

## **Message about Safe Sleeping**

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The Los Angeles Safe Sleeping Campaign to Save Children's Lives is the result of a joint effort of agencies and individual who became increasingly concerned about the alarming number of infants whose lives are abruptly ended under totally preventable circumstances.

Our ICAN report on child fatalities shows that in 2006 and 2007, 86 babies died while sleeping with another person. In 2007, 93% of these infants were sleeping with one or more adult. 80% were under the age of 6 months and 59% were under the age of 3 months. We're talking about tiny, helpless babies who can't walk or talk and can't lift their head out from under a pillow, blanket or you.

The trend in Los Angeles continues into 2008 and 2009.

The Center for Disease Control issued a report in February of this year stating that there is a four fold increase in the rate of infant strangulation and suffocation in the US in the past twenty years.

Now, let's look at some of the real babies behind the data. Here are just a few in one month:

### *Katelyn – Age 4 months*

*The mother reported "she swaddled" Katelyn in blankets and placed her in the bed "on her back on a pillow" where her father was sleeping. The mother further reported that she fell asleep and later woke up to check on the baby. She said she then found Katelyn face down on a pillow with the bedding wet underneath her. The bed had an abundance of bedding, five pillows and three blankets.*

### *Sammie – Age 2 days*

*The Coroner's Investigator reported the child was sleeping in a king size bed with the mother when he was found unresponsive with some blood on his face. The mother is a large woman and there is concern that the child's death was due to a layover while the child was sleeping with the mother.*

### *Mark – Age 1 month*

*Although Mark routinely slept in the crib, the mother took him to bed with her to feed him at 2:00 a.m. The father and sibling were also in the bed. The mother and others in the bed fell asleep and were awakened at 4:30 a.m. when the mother found Mark limp and called 911. The infant never regained consciousness.*

In almost every case, infants were not the victims of violence, and to be clear, most babies placed on their stomachs or in an adult bed do not die. Most of us here were placed on our stomachs as babies and many may have shared a bed with our parents. But the data is clear: It is not safe and it's just not worth the risk – the possibility that you may wake up to a situation that will stay with you the rest of your lives.

We ask everyone who is pregnant, has an infant or knows someone who does to share this information about safe sleeping listed in our pamphlet. Just as no newborn can be released from the hospital without a car seat, we ask for help to secure cribs or side sleepers so that no baby goes home without a safe place to sleep.

At the very least, all new parents should go home with instructions for safe sleeping and how to make a safe separate place for them to sleep and dream.