

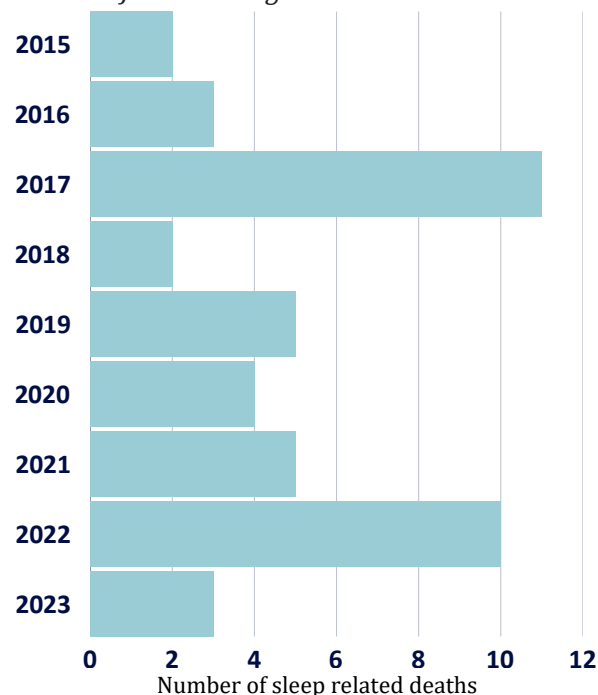
Babies Need to Breathe Campaign

Goal: ZERO Sleep-related infant deaths by 2027



Sleep-related Infant Death St. Joseph County, Indiana, 2015-2023

Source: SJC FIMR Program



Sleep-related Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) is the #1 cause of death for infants older than 1 week who are discharged home from the hospital after birth.

These deaths are preventable but continue each year in St. Joseph County (SJC). Awareness campaigns by the SJC Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Program in 2017 and 2022 played a role in lowering the numbers, yet deaths rose again afterwards as demonstrated in the chart to the left. Preliminary data show 5 sleep-related deaths in 2024 and 3 as of August 2025.

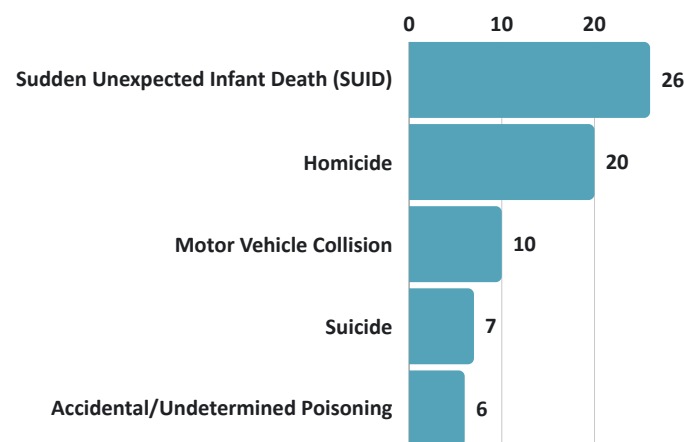
Sleep-related SUID is also the #1 cause of child fatality for *all children* in SJC, ages 0-17, more than car accidents, drowning, or homicide.

It is the goal of the Babies Need to Breathe campaign that through a consistent, year-round message in our community, safe sleep could develop into a safety practice that is as natural and widely accepted as using a car seat, wearing a seat belt, and learning to swim.

Together, we can ensure that every baby has the chance to breathe easy and sleep safely—every nap, every night.

2019-2023 External Injury Deaths SJC Residents Ages 0 -17 by Cause

Source: IDOH Vital Records Data. n=78



The total number of accidental/undetermined gun deaths and drownings are suppressed for totals less than 5.

Turn the page to learn how you can make a difference.

What We've Learned & How You Can Help

Local Findings: Of the 26 Sleep-Related Infant Deaths studied during the time period of 2019-2023, 25 included complete case information to be included in the data reported below.

No infants who died were sleeping in a crib, bassinet or pack and play.
Every infant who died had 2 or more unsafe sleep factors in their sleep space.

- 84%** were placed to sleep on an adult bed.
- 76%** were less than 4 months old.
- 72%** were sleeping with one or both parents.
- 48%** were exposed to tobacco during pregnancy or at home.
- 44%** were placed prone, surrounded or covered by blankets, or had their head propped on a pillow or boppy.



More than 90% of families had an appropriate sleep space for their baby, like a crib or pack n play, in their home. They just weren't using them.

Your role as a trusted messenger – Babies Need to Breathe

Help parents understand that the purpose of safe sleep is to make sure their baby can breathe easy for every nap, every night.

During prenatal care: Parents should know that the rate of sleep-related deaths for babies exposed to tobacco (*during pregnancy or in the home*) is 4X higher than for infants who are not exposed.

At well baby visits: Explain that a baby's airway opening is smaller than a straw and that babies tend to breathe through their noses the first 4 to 6 months of life.



The American Academy of Pediatrics says **the most important thing** parents can do for their baby's sleep is make sure they are **flat on their back**.



Encourage parents to make sure that everyone who cares for the baby knows the **ABCDE's** of safe sleep.

To help me sleep safely, remember:



Alone, in their crib, in the same room as you.



Flat on their **Back** to help them breathe.



In a **Crib**. No pillows, blankets, or propping.



Don't smoke, so they can breathe & stay healthy.



Everyone follows the **ABCDE's** of safe sleep.

