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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sleep-related fatalities leading cause of death for Kansas infants 1-month to 1-year:

The KIDS Network continues intervention efforts to reduce these deaths.

(Wichita, Kan.) – The most recent annual report from the Kansas State Child Death Review Board (SCDRB) reports that 83% of sleep-related deaths occurred in an unsafe sleep location. The board notes the large number of infants who sleep in less than ideal circumstances may have been prevented had the infant been in a safe-sleep environment. Furthermore, the rate of African American infant deaths is two to three times higher than their Caucasian counterparts while the Hispanic rate of infant mortality has been on the rise.

While the root causes of infant mortality are complex, the high incidence of infant deaths can be attributed to stress, poverty, lower education levels and higher teen pregnancy rates. Confronting the complex factors that contribute to infant mortality needs a collaborative and committed community effort to bridge these gaps.

"Infant mortality is an indicator of the health of our community and our rate is too high. We can do better by thinking strategically and working together" says Christy Schunn, Executive Director of Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network. "While we have made progress over the last ten years, the KIDS Network remains committed to working with partners across Kansas to continue intervention efforts to decrease infant mortality and protect the lives of our youngest and most vulnerable population."

To address these issues, the KIDS Network supported in part by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment developed a way to train maternal and infant health providers to educate parents and caregivers on the American Academy of Pediatrics Safe Sleep policy. The Kansas Department for Children and Families, Wichita Police Department, health-care providers and social workers from around the state will attend the KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor Certification training held in Wichita Sept. 24 and 25 at the Sedgwick County Child Advocacy Center. Due to the pandemic, attendance has been limited to maintain physical distancing with virtual recertification options available later this fall.

Other ongoing efforts include:

KIDS Network Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers, hosted in partnership with the Wichita Black Nurses Association, are being held virtually to promote Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month. Community Baby Showers are an interactive and educational event for expectant parents and their support people to learn the ABCs of Safe Sleep—all babies should sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, and in **C**lutter-free **C**rib. The pregnant women who attend the shower

and receive the safe sleep training will receive a free portable crib and a wearable blanket, based on availability. Do you know someone who could benefit? Encourage them to contact the KIDS Network at 316-682-1301.

The KIDS Network is a nonprofit agency serving individuals who have been touched by the tragedy of infant death or SIDS in Kansas and those individuals or organizations who strive to reduce the risk of infant deaths by providing supportive services, community education, professional training and supporting associated research.

Characteristics of Sleep-Related Infant Deaths in Kansas

- 66% were sleeping in an adult bed (51% were co-bedding).
- 83% were not sleeping in a safety approved crib/bassinet.
- 7% were sleeping on a couch, while co-bedding.
- 7% were sleeping in infant swings, nursing pillow, air mattresses, trundle beds, etc.

Characteristics of SIDS Deaths in Kansas

- 37% were documented as not being placed on the back to sleep (recommended position)
- 89% had one or more elements of unsafe sleep
- 58% were less than 4 months old

(source: State Child Death Review Board 2019 Annual Report)

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