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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 97% of sleep-related infant deaths had one or more elements of unsafe sleep. 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 inadequate prenatal care, lower education levels, stress and economic instability. 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 community partners to continue intervention efforts to decrease infant mortality and protect the lives of our youngest and most vulnerable population."

Since 2015, more than 200 statewide professionals have received standardized training on the American Academy of Pediatrics' safe sleep recommendations through the KIDS Network Safe Sleep Instructor (SSI) Certification program. These certified SSIs have, in turn, trained more than 4,000 families and over 6,000 professionals, including health care professionals, child protective services, first responders and child care professionals working with new and expectant families. The Certified SSIs learn to educate professionals and caregivers on the AAP recommendations and how to organize and implement Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers/Crib Clinics, which offer information to families about creating healthy environments and the tools needed to create a safe sleep environment.

The KIDS Network SSI train-the-trainer certification program developed by the KIDS Network in partnership with the Center for Research for Infant Birth & Survival (CRIBS) is supported by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, United Methodist Health Ministries and a federal grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. Training conferences occur biannually

in May and September. For more information about the certification training, contact Maria Torres, ssidirector@kidsks.org.

Other ongoing efforts include:

KIDS Network Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers/Crib Clinics, are interactive and educational events 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. Pregnant women who attend the shower and receive the safe sleep training receive free portable cribs and wearable blankets, based on availability. Do you know someone who could benefit? A list of statewide Safe Sleep Community Baby Showers can be [found here](#).

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 2015-2019

- 84% were not sleeping in a safety approved crib/bassinet
- 61% were sharing a sleep surface
- 55% were in an adult bed
- 16% the mother/caregiver reportedly fell asleep while breast (10%) or bottle (6%) feeding the infant
- 13% were sleeping on a couch
- 9% were sleeping in infant swings, floor, baskets, air mattresses, etc.

(Source: [State Child Death Review Board 2021 Annual Report](#))

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