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All Babies Born in Baltimore City To Receive Free Safe Sleep Onesie

Baltimore, MD (September 27, 2006) – Today, the Baltimore City Health Department will announce a citywide effort to reduce infant death by promoting safe sleep practices. The press conference will take place at 1 pm at Harbor Hospital (*the Baum Center, Conference Room B*).

Beginning this Fall, the Health Department will give every mom who gives birth in Baltimore City a safe sleep infant “onesie” when discharged from the hospital. The garment is embossed with the ABC’s of safe sleep - a reminder that infants sleep safest Alone, on their Backs and in a Crib. Through the Health Department’s *Crib Fund*, a companion initiative, the Health Department will make safe, portable cribs available to parents who would not otherwise be able to afford them.

The project is a partnership with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

At the press conference, Baltimore City Health Commissioner, Dr. Joshua Sharfstein will be joined by Dr. Pierre Vigilance, Health Officer for Baltimore County to offer parents important tips to protect infants from harm or death that can result from unsafe sleep environments. These include:

- 1) Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night.
- 2) Sleep within easy access of your baby but do not share a bed, chair or sofa.
- 3) Ensure baby’s sleep surface is firm and covered with a fitted sheet.
- 4) Remove bumper pads and toys from baby’s sleep area.
- 5) Never smoke, or allow others to smoke, around your baby.
- 6) Keep strings from blinds or curtains away from crib and out of baby’s reach.
- 7) Dress baby in light sleeping clothing and keep room at a comfortable temperature.

Since 2003, over 40 infant deaths occurred related to unsafe sleep practices in Baltimore City. “Many of these tragic deaths were preventable. Every parent needs to know the basics of infant safe sleep,” said Dr. Sharfstein.

Both the *ABC’s of Safe Sleep* campaign and the *Crib Fund* began in 2003 when the Baltimore’s Child Fatality Review Board identified unsafe sleep environments as the second leading cause of death for babies in Baltimore City that year. National sales of safe sleep onesies and a recent \$10,000 contribution from Baltimore Health Care Access will make possible the purchase of more than 200 new cribs. The cribs will be distributed through home visiting programs in Baltimore City, including Healthy Start, Healthy Families, the Health Department’s Maternal and Infant Nursing Program, and Baltimore HealthCare Access.

The Wednesday, September 27th event is the second in the “Prevention Wednesday” series, a public information campaign launched last month by the Health Department to promote healthy living, prevent disease, and improve community health. Prevention Wednesday flyers will be distributed citywide at health clinics, Community Action Centers, DSS Family Investment Centers, Senior Centers, Rec Centers, and Enoch Pratt Free Libraries. All Prevention Wednesday materials are available online at <http://preventionwednesday.org>.

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