

## **Understanding the Difference Between SIDS and SUID and Related Prevention Strategies in Tippecanoe County**

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Many people falsely interchange the terms SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and SUID (Sudden Unexpected Infant Death). SUID is an overarching category for deaths of infants under one year that are sudden and unexpected, hence the name.

Per the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are three main causes of death that can be responsible for a SUID: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), accidental suffocation in a sleeping environment, and other unknown causes. In other words, SIDS could be the underlying cause of a SUID, but not always, which is why the terms should not be interchanged.

When the term SIDS is used synonymously for SUID, the opportunity to address the actual cause of death could be overlooked. By properly identifying a SUID death and specifying, for example, that accidental suffocation took place due to the sleep environment, then the true cause of death is understood and can be utilized to develop adequate prevention strategies.

Here in Tippecanoe County, preliminary data from the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) suggested that there were six SUID-related cases in 2021, but further investigation into the certified death certificates and mortality reviews needed to take place for more information. This was then reported on the news as six SIDS-related deaths, which was not accurate because not all of the SUIDs were caused by SIDS. In fact, upon further discussion with the Tippecanoe County Coroner, it was determined that the official cause of death was positional asphyxia, not SIDS, for five of the six deaths. Positional asphyxia is airway obstruction due to the position the infant is in, most commonly during sleep.

The CDC recommends that any death scene investigator- police, DCS, coroner, etc.- utilize the Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Investigation Reporting Form to ensure that all information is gathered to identify the specific cause of a SUID. This form is invaluable for review teams, like FIMR, because it provides the specific circumstances surrounding the death, which aids in prevention strategy development. The form can be found on the CDC website and staff trainings are periodically offered throughout the state by the IDOH. Please encourage these county positions to utilize this form and consider a training. Additionally, the Indiana House Enrolled Act 1169 section 78 will go into effect on July 1, 2022 requiring specific investigation steps for SUID deaths.

The Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) team has not yet reviewed all the 2021 SUIDs, but there is a collaborative review being scheduled in October, which is also Safe Sleep Awareness Month, with the local FIMR team, the IDOH SUID Coordinator, and Safe Sleep Program Manager. This will help us further understand the circumstances surrounding the death and how we can better navigate the investigation process going forward. In the meantime, the FIMR team asks for continued support in sharing the Safe Sleep Short Films from the Charlie's Kids Foundation online and throughout the county. They are 15-30 second films, particularly great for social media or commercials, that highlight the safest sleep practices and tips for anyone caring for an infant. The FIMR team will also be sharing films created by the IDOH of real mothers candidly discussing their stories to bring awareness about unsafe sleep.

## **Resources and Links**

**Charlie's Kids Safe Sleep Films:** [vimeo.com/user/152811920/folder/8701102](https://vimeo.com/user/152811920/folder/8701102)

### **IDOH Safe Sleep Films:**

Sarah Broady Feature: <https://vimeo.com/654289935/b73bbff454>

Sarah Broady Social: <https://vimeo.com/654289915/422f6cb3a2>

Ashley Giles Feature: <https://vimeo.com/654288229/d2ffde2909>

Ashley Giles Social: <https://vimeo.com/654288188/e273d5df7c>

Jen Hittle Feature: <https://vimeo.com/654288335/7642cdccb9>

Jen Hittle Social: <https://vimeo.com/654288323/ace6f2a1df>

Compilation of all three mothers: <https://vimeo.com/654288272/7dbadc0edc>

### **Indiana House Enrolled Act 1169**

(Select full text on the right. In the full text, section 78 starts on the bottom of page 43.)

<https://trackbill.com/bill/indiana-house-bill-1169-department-of-health-matters/2218994/>

### **Specific information from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/sids/about/index.htm>

“Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) is a term used to describe the sudden and unexpected death of a baby less than 1 year old in which the cause was not obvious before investigation. These deaths often happen during sleep or in the baby’s sleep area.” -CDC

“About 3,400 babies in the United States die suddenly and unexpectedly each year. A thorough investigation is necessary to learn what caused these deaths. Sudden unexpected infant deaths include sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), accidental suffocation in a sleeping environment, and other deaths from unknown causes.” – CDC

### **SUID Investigation Reporting Form**

<https://www.cdc.gov/sids/SUIDRF.htm>