



**Washtenaw Area Council for Children**  
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### **For Immediate Release**

### **Preventable Infant Deaths in County Spur Safe Sleep Initiative**

*Kick-off Event: Wednesday, March 15, 8AM- 10AM at WCC's Morris Lawrence Building*

2.03.06, Ypsilanti, MI—The Washtenaw Area Council for Children is leading a countywide campaign to get the word out about how to prevent infant deaths due to unsafe sleep practices. The initial kick-off event is scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup> at the Washtenaw Community College's Morris Lawrence Building to inform youth-serving professionals and the community about the problem. The goal of the kick-off event will be to form a coalition of partners to work on an ambitious community awareness and outreach campaign to take place beginning this summer and continuing over the next 2 -3 years.

### **Free Professional-Community Event with Continental Breakfast:**

Wednesday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 8AM- 10 AM at Washtenaw Community College, Morris Lawrence Building, 4800 East Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor.

For directions, see: <http://www.wccnet.edu/aboutwcc/collegeinfo/directionsandmaps>

Reserve your free seat by emailing [Marcia@washtenawchildren.org](mailto:Marcia@washtenawchildren.org), or calling Washtenaw Area Council for Children at 734-434-4215. For more information, go to [www.washtenawchildren.org](http://www.washtenawchildren.org).

### **Panel speakers being confirmed as of 2/04/06:**

- Sue Gialanella, RN, MSA, Washtenaw County Public Health Department
- Pat Tackitt, coordinator for Michigan's Child Death Review Team
- Mary Adkins, RN, MSW, Program Director, Tomorrow's Child, formerly Michigan SIDS
- A representative from American Academy of Pediatrics, Michigan Chapter
- Patrick McLean, Executive Director, Washtenaw Area Council for Children

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**Facts about Preventable Infant Deaths in Washtenaw County and Michigan:**

- Each year, in Washtenaw County, more infants die of poor sleep environments than any other cause, except for prematurity and birth defects.
- In 2004, five infant deaths in Washtenaw County were the result of unsafe sleep practices. These cases ranged across races, nationalities and economic status. The commonality in all included one of these variables: co-sleeping (sharing bed with adult); infants on adult beds; toys, blankets, pillows and such in the crib; overheated rooms or overdressed child; upper respiratory illness in the child. (These variables listed are in the informal records, and will be formally concluded after complete review by the county Fetal Infant Mortality Review Team—FIMR.)
- Unsafe sleep practices cause 200 deaths per year in Michigan.
- Washtenaw County is one of 11 counties statewide where racial disparity in infant mortality rates is prominent. In Washtenaw County, 16.8 out of every 1000 black infants died before their first birthday, compared to 5.0 white infants—a 3:1 black/white disparity.
- In December 2005, the Washtenaw County Coalition for Infant Mortality Reduction announced its 2006 Project Plan for Washtenaw County. A Safe Sleep Initiative is part of the plan, particularly for the predominantly black communities in zip codes 48197, 48198, and 48108. Washtenaw Area Council for Children was identified as the lead agency in this initiative.

**Infants are at greater risk of death when they are put to sleep in these ways:**

- In positions other than on their back;
- On soft mattress or mattress that doesn't fit firmly in crib;
- On sofas, or adult beds with soft bedding;
- With, near or on loose objects like blankets or pillows;
- Over dressed, or in rooms that are over-heated; and
- With others, co-sleeping, in the same bed.

**For Further Information on Safe Sleep**

In October 2005, The American Academy of Pediatrics revised their previous policy on safe sleep practices. For a copy of this please visit <http://www.keepingkidsalive.org/Main Pages/Data and Publications/Other Publications/aap safe sleep statement 2005.pdf>

In April 2005, The Michigan Children's Cabinet Infant Safe Sleep Task Force released guidelines that the state believes — if followed — will significantly reduce Michigan's infant mortality rate by cutting down on accidental suffocations. These guidelines are at <http://earlychildhoodmichigan.org/articles/4-05/MIRS4-25-05.htm>

Michigan Child Death Program  
<http://www.keepingkidsalive.org/Main Pages/Prevention/Specific Causes of Death/suffocation.htm>

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