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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Infant Mortality Rates Serve as Critical Indicators of Community Health

The KIDS Network Continues Intervention Efforts to Reduce the Numbers

**(Wichita, Kan.)** – The Kansas State Child Death Review Board (SCDRB) 2024 Annual Report announces an increase in infant deaths statewide. The report reveals that 210 infants died in 2022, leading to an infant mortality rate (IMR) of 6.1 deaths per 1,000 live births. Although Kansas saw a downward trend in its annual IMR from 2018-2022, the state still exceeds the Healthy People 2030 goal of reducing the IMR to 5.0 deaths per 1,000 live births by the year 2030.

The report also highlights that 99% of sleep-related Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID) involved one or more elements of unsafe sleep. Christy Schunn, Executive Director of the Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network, commented, "Infant mortality is a complex issue. While prematurity and congenital anomalies increased in 2022, sleep-related SUIDs decreased from 51 to 45 infant deaths. Although this decline is promising, we still have much work to do to reduce these preventable deaths."

Dr. Stephanie Kuhlmann, DO, pediatrician and KIDS Network board member, emphasized, "The number of sleep-related infant deaths exceeds the rate of other causes of childhood and adolescent deaths like motor vehicle accidents, drowning, homicide and suicide. This reinforces the critical importance of promoting and implementing safe-sleep education and practices statewide so we can continue to reduce the number of these preventable infant deaths."

The high infant mortality rate in Kansas serves as a critical indicator of the community's overall health, remaining alarmingly high despite progress in the past decade. Addressing the root causes of infant mortality, such as inadequate prenatal care, education levels, and economic instability, requires a unified and dedicated effort. The KIDS Network, along with its statewide partners, is committed to raising awareness and collaborating with communities to protect the lives of Kansas's youngest and most vulnerable population.

In recognition of October as **Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month**, the KIDS Network and other state and local organizations are calling on Kansas communities to participate in increasing public awareness and education about safe sleep and healthy lifestyle choices. Join us in the effort to keep our youngest community members safe.

The KIDS Network provides bereavement services to families who have experienced infant loss, along with community education, professional development, and research initiatives to eradicate infant death. For more information about the KIDS Network and upcoming local programs, please visit [KIDSKS.org](http://KIDSKS.org).

### **Characteristics of the sleep-related SUIDS in Kansas**

- 99% had one or more elements of unsafe sleep
- 79% were not sleeping in a crib/bassinet
- 53% were sleeping in an adult bed, 12% were sleeping on a couch or futon
- 54% were sharing a sleep surface
- 52% were put to sleep on their stomach, side, or a position other than the recommended supine (on their back) placement
- 11% of parents or caregivers fell asleep while either breastfeeding or bottle feeding the infant  
(source: *Kansas State Child Death Review Board 2024 Annual Report*)