

Safe Sleep for Our West Coast Babies

*"The Baby Bed is more than a gift. . . I felt like it was put together with a lot of thought and love and effort"**

BACKGROUND:

In the first year of a baby's life it has been shown that safe sleep practices can have a significant impact on decreasing the incidence of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death). Assuring a baby has a safe sleeping surface is the core of all safe sleep.

Various initiatives have occurred to address the need to ensure safe sleep for babies. One example is the Finnish Baby Box program that has been active for the last 75 years. All Finnish families receive a Baby Box that provides a safe sleeping environment and also provides basic baby essentials for the first days of life. This program has been identified as helping Finland achieve one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world.

Through the generous past support from the WCGH Hospital Foundation and Women's Auxiliary, the Baby Bed Program has become a reality for all West Coast Families since the summer of 2016. The program has been universally delivered to almost 600 families living in Port Alberni and other West Coast Communities. In addition to providing a safe sleep place for baby, the program has promoted opportunities for families to make health promoting connections for parenting education and support through early contact with their local public health nurse. The feedback families have provided has been overwhelmingly positive. The results from a survey that was done with 144 families revealed the following:

- 24 identified that program improved their understanding of safe sleep.
- 25 identified the program provided them the ability to provide a safe sleeping place for baby
- 21 stated the program helped increase comfort in contacting their public health nurse
- 49 viewed the baby bed as a wonderful welcome gift for the family.

Island Health recognizes the value of support a Baby Bed Program for safe sleep, but due to various factors the Health Authority is unable to initiate the Island wide initiative at this time. Sleep safety is an on-going issue and the Baby Bed Program is one factor that can have a significant and positive influence. Perinatal care providers in the Port Alberni area continue to believe in the benefits of the Baby Bed Program for local families and hope to continue to distribute the beds to West Coast Families.

"Loved it. Loved everything about it. We are new to the community and receiving this package felt like such a wonderful personal touch"

"Sleep is a sensitive topic. My nephew died of SIDS and it was devastating. This program gives women a chance for women to talk about safe sleep with the nurse"

The goals of the Baby Bed Program are:

- To increase awareness and practice of safe sleep
- To provide a safe sleep alternative (vs. putting baby to sleep on couch, adult bed)
- To give families an opportunity to connect with the Community Healthcare Service Providers and in turn increase family awareness of many health promotion practices (vaccine program, parenting supports and education).
- To celebrate the birth of a new baby. Welcoming our new family to our communities.



The Baby Bed is "a great program. It helped us for the first few weeks". "I used the bed all the time in the first month".

“Very much appreciate the bed and use the sleep sack often. Thank you!!”

PROPOSAL:

The continuing cost of providing a Baby Bed to a family is approximately \$100. Currently the WCGH has an average delivery rate of 270 babies per year. This would be an approximate cost of \$30,000 including costs to administer the program.

- The Baby Bed serves as baby’s first bed and helps to ensure safe sleep practices and positioning of infant. Inside of the bed there are a number of educational materials and gifts for mom and baby to help best prepare for a strong and healthy start.
- Some examples of items could be:
 - Sleep space made from environmentally safe, materials that would hold a baby up to 30 lbs.
 - Firm mattress and fitted sheet.
 - Nursing pads, Lanolin nipple cream
 - Baby books
 - Sleeper, Onesie, blanket, bath supplies



This project has perinatal providers working in partnership with the Westcoast Communities, Nuuchahnulth First Nations and Public Health. Sensitivity to respecting cultural values will be inclusive throughout the process. The Nuuchahnulth Hupiiimin wiikshahiy'ap (Nursing Services) will participate in planning, implementation and evaluation of the programs.

It is requested at this time that your organization would consider becoming a financial sponsor for the West Coast Community Baby Bed Program for 2018/2019.

We appreciate your time and look forward to hearing from you. We would be happy to meet to discuss any questions.

Sincerely

WCGH Perinatal and Pediatric Committee
Nuuchahnulth Nursing Service
Port Alberni Public Health Nursing

**(Quotes taken from evaluation survey results conducted between May 2015- Feb.2018))*

