacrib, playpen, or bassinet;
 3. Ensure that cribs have firm, properly fitted mattresses with clean coverings, and do not contain any potential head entrapment areas;
 4. Ensure that slats on cribs are no more than $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches apart; and
 5. Ensure that cribs, portacribs, playpens, and bassinets used for sleeping infants younger than 12 months of age do not contain pillows, comforters, stuffed animals or other soft, padded materials.

POLICY STATEMENT

All individuals caring for infants in an EEC-licensed or funded program must follow the Safe Sleep practices outlined below.

Always place infants under 12 months old on their backs when putting them down to nap, rest, or sleep.

- Each infant must be placed on their back for sleep or rest unless that child's health care provider provides a written order for an alternate sleeping position. This order must include a specific description of the way the infant is to be slept, the medical condition requiring an alternate sleeping position, must be signed by the child's health care provider and parent, and must be followed as written. The order must be kept in the child's file and available for review by EEC staff.
- Programs may provide EEC's [Infant Safe Sleep Exception Form](#) to the family to have their child's physician complete or may accept an equivalent physician's form, so long as that form contains the same information required by the EEC form.
- Even when an infant can easily turn over from back to front and back again, program staff must continue to put the infant down to sleep on their back. If the infant then rolls over into their preferred position, it is not necessary to reposition the infant. If an educator has not previously observed the infant rolling over, they should reposition that infant onto their back.
- In accordance with 606 CMR 7.08(6)(j), all programs serving infants must provide families with written information, prior to enrollment, about their Safe Sleep practices, including the practice of sleeping infants on their backs as required by 606 CMR 7.11(13)(e).
- Group child care programs must include in their written health care policy, "a plan to ensure that all children twelve months of age or younger are placed on their backs for sleeping, unless the child's health care professional orders otherwise in writing" [See 606 CMR 7.11(19)(a)(9)].

Always place infants on a firm, flat, non-inclined sleep surface.

- Each infant must sleep in an individual crib, portacrib, playpen, or bassinet with a mattress that is:
 - **Firm.** Items used to make the sleep surface softer, including but not limited to pillows, cushions, and mattress toppers, are not allowed to be used in place of, or in addition to, a mattress.
 - **Properly fitted.** This means that the mattress fits tightly and there are no gaps between it and the side of the crib, portacrib, playpen, or bassinet. A

properly fitted mattress maintains its shape even when covered by a correctly sized fitted sheet.

- **Designed for use with the product.** Each element of the safe sleep environment must be designed to work with the other elements of the environment. For example, the mattress or sheet used in a playpen must be the one designed for use with that model.
- **Covered with a clean, fitted sheet.** Sheets must be fitted to the mattress and designed for that mattress type. Sheets should not be so loose that the infant can pull on the sheet or that it bunches. The sheet should not be so tight that the mattress corners pull upwards. EEC recommends confirming the fit of the sheet before laying an infant down to sleep or rest to ensure the sheet cannot come loose.
- Infants may not:
 - be placed to sleep or rest on a bed or sofa;
 - sleep in wearable infant carriers or slings;
 - sleep in car seats, swings, bouncy seats, or other sitting devices. If an infant is showing signs of sleepiness in a sitting device, that infant must be moved to a crib, portacrib, playpen, or bassinet **before they fall asleep**. Infants observed by EEC staff to be asleep in one of these devices will be noted as being slept unsafely and the program will receive a Safe Sleep noncompliance, regardless of how recently that infant fell asleep.

Always use safe cribs and approved sleep equipment for infants.

- All infant sleeping equipment must be checked regularly to make sure it has not been recalled, is not missing any hardware, and is in good repair.
- All infant sleeping equipment must meet current [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#) and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM International) safety standards.
- To demonstrate that the crib or other sleeping equipment meets the current CPSC crib standards, one of the following must be observed on any equipment used for sleeping children:
 - A “tracking label,” which is a permanent, distinguishing mark on the crib that contains, at minimum, the source of the product, the date of manufacture (any date on or after June 28, 2011 will be accepted), and cohort information, such as batch or run number;

- A registration form including the manufacturer's name and contact information, model name, model number, and a date of manufacture on or after June 28, 2011; or
- A Children's Product Certificate (CPC) or from a CPSC-accepted third party lab demonstrating compliance with 16 C.F.R. part 1219 or 16 C.F.R. part 1220.¹

Always keep soft objects and loose bedding out of infant sleep areas

- The safe sleep environment, and the area within the infant's reach, must be kept free of any soft items, including but not limited to loose blankets, pillows, bibs, stuffed animals, wedges, positioners, and bumper pads. Nothing is permitted to be draped over the side of the infant's crib, playpen, or portacrib while the infant is in it.
- Weighted sleep aids are prohibited and may not be used in an infant safe sleep environment. This prohibition includes but is not limited to: weighted blankets, weighted swaddles, weighted sleep sacks, or any other weighted clothing or bedding items.
- Any clothing or accessory that creates a risk of entanglement or strangulation must be removed prior to the infant being placed in the safe sleep environment. This includes bibs, hats, hair accessories, jewelry, and any clothing with ties or hoods, such as hooded sweatshirts and jackets. For more information on jewelry, see page 6.
- Infants may not be swaddled unless a child's health care provider provides written documentation attesting to the medical necessity of swaddling.² This documentation must include:
 - the medical condition that requires the infant to be swaddled;
 - the duration of time the infant should be swaddled;

¹ While manufacturers, importers, and retailers are not required to supply CPCs or test reports to consumers, many will provide these documents upon request or post them on their websites. A CPC or test report indicating compliance with any of the following standards is acceptable for full size cribs: F1169-10, 10a, or 11. A CPC or test report indicating compliance with any of the following standards is acceptable for non-full size cribs: F406-10l 10a, 10b, 11, 11a, 11b, 12, or 12a. If a crib purchased after June 28, 2011 does not have a tracking label or registration form, contact CPSC's Office of Compliance and Field Operations at jjrgl@cpsc.gov. Receipts alone are not an indicator of compliance and should only be used to support the documents identified above when determining compliance.

² For the purpose of this policy, swaddling is defined as wrapping an infant in a blanket or similar material in a manner that restricts movement, including wraps secured with Velcro, snaps, or similar fasteners. Garments such as sleep sacks or zip-up blanket sleepers that leave the infant's arms free are not considered swaddles, regardless of how they are marketed.

- the signature of the child's health care provider; and
- the signature of the child's parent or guardian.
- Programs may provide families with EEC's [Infant Safe Sleep Exception Form](#) for completion by the child's health care provider or accept equivalent documentation from the health care provider, provided it contains all required information noted above.
- The child care program must maintain a copy of the written documentation in a manner available for review by EEC staff. The program must follow the physician's documented instructions precisely. The order must be kept in the child's file and available for review by EEC staff.

Always provide each infant with an individual sleep area.

- Each infant must have an individual sleep area; co-sleeping with another infant, child, or adult is prohibited.

Always avoid overheating and use of head coverings while infants are sleeping.

- Infants must be dressed appropriately for the environment; educators must take care to avoid over-bundling. Infants should be dressed in no more than one layer more than an adult would wear to be comfortable in the same environment.
- When an infant is sleeping, educators must periodically check the infant for signs of overheating such as sweating, damp hair, flushed skin, or the infant's chest feeling hot to the touch.
- Due to the risk of overheating, do not place hats, other than those helmets prescribed by a health care provider, on infants when indoors; the infant's head and face must remain uncovered.
- EEC recommends that the temperature of the infant sleep environment is between 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit. Programs must make reasonable efforts to maintain this temperature range.

Always ensure pacifiers used during sleep do not include additional components or attachments.

- Infants may use pacifiers while sleeping, provided the pacifier does not include any extra components. Any attachments to the pacifier, including clips to the infant's clothing, beads, small blankets, or plush/stuffed toys, must be removed prior to laying the infant down to sleep. Pacifiers with built-in straps, cords, tethers, or other items that cannot be removed are not permitted in the infant sleep space.

Always remove bottles from infant sleep areas before sleep.

- In accordance with 606 CMR 7.12(10)(a)(3), infants must be held when being fed a bottle. Infants may not have bottles with them in the safe sleep environment.

Always remove jewelry from infants before sleep.

- Jewelry must be removed before placing a child to sleep.
- Jewelry may only be left on when a parent or guardian requests so in writing. Documentation of the request must be kept in the child's file and available for review by EEC staff. Programs can ask parents or guardians to fill out and sign EEC's [Infant Jewelry Waiver](#), or an equivalent form created by the program.

Always remove hanging objects from infant sleep areas.

- Hanging objects such as mobiles, sound machines, crib toys, or mirrors are not allowed.
- Cribs, portacribs, playpens, and bassinets must be positioned in a way that prevents an infant from reaching hazards including, but not limited to, dangling cords, electric wires, window-covering cords, and any other potential strangulation risks.

Always supervise infants during sleep in accordance with Safe Sleep practices.

- Home monitors, including audio and/or video monitors, or commercial devices marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS may not be relied upon for the supervision of sleeping infants.
- Infants younger than 6 months:
 - Infants younger than 6 months of age at the time of enrollment must be under direct visual supervision at all times during the first 6 weeks they are in care, including while they are sleeping, falling asleep, and waking [See 606 CMR 7.10(5)(a)].
 - Infants younger than 6 months of age who have been in care for more than 6 weeks must be seen and/or heard at all times during sleep.
- Infants older than 6 months:
 - Infants older than 6 months of age must be seen and/or heard at all times during sleep.
 - In family child care programs, napping infants over 6 months of age must be visually observed at least every 15 minutes. When children are placed in a separate room for naps, the door must remain ajar [See 606 CMR 7.10(07)(d)].

- All infants:
 - Spaces used for sleeping infants must be lit well enough to allow supervising staff to see each infant's face and skin color. Infants may not sleep in completely darkened rooms.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- In accordance with the EEC Essentials 2.0 Policy, **all** educators, administrators, assistants, volunteers, and any other staff counted in a program's s adult-child ratios must complete all EEC Essentials 2.0 training modules, including "Safe Sleep Practices" and "Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome," as well as the corresponding annual refresher course.
- In programs that serve infants through school-aged children, only those staff members who have taken the complete 13-course EEC Essentials for Early Childhood 2.0 package, including the two infant-focused courses, and corresponding annual refresher course, may provide coverage in the infant classroom, regardless of how brief the coverage period.

COMPLIANCE

When a program is found to be non-compliant with EEC's Safe Sleep regulations or policy, the educator must immediately take the necessary steps to come into compliance. If a solution is not immediately clear, EEC staff will work with the program to explore options, including by consulting with the EEC Supervisor or Regional Director. If a compliant solution still cannot be found during the course of the visit, care for any infant under 12 months old without access to a safe sleep environment must cease immediately and may not resume until the program can demonstrate compliance to EEC.³

1st Safe Sleep Citation

- Program Notification to Families of Involved Infants: On the day of the citation, the program must complete the ["Safe Sleep Letter to Parent - First Citation of Noncompliance Findings"](#) and send it home to the family of each infant involved in

³ EEC staff may approve the program to resume care as soon as the program provides evidence of coming into compliance, even if the program has not yet submitted a corrective action plan. Photos and/or videos sent via text or email are acceptable means of demonstrating compliance for EEC staff. Programs must still respond to the noncompliance by submitting a corrective action plan via LEAD.

the Safe Sleep noncompliance. The program may instead use a different Safe Sleep parent letter, if approved by EEC, that describes the visit findings and plans to immediately make corrections. A copy of each letter, signed and dated by the parent(s), must be returned to the program within two business days and must be retained in the child's file and available for EEC review.

- Education: Within 10 business days of the citation, all educators and staff involved in the care of infants on the day of the citation must complete the EEC compliance training on Safe Sleep through the StrongStart Professional Development System. Programs must email their Licensor to request access to this training for all educators and staff involved in the care of infants on the day of the citation. A certificate showing successful course completion must be submitted to the Licensor for each staff member required to complete the training.
- Safe Sleep Follow-Up Visit: Within 10 business days of the citation, an EEC Licensor will conduct an unannounced Safe Sleep Follow-Up Monitoring Visit. During this visit, the Licensor will observe all Safe Sleep arrangements and nap materials, review the previous citation(s) and Safe Sleep improvements made since the last visit with all involved educators, and will support the program in developing a plan to ensure ongoing compliance with all Safe Sleep regulations.
 - If Safe Sleep violations are observed during a Safe Sleep Follow-Up Visit, all immediate safety concerns must be addressed and corrected on-site, and the program shall automatically be subject to the enforcement protocols outlined below for 2nd Safe Sleep Citation. At EEC's discretion, additional enforcement actions may be taken.

2nd Safe Sleep Citation

When a program is cited for a violation of EEC's Safe Sleep regulations for a second time, regardless of the time between the two citations, all immediate safety concerns must be addressed and corrected on-site. Additionally:

- Program Notification to Families of Enrolled Infants: On the day of the citation, the program must notify, in writing, all parents of infants enrolled at the program of the Safe Sleep non-compliance, whether or not their infant was involved in the non-compliance, using the "[Safe Sleep Letter to Parent - Second Citation of Noncompliance Findings](#)." The letter indicates that the program may be at risk of

EEC restricting the program's ability to care for infants or revoking the program's license. A copy of the letter sent to families must be included when responding to the Safe Sleep citation in LEAD. This letter may be given to parents in person or via email. A copy of the letter, signed and dated by each parent of an infant in the program, must be returned within two business days and must be retained in the child's file and available for EEC to review. The program must confirm with their Licensor as soon as signed letters from parents of each infant are received.

- Office Conference: Within 10 business days of the citation, required program staff must attend a conference, in-person or virtually, with their EEC Regional Licensing Office to discuss the regulatory violations and required corrections. At the conclusion of this conference, all program staff in attendance must sign and date the [EEC Educator Safe Sleep Pledge](#). Both EEC and the program shall maintain the signed and dated pledge on file.
- Ongoing Documentation of Safe Sleep Practices: Effective immediately upon the second finding of non-compliance and until otherwise advised by EEC, the program must maintain a daily log of all infant sleep, including the dates, times, staff involved, children involved, children's ages, times napped and awake, and specific Safe Sleep practices used (sleep position, whether the infant can roll over, sleep space details including room and sleeping equipment used, supervision).⁴ The daily log may be requested by and must be available for review by EEC staff at any time.
- Safe Sleep Follow-Up Visit: Within 10 business days of the citation, an EEC Licensor will conduct an unannounced Safe Sleep Follow-Up Monitoring Visit. Licensors shall follow the same Safe Sleep Follow-Up protocol used for a first citation as outlined above. In addition, the Licensor shall review the ongoing documentation of Safe Sleep Practices.

Subsequent Safe Sleep Citations

If further Safe Sleep violations are observed during a subsequent Safe Sleep Follow-Up visit, a monitoring visit, an investigation, or any other type of visit, all immediate safety concerns must be addressed and corrected on-site. The program shall be required to

⁴ For larger group and school age programs, each infant classroom must be observed for Safe Sleep on a weekly basis at different times of the day.

cease care of infants at the close of business that same day and, at the discretion of the Regional Director and/or Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations, may be subject to sanctions against the program's license, including forfeiture of the ability to care for infants, enrollment freeze, or revocation and/or refusal to issue.

A program has the right to appeal any sanctions placed on their license through a request for administrative reconsideration and additional appellate rights may apply. For additional information, please see 102 CMR 1.08(1).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on EEC's Safe Sleep for Infants policy can be found in the [Safe Sleep for Infants FAQ](#).

For more information on Safe Sleep, including resources to share with families, please visit:

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [HealthyChildren.org Safe Sleep Articles](#)
- [Sleep - HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [Back to Sleep, Tummy to Play](#)
- [Safe Sleep in Child Care Settings](#)

OBSOLETE

This policy replaces EEC's previous Safe Sleep for Infants policy issued on October 1, 2023.