



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Statewide Safe Sleep Campaign

Date: October 23, 2013

First Responders Step Up to Save Infants Lives DCF Reports Deaths of 128 Infants Across the State may be Attributed to Unsafe Sleeping Environments

Across the state, Florida's leading child protection organization, the Department of Children and Families, is currently investigating the deaths of 128 infants to date this year, believed to be the result of unsafe sleeping environments. Here in Central Florida, the Department is looking into the deaths of 10 infants across the counties, likely attributed to unsafe sleeping arrangements. In response, the Department teamed up with first responders across the state, as well as Healthy Start Coalitions, in an effort to prevent further tragedy from taking place. In most cases, unsafe sleeping deaths are attributed to the environment in which an infant is placed.

Here in Hernando County, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office has opened the lobbies in both the main office and the District Two Office for the community to donate new pack and plays (portable cribs) that will be distributed to families in need, either through their local Healthy Start organization or child protective investigators. "It's a natural partnership, as our emergency personnel get that first call for help from a grief stricken or panicked parent. We know how much first responders want and hope to prevent tragedy just as we do," says Bill D'Aiuto, DCF's Managing Director in Central Florida.

More than a dozen other first responders across the state have signed up as receiving sites.

Although many parents sometimes want to create that beautiful sleeping environment complete with soft bedding, fluffy pillows and plush stuffed animals, such an environment

may prove dangerous to an infant not yet at an age where they are able to move their head to ensure a clear airway. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies sleep ALONE, on their BACKS, and in a CRIB. Cribs should be clear of items like blankets, pillows, stuffed toys, strings/cords, sleep positioners and bumper pads. Babies should sleep in their own cribs, as the risk of infant death is 40 times higher for babies who sleep in adult beds.

The Safe Sleep Campaign encourages the public to donate new pack and plays to designated fire, emergency, and law enforcement stations.

For more information, free resources, designated drop-off locations, video PSAs, and a full list of partners, visit www.MyFLFamilies.com/SafeSleep.

Participating **Hernando County Sheriff's Office** locations are as follows:

Main Office (lobby) – 18900 Cortez Blvd, Brooksville, FL 34601

District 2 Office (lobby) – 7499 Forest Oaks Blvd., Spring Hill, FL 34606

DCF produced a PSA on safe sleep environments which can be found at: [Safe Sleep PSA](#). For additional information on how to donate a portable crib/pack and play, please contact Robin Butler at rbutler@seminolecountyfl.gov. This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it or visit <http://www.myflfamilies.com/press-release/florida-officials-first-responders-and-community-organizations-launch-safe-sleep>.