



# SAFE SLEEP & BREASTFEEDING IN INDIAN COUNTRY

**August 8, 2016 - Part 1 of a 3-Part Series**

The two most common challenges with a new baby are feeding and sleeping.<sup>1</sup> Breastfeeding has kept American Indian and Alaska Native traditions strong since the beginning of time and honors Indigenous values, culture and traditions.

***Breastfeeding has been shown to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) by up to 73%.<sup>2</sup>***

SIDS is the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States with AI/AN babies being twice as likely to die from SIDS than non-Hispanic white babies.<sup>3</sup> As a partner within the National Action Partnership to Promote Safe Sleep (NAPPSS), the Urban Indian Health Institute is sharing NAPPSS' Action plan with health care providers and infant caregivers to increase breastfeeding and safe infant sleep behaviors in Indian Country.

It is imperative, as health care providers, to focus on increasing active conversations with infant caregivers. Individualized and interactive conversations create a safe space for the caregiver to receive culturally sensitive and supportive messages. Caregivers are encouraged to ask questions, express concerns, and discuss possible solutions to overcoming common barriers to proper breastfeeding and infant safe sleep behaviors.<sup>4</sup>

## NAPPSS Strategies You Can Use for Engaging and Communicating with Infant Caregivers:<sup>4</sup>

- Share consistent, evidence-based and culturally competent information with infant caregivers about current safe sleep and breastfeeding recommendations.
- Utilize talking circles or focus groups and other methods to learn perceptions, beliefs and values of community members who influence infant caregivers to inform promotion efforts.
- Recommend the use of online phone apps to provide parents and caregivers access to information about breastfeeding and safe sleep:
  - [Pacify](#)
  - [Text4Baby](#)

The American Academy of Pediatrics currently recommends exclusively breastfeeding new babies for the first 4-6 months. Based on recent national data, 13.2% of AI/AN infants were exclusively breastfed for their first 6 months, and 20.7% were breastfed for 12 months.<sup>5</sup>

## References

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