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Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics **Endorsement of the Alabama Baby Box Project**

Alabama had the third highest infant mortality rate in the nation between 2011 and 2013. And more recently, while it has stayed within its usual range, it rose from 8.6 per 1,000 in 2013 to 8.7 per 1,000 in 2014, translating to 517 lost lives per year. Approximately 21 percent of those deaths are related to a lack of understanding about safe sleep practices.

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has long been working on safe sleep and infant vitality, in conjunction with the Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics and other partners who have been at the table for many years. We must continue, however, to look at a range of ways to get the message out.

In 2017, in just a few short months, the Alabama Baby Box Project has blossomed as one new way to tackle Alabama's infant mortality problem through promotion of safe sleep.

Thanks to an offer from the Baby Box Company to fund baby boxes for every new mother in Alabama, the Alabama Department of Human Resources is well on its way to making these boxes and their contents available at no charge to all new mothers across the state.

So what is the Alabama Baby Box Project? Through a series of distribution points, including Alabama hospitals, family guidance centers and others, new mothers can sign up to receive a box, which is lined with a mattress and safe to use as the infant's first bed and serves as a "starter kit" for their new baby, containing newborn necessities. Their only requirement is to complete our Alabama Baby Box video syllabus on the Baby Box University website, which is a series of short teaching videos from content experts on safe sleep techniques and other safety messages for new Alabama parents.

Baby boxes have a long history in Finland, demonstrating sharp reductions in the number of SIDS- and SUID-related deaths and helping the country achieve one of the world's lowest infant mortality rates. Now, the boxes are manufactured safely in the United States through The Baby Box Company, whose mission is to drive infant mortality down through the use of social media and the "power of the Baby Box." Their goal is to appeal to the millennials use of social media to get the safe sleep message across; the Baby Box is the "hook" to make that happen.

The biggest draw (and health benefit) of baby boxes is thought to be the reduction in SIDS. The exact cause of SIDS is not always known, but some of the potential hazards can arise while a baby is sleeping—suffocation, entrapment, or strangulation from things like clothing, loose sheets and blankets. Baby boxes provide a separate, safe surface for baby's sleep, free of fluffy blankets, toys and other items that contribute to unsafe sleeping environments.

While the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says there is not enough evidence yet to prove the benefits of baby boxes, the Alabama Chapter-AAP Executive Board reviewed the Baby Box safety materials and the specifics of the program, and endorses the project as a tool in the safe sleep toolbox and a way to bring important awareness to safe sleeping techniques. The project gives every baby whose parents agree to the education an opportunity for an immediate "safe place" to sleep.

We are very excited about this opportunity to impact an at-risk population.

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