**Infant Safe Sleep: A Systems Approach**

A multi-year project funded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to support

**Infant Safe Sleep in Michigan**

“Safety and security don’t just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment.” – Nelson Mandela

Effective infant mortality reduction efforts require a focus on preventable infant death in the sleep environment. Between 2010 and 2015, 871 Michigan infants died due to sleep related causes—a rate of 1.3 deaths per 1,000 live births¹, and an average of one baby lost every 3 days. Disparities in outcomes exist between racial groups. African American infants have a rate more than 3 times that of white infants, with rates of 2.8 and .8, respectively. American Indian infants have more than double the rate of white infants with a rate of 2.0 per 1,000 live births. These concerning numbers and persistent disparities demand systematic and innovative interventions that resonate with the most at-risk families.

In December 2016, MDHHS launched a multi-year project to align resources and services across the state to address infant safe sleep in a consistent and collective way, addressing Goal 5 of Michigan’s 2016-2019 Infant Mortality Reduction Plan: **Reduce sleep-related infant deaths and disparities.** In addition to significant support from MDHHS and partners, the Michigan Health Endowment Fund is providing financial support for the first two years of this project (December 1, 2016-November 30, 2018). State-wide knowledge of and engagement in the project is vital to its success. The following is an update on the project, as well as a summary of ongoing and planned activities.

**Objective 1: Develop and Implement Effective Messaging and Methodologies**

In collaboration with the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI), MDHHS is currently conducting formative research through a series of focus groups with parent caregivers—both mothers and fathers—and influential “others” who influence parents’ choices to assess their attitudes about infant safe sleep and existing educational materials, their trusted sources for information, and what messages will resonate with them. Recommendations from the focus groups will be used to guide development and field testing of new, culturally-responsive safe sleep educational materials. These messages and materials are being developed in collaboration with Brogan & Partners, MDHHS Communications and the MDHHS Infant Safe Sleep Program.

**Objective 2: Increase the Number of Trained Partners Who Provide Safe Sleep Education**

A training workgroup is revising an existing online safe sleep 101 training, and developing a curriculum for a more in-depth follow-up that actively addresses challenges that home visitors and child welfare staff may encounter in the field. This “safe sleep 201” training curriculum will be made available both in-person and in an online format. Once developed, the training will be piloted and evaluated in several communities across the state before being made available statewide. Additionally a multi-tier safe sleep community of practice is being launched for professionals working with families to provide support and opportunities for skill enhancement. It will include a quarterly webinar series; an online professional information resource forum; and an email subscription management system.

**Objective 3: Develop and Implement a Continuous Quality Improvement Process**

Partners at MPHI are supporting evaluation efforts of all the program activities, and planning a cycle of continuous quality improvement that can be applied across all of the activities. Currently, appropriate process and outcome indicators are being identified.
Objective 4: Impact Existing Infrastructure Resources

Finally, MDHHS staff has presented on the grant activity efforts in three of the active perinatal regions—(2 & 3, 4 & 10)—with emphasis on local partnerships to advance the systems-level approach. Presentations are planned at the next meeting of the Medicaid Care Management Directors in July, and the Infant Mortality Advisory Council in August while expanded outreach plans are being developed.

To find out more about the project and how your organization can join the efforts to maximize collective impact, please contact Patti Kelly, MDHHS Infant Safe Sleep Program Consultant, or Colleen Nelson, Infant Safe Sleep Program Coordinator at 517-335-8955.

^ CDC Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) Case Registry Project, Michigan Public Health Institute, 2017.