

UC BLUE ASH COLLEGE NEWS RELEASE

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Award-Winning Project Helps Infants – and Their Parents – Sleep Better

(Blue Ash, Ohio) – The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Ohio AAP) is the recipient of the 2017 Ohio Injury Prevention Partnership’s Promising Practice Award from the Ohio Department of Health for its research on understanding barriers and educating parents about safe sleep practices for infants.

The Ohio AAP led the project, with funding provided by the Ohio Children’s Trust Fund. Heather Vilvens, an Assistant Professor of Allied Health at UC Blue Ash College, was a co-researcher for the project as part of her work toward earning her PhD from the University of Cincinnati.

The Ohio AAP has guidelines and recommendations for providing a safe sleeping environment for infants, but health care leaders have seen sleep-related deaths continue across the state.

The project included more than 100 interviews with families who have an infant or are expecting. Researchers found that there is a need to increase awareness about infant safe sleep guidelines and the critical importance of following them, since it can mean the difference between life and death for a baby. They also found a need to tailor public health messaging for different audiences and deliver them through a variety of venues. This includes in-person communication through pediatrician offices, churches and schools, as well as online communication through parenting websites.

“One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to health messaging on the topic of safe sleep,” said Professor Vilvens. “From our results, we developed personas which can inform messaging and venues that could be used with different families. This takes into account context, lifestyle factors, stress factors, needs and behaviors for new or expecting parents.”

“The Chapter was thrilled to receive this award. The Ohio AAP has worked with many partners to improve safe sleep messaging across our state,” said Michael Gittelman, MD, FAAP, president-elect of the Ohio AAP and the medical director of the safe sleep project. “This research is important for us to understand how to provide safe sleep messaging to different families in different ways in order to reduce infant mortality in Ohio. To be recognized for our work is incredibly rewarding.”

The results of this research demonstrated that infant caregivers want to make the safest decisions when caring for their children, but are frequently under high levels of stress. Messages that acknowledge these factors and provide practical steps to improve safe sleep are most effective in reducing the risks of unsafe sleep. The Ohio AAP’s prescription for safe sleep shares four basic guidelines caregivers can follow:

1. Routine is the key. Consistently putting your baby to sleep in the same place, using the same routine will lead to good sleep habits.
2. Create a calming environment.
3. Always put babies on their back to sleep, in their own crib that is free from blankets, pillows, bumpers and stuffed animals. If the baby falls asleep elsewhere, they should be moved to their safe environment.
4. Babies sleep safest in the room where you sleep, but not in your bed. Ohio AAP recommends infants share their parents’ room for at least the first six months and, optimally, the first year of life.

You can learn more about the 2017 Ohio Injury Prevention Partnership awards by visiting <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/health/vipp/oipp/awards.aspx>.

The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics promotes the health, safety and well-being of children and adolescents so they may reach their full potential. The Ohio AAP will accomplish this by addressing the needs of children, their families, and their communities, and by supporting Chapter members through advocacy, education, research, service, and improving the systems through which they deliver pediatric care. Go to www.OhioAAP.org to learn more.

UC Blue Ash College is a regional college within the University of Cincinnati. It offers one of the best values in higher education with access to a nationally recognized UC education in nearly 50 degrees and certificates, as well as tuition that is about half of most colleges and universities. The college is located on a

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