

COMBATting INFANT MORTALITY

Waking up to the importance of safe infant sleep

An average of 61,000 infants a year are born in Louisiana. Of these infants, approximately 462 die before their first birthday. However, about one third of all infant deaths are potentially preventable, with most injury-related deaths occurring in the sleep environment. In Louisiana, most sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUIDS) occur when the infant is 2 to 3 months old, with the most common risk factors present among these deaths being: infants sleeping with loose bedding or toys (85%); infants sleeping in something other than a crib or bassinette (83%); and infants sleeping with other people (63%).

In 2018, Louisiana Healthcare Connections initiated a safe sleep pilot in North Louisiana. Identified as two regions of the state with particularly high rates of infant mortality and clear racial disparities, Shreveport and Monroe were the original targets. Because the average cost of a crib is \$200, purchasing a new one represents a challenge for most low-income families.

For the program, Louisiana Healthcare Connections partnered with Cribs for Kids®—a national non-profit dedicated to providing parents with resources that ensure safe sleep environments for their babies—and Safe Sleep Survival Kits were sent to pregnant members a month before their due date. Provided free at no cost to the member, the kits contain the appropriate crib, educational materials on safe sleep, a wearable blanket, and a pacifier, which has been shown to help protect against SIDS. After the initial two-year test period showed **infant mortality decreasing by more than 50% for members**, Louisiana Healthcare Connections expanded the program statewide and, to date, **has delivered 23,350 cribs to members expecting a baby**.



“Data-driven insights help us target real-world problems with practical solutions. A simple but innovative tactic like providing cribs means more babies are waking up healthy throughout Louisiana today, and that’s healthcare that makes a positive difference.”

—Stewart T. Gordon, MD, FAAP
Chief Medical Officer,
Louisiana Healthcare Connections