

MEDIA RELEASE

Information **Advisory** **Warning** **Update**

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Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month Puts Focus on Preventing Infant Deaths

September is *Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month* and to recognize this important observance, St. Clair County Health Department is reminding parents and caregivers of techniques that can help to substantially reduce the infant death rate in Michigan.

After years of significant decline, Michigan's infant death rate has held relatively steady since 2003, indicating 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, more work remains,"* says Annette Mercatante, MD MPH Medical Health Officer at St. Clair County Health Department. *"In 2014, 152 Michigan infants died in unsafe sleep environments, from 2010 – 2014 St. Clair County has had a total of 15 sleep-related infant deaths. The loss of these babies to unsafe sleep environments is such a tragedy, particularly since such deaths are 100 percent preventable."*

The following are lifesaving steps parents and caregivers can take to protect their baby:

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

For more information please visit www.michigan.gov/safesleep.

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