

## **Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

**September 28, 2016**

**Contact: Rebecca Burns, Health Officer  
517-279-9561, ext. 0148#**

**Val Newton, Prevention Services Director  
517-279-9561, ext. 0143#**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **The ABCs of Infant Safe Sleep Practices**

**Coldwater, MI.** September is Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month and to recognize this important observance, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is reminding parents and caregivers of techniques that can help to substantially reduce the infant death rate in Michigan. According to Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the tri-county health department, “Everyone needs to know ways to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and other sleep-related causes of infant death. Studies have shown that babies sleep safest on their backs. The message is as simple as ABC. All infants need to sleep:

**Alone, on their Backs and in a Crib!”**

After years of significant decline, Michigan’s infant death rate has held relatively steady since 2003, which indicates that not all parents and caregivers are getting the message about safe sleep practices. By eliminating just the unsafe sleep deaths, Michigan’s infant mortality rate could be reduced below the national average. “Although we have made great strides in reducing the number of preventable infant deaths in Michigan, more work remains,” says Val Newton, Prevention Services Director. “Between 2010 – 2014, about one out of six infant deaths in Michigan were due to unsafe sleep environments. That’s 712 babies. The loss of these babies to unsafe sleep environments is such a tragedy, particularly since such deaths are 100 percent preventable.”

All babies should always be placed to sleep on their backs, never on their sides or tummies, in their own crib. Other lifesaving steps parents and caregivers can take to protect their baby include:

- Never put the baby to sleep with adults or other children as the practice exponentially increases the chance of a tragedy occurring.
- Put babies in cribs of their own, never on adult beds, pillows or couches.
- Use a firm mattress with a tightly-fitted sheet.
- Ensure that the crib does not contain extraneous items -- including pillows, crib bumpers and stuffed animals – and use a safe sleep sack instead of blankets.
- Place the baby to sleep on his or her back, not on the stomach or side.
- Do not overheat baby.
- Make certain that no one smokes around baby.

By creating safe sleep environments, parents, grandparents and caregivers can reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. To learn more about safe sleep visit: [www.michigan.gov/safesleep](http://www.michigan.gov/safesleep). To receive more healthful tips for raising a healthy family, visit us on the web at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/bhsjwic](http://www.facebook.com/bhsjwic).

**Branch County**  
570 N. Marshall Rd.  
Coldwater, MI 49036  
(517) 279-9561,  
ext. 0144#

**Hillsdale County**  
20 Care Drive  
Hillsdale, MI 49242  
(517) 437-7395  
ext. 0144#  
# # #

**Three Rivers**  
1110 Hill St.  
Three Rivers, MI 49093  
(269) 273-2161  
ext. 0144#