

# Mahoning County Child Fatality Review Board

## 2004 Report and Recommendations

*The mission of the Mahoning County Child Fatality Review Board is to decrease the incidence of preventable fetal and child deaths by:*

- ? *Promoting cooperation, collaboration, and communication between all groups, professions, agencies, or entities that serve families and children*
- ? *Maintaining a comprehensive database of all child deaths that occur in Mahoning County in order to develop an understanding of the causes and incidences of those deaths*
- ? *Recommending local service and program changes to the groups, professions, agencies, or entities that serve families and children that might prevent fetal and child deaths.*
- ? *Advising the Ohio Department of Health of aggregate data, trends, and patterns concerning child deaths.*

The Board meets quarterly to review the deaths of children who die under these circumstances:

- ? Due to an injury, either intentional or unintentional
- ? Whose death is unattended by a physician
- ? Whose death has been investigated by the coroner
- ? When a review is requested by any child fatality review board participant

These organizations participated in child death reviews in 2004:

Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Program, Planned Parenthood of Mahoning Valley  
Mahoning County Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services Board  
Mahoning County Children Services  
Mahoning County Coroner's Office  
Mahoning County District Board of Health  
Mahoning County Mental Health Board  
Saint Elizabeth Health Center  
Tod Children's Hospital – Forum Health  
Youngstown City Health District  
Youngstown Police Department

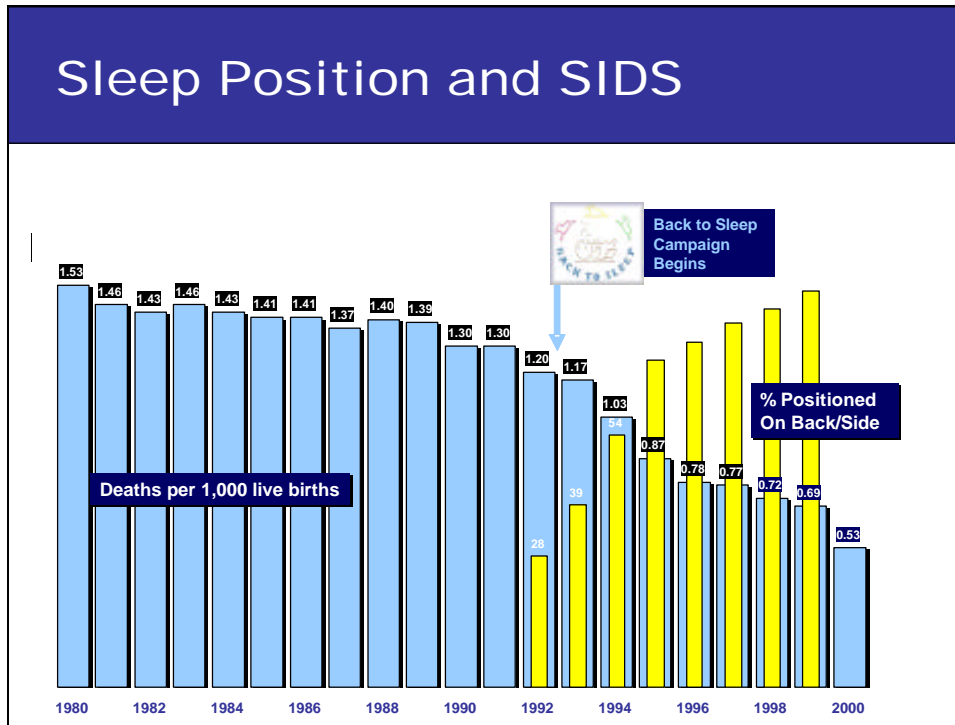
The Board reviewed 14 of the 40 Mahoning County resident child deaths reported in 2004. A table summarizing these 40 child deaths is presented on page 4. Based on these reviews, the Board makes these recommendations:

### ***Recommendation:***

***Provide a safe sleeping environment for infants to prevent infant deaths from SIDS and other sleep-related conditions.***

The Board observed that in the five years between 2000-2004, 18 of the 116 infants who died in Mahoning County died of SIDS and other sleep-related conditions such as suffocation and maternal overlay. *These sleep-related deaths accounted for 16% of - or one in six – infant deaths in Mahoning County during this five-year period.*

**Sleep position** remains a predominant risk factor for SIDS and other sleep-related deaths despite the steady decline in the proportion of infants placed on their stomachs to sleep. SIDS deaths have declined by 38% in the U.S. since 1992, when pediatricians began counseling “back to sleep,” i.e., positioning babies on their backs to sleep (see chart below). Information about sleep-positioning for Mahoning County infants who died of sleep-related conditions is incomplete.



**Bed sharing** was the most commonly reported risk factor for sleep-related deaths reviewed by county child fatality review boards in Ohio in 2004. Bed sharing with adults or other children can lead to the unintentional entrapment of the infant under a sleeping adult or child. The risk is increased when the adult is under the influence of drugs that impair arousal, is fatigued, or is obese.

**Tobacco exposure** during and after pregnancy has been implicated as a risk factor for SIDS death. The Board found that this risk factor were more prevalent among these 18 infants who died between 2000 and 2004. Almost one-half (47%) of these infants’ mothers reported tobacco use during pregnancy. By comparison, 19% of all Mahoning County women who had babies in 2001 reported tobacco use.

**Race** is a factor in sleep-related infant deaths. Nationally, the rate of SIDS among black infants was 2.5 times that of white infants in 2001. Nine of the 18 infants (50%) who died of sleep-related conditions in Mahoning County in the five-year period were African-American or bi-racial.

Racial differences in sleep-positioning contribute to this disparity. Nationally, the prevalence of prone (stomach) positioning in 2001 among white infants was 11%, compared with 21% among black infants. *Black babies are twice as likely to be put to sleep on their stomachs.*

**Low birth weight** (<2500 grams) and preterm birth have been consistently identified as independent risk factors for SIDS. Thirteen percent (13%) of the SIDS and sleep-related infants who died between 2000-2004 were low birth weight. By comparison, 9% of babies born in Mahoning County in 2001 were low birth weight.

**Bedding and sleep surfaces** - The Board has reviewed several infant deaths in which a parent fell asleep with an infant on a couch or sofa. **IT IS VERY DANGEROUS TO PLACE AN INFANT ON A COUCH OR SLEEP WITH AN INFANT ON A COUCH, ARMCHAIR OR WATERBED – NO ONE SHOULD SLEEP WITH AN INFANT, ESPECIALLY ON THESE SURFACES.**



*An infant in a safe sleep environment*

In its 2005 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended the following practices to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related deaths, which the Mahoning County Child Fatality Review Board endorses:

### ***Safe Sleep Practices***

- ? **Infants should be put to sleep on their backs only**
- ? **Infants should sleep in a crib with a firm mattress in the same room as their mothers**
- ? **Caregivers should keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib**
- ? **Offer a pacifier at nap and bed time**
- ? **Mothers should not smoke during or after pregnancy**
- ? **Adults should not expose infants to secondhand smoke**

*Healthy People Year 2010 Objective*

Increase the percentage of healthy full-term infants who are put down to sleep on their backs to 70% (from 35% in 1996).

The Child Fatality Review Board has alerted the Mahoning County Family and Children First Council to these sleep-related deaths, and the Council has begun organizing a campaign to promote safe sleep for infants. The message of this campaign is **“babies sleep safest on their backs – and in their own cribs.”**

Nine of the 18 infants who died of sleep-related conditions in the last five years lived on the north and east side of Youngstown. Some of these deaths could have been prevented if their parents or caregivers had known how to position infants to sleep safely.

Many infants are cared for by relatives and non-licensed caregivers (babysitters, nannies, unregulated family child care homes) who also may be unaware of the importance of supine sleeping in a safe sleep environment. Local training opportunities are planned for these groups and others who are in a position to communicate the safe sleep message. The Council is also organizing a program modeled on Allegheny County Pennsylvania’s Kids for Cribs program that distributes portable cribs to needy families.

***“Babies sleep safest on their backs – and in their own cribs”***

*The Board wishes to express its gratitude and appreciation to these individuals and organizations who have helped to promote safe sleep for infants in Mahoning County:*

- ? Members of the **Mahoning County Family and Children First Council’s Sleep-Related Infants Deaths Committee** for providing safe-sleep training
- ? **Mahoning County Child and Family Health Services Consortium** for purchasing portable cribs for distribution to families in need through the Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies program
- ? Members of the **Mahoning, Trumbull and Columbiana County Funeral Directors Association** for providing us with death certificates of children who died in 2004

*For more information about child deaths in Mahoning County and child fatality review, contact Matthew Stefanak, board chair, at 330-270-2855 or [mstefanak@mahoning-health.org](mailto:mstefanak@mahoning-health.org)*

## **SIDS Resources**

### Promotional materials, facts & figures, policies and recommendations

Back to Sleep Campaign. [www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/)

American Academy of Pediatrics. [www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org)

Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs. [www.asip1.org](http://www.asip1.org)

National SIDS/Infant Death Resource Center. [www.sidscenter.org](http://www.sidscenter.org)

### Safe sleep guidance and training for caregivers

Help Me Grow. Telephone: 330-965-7912

Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Program. Telephone: 330-788-6506

Cribs for Kids. [www.cribsforkids.org](http://www.cribsforkids.org)

### Grief counseling

Tri-County Coalition for Grief & Loss – contact Help Hotline at 211 or 330-747-2696

Sudden Infant Death Network of Ohio. [www.sidsohio.org](http://www.sidsohio.org)

### Ohio and Mahoning County child fatality review reports

Ohio Department of Health. [www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/cfhs/cfr/cfr1.aspx](http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/cfhs/cfr/cfr1.aspx)

Mahoning County District Board of Health.

[www.mahoning-health.org/healthreports-annualreports.asp](http://www.mahoning-health.org/healthreports-annualreports.asp)

### Other references

Healthy People 2010. [www.healthypeople.gov](http://www.healthypeople.gov)

## Child Deaths in Mahoning County 2004

### Ages

- \* 40 child deaths in 2004
  - o 24 (60%) deaths were infants (birth-1 year)
    - \* 13 infant deaths (54%) were neonates (birth-28 days)
    - 11 infant deaths (46%) were post-neonates
  - o 3 deaths (8%) were preschool-age (1-4 years)
  - o 5 deaths (12%) was 5-9 years
  - o 2 deaths (5%) were 10-14 years
  - o 6 deaths (15%) were teens (15-17 years)

### *Deaths by Age Group by Cause*

Cause	0-1 Month	1-12 Months	1-4 Years	5-9 Years	10-14 Years	15-17 Years	Total
Prematurity	11	2					13
Birth defects	2	3	3	1			9
SIDS		3					3
Homicide				1		1	2
Suicide						1	1
Maternal overlay		1					1
Motor vehicle accidents				1	1	3	5
Cancer				1		1	2
Infectious disease		1		1	1		3
Undetermined/unknown		1					1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>40</b>

### Residence

- \* 21 in Youngstown (52%)
- \* 4 in Austintown (10%)
- \* 4 in Boardman (10%)
- \* 4 in Canfield Township (10%)
- \* 4 in Poland (10%)
- \* 2 in Campbell (5%)
- \* 1 in Beloit (2%)

### Race

- \* 22 were white (55%); 14 were black (35%); 1 was biracial (2%); 3 were unknown (8%)

### Sex

- \* 21 were boys (52%); 19 were girls (48%)

*Source: Mahoning County District Board of Health*