

# SIDS / Safe Sleep Animation Project

## Mentor Safety Village



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## **Mentor Fire Department / Mentor Safety Village**

### *Project Proposal- November 2011*

In the past several years, the City of Mentor has noticed a rise in the number of sudden infant deaths. Research into the causes of deaths in the region and throughout the State of Ohio uncovered vast differences in what specific education is being provided to new parents in regards to SIDS prevention and Safe Sleep practices. Health professionals throughout the country complained of similar problems, making a national solution the most reasonable.

Besides the actual information being given to parents, the *form* of the education appears to be relatively ineffective. Research showed that a fair percentage of parents who performed unsafe practices with their children actually received education but didn't follow the recommendations. This finding leads to questions about the effectiveness of the education. Fliers and brochures are the most common form, and probably the least read. A far more effective method of education has proven itself in fire prevention. Rather than teach parents what to do if their clothes catch on fire, firefighters teach children who then teach their parents. Most parents know to stop, drop and roll, although we don't target them with the message. Parents that don't wear their seatbelt are likely to be lectured by their six year old until they put it on.

Most new parents are issued a "gift bag" on discharge from the hospital. Many who visit Health Departments, WIC, or pediatricians are supplied with free samples of diapers, formula or coupons. If they also were to receive a DVD with a cartoon on it, older siblings would be overjoyed to get it. If we teach older brothers and sisters how to care for their new family member or correct a potential mistake a parent or grandparent makes, we can save lives.

The Goal of this project is to create an animated video that can be distributed free of charge by any group or company that has access to young families. The hope is that siblings will take it home and watch it over and over. It is expected that parents will also watch or overhear the messages, resulting in a reduced risk to infants. In order to achieve our goal, we established the following objectives:

1. **To get out the most accurate updated information available.** We polled over a dozen professionals in SIDS education from throughout the United States in an effort to make the script appropriate. As you would expect, opinions varied on several aspects. The script has found common ground on those subjects (breast vs. bottle, pacifier or no pacifier, smoking, etc.), and has been updated to match the latest recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. We even chose animals to make it appropriate for all children. The video can easily be re-recorded in any language, since it will be available at no cost to anyone.
2. **To create a professional video.** The artist we are considering is experienced at painting wildlife and nature. Although the cartoon is two dimensional rather than a big screen quality 3D digital animation, it is very well done and affordable. You can see a similar video she created at: <http://kimhunter.ca:80/animations/churchill.html> . A still clip of her work is on the cover of this packet.
3. **To have a good story.** The story has to be interesting and funny. There are several PSA's promoting safety out there that nobody will watch. The script makes the difference whether the message is absorbed or totally misses the target.

## HISTORY

Lake County Ohio is slightly above the state average for infant deaths, and has an increasingly substantial Hispanic community. Unfortunately, we saw a spike in infant deaths in 2007 specifically in the City of Mentor. Three infants died from sleep related environments within a half mile of each other. They all occurred in lower income apartments, to families that had other children, and had appeared to have received brochures on safe sleep. All reported that the actions they took with their infants were similar to things they have always done and never had a problem with. We began to investigate SIDS and sleep death, and were alarmed by the statistics and the lack of knowledge in the community.

It is clear that a large scale, long range educational plan is needed as a safety net for families and babysitters that have missed the prevention message. It is also apparent that although brochures on infant care in regards to safe sleep and SIDS prevention are being used, the message needs to be reiterated in a different way to ensure that it is understood. A project is needed that will reach all demographics, on a national level.

## PURPOSE

Firefighters have known for quite some time a secret about prevention programs. They are very successful because they aim their message at children. Although they don't talk to adults about stop drop and roll, every parent knows the message. If they tell adults to "buckle up", they are ignored. Yet teach children to "buckle up", and they preach to their parents when the adults forget. There is a prime age range of preschool to about the 5<sup>th</sup> grade when children love to learn about safety. Firefighters target that group, and it works. When the Mentor Fire Department investigated ways to educate the public, we tried to look at SIDS and safe sleep prevention from a different angle. Our research has shown that few educational programs have been aimed at children nationally, and no safe sleep programs for young children were found.

Our project involves creating a nine minute animated cartoon on DVD to distribute nationally. This animation will teach the lessons in the Back to Sleep

program, as well as numerous SIDS prevention tips in an entertaining format. We believe that if the characters, story, and production are good, children and their parents or caregivers will watch it over and over again. If it has a catchy sing-along at the end, daycares and preschools will sing it. If it is available nationally at no charge, health departments, fire departments, and civic groups will copy it, put their name on it and disperse it. Hospitals can send it home with moms and their new babies. Unlike brochures, it is unlikely that they will be discarded or ignored. It will be on You Tube, as well as SIDS prevention organizations' websites. Our local cable channels can run it as Public Service Announcements, and pediatricians can put it on in their waiting rooms. Since the SIDS prevention community will retain the rights to the video, organizations can personalize it with the local resources available for more information or assistance.

The script was written by Don Zimmerman of the Mentor Fire Department, and distributed to many of the top SIDS organizations in the country. From Florida to Michigan, and New Jersey to Missouri, the script was edited to reflect the latest preventative recommendations. The script was read by several professionals in childhood education, who made suggestions to ensure that the best communication was achieved with a younger audience. Finally, several people looked at the script from an entertainment perspective and made suggestions to ensure that the video was interesting enough to make people watch. Although it is aimed at children, we believe adults and teens will get the message. The script, in its entirety can be found as at the end of this packet.

The animator we are considering is based on a video she created on her website. Not only professional in appearance, Ms. Hunter used vibrant colors and Native American style music that captivated all that we forwarded it to. A family of porcupines was chosen to coincide with her style of art, while creating cute characters that audiences would remember. The use of porcupines has to do with how most sleep on their back, and also allows for some humor. Finally, it allows viewers of any race or background to relate. The video can also be produced in Spanish or other languages. The animator is excited about the prevention project and has given us a relatively low quote. The quote for animation was \$30,000. She has developed the characters, and is willing to allow us to use them for the video and prevention programs at no charge. She understands that the video would be produced with the intention of being copied

and distributed at no charge, and unlimited copies can be made without fear of royalty fees. The music for the back to sleep song was written by Tony Higginbotham of the Mentor Fire Department, and is written as a sing along for children. The video will incorporate his music, and like the animation and the script, the music is also royalty free.

The objectives for this project include the production of the DVD, along with the copying and distribution. The quote from the animator includes 12 master DVD copies to disperse to the participating organizations around the country. Master labels will be created by the Mentor Fire Department and included with the DVDs. Each organization is encouraged to create as many copies of the DVD as possible for their own distribution. On a local level, we had pledges several years ago meeting a goal of copying and distributing at least 600 copies in the first year. We are hopeful that these pledges are still valid. This project request is not for staff, materials, equipment or postage. The only financial request is for the actual production of the video and its promotion, which is unattainable without additional funding. All other expenses are in-kind contributions.

#### THE FUTURE

Our anticipated results of this project is for the video to become the most effective way to teach young families proper safe sleep methods, thus reducing infant deaths. We see this project as taking a creative approach to the problem of getting the message out, from an angle that is not being utilized. We see organizations making copies of this video and distributing it nationwide, and Kaitlyn the Porcupine becoming a well known cartoon character. We see this video being replaced in 5-10 years with an updated version, using the latest recommendations in infant death education. It has the possibility of being expanded to include other injury prevention information as well. We believe that this video will fill the void left with existing national SIDS prevention and safe sleep educational programs.

#### EVALUATION

The Mentor Fire Department built the Children's Safety House in 2000, and have bused in 3<sup>rd</sup> graders every spring since then. The Safety House is an interactive, all injury prevention house based on the National Fire Protection Association's Risk

Watch curriculum. Children identify the eight leading causes of death including: Fire and Burn, Motor Vehicle, Drowning, Choking Suffocation Strangulation, Poisoning, Slips and Falls, Guns, and Bike Pedestrian. One of the highlights of the Safety House visit is a 7 minute music video starring Vince and Larry, the crash test dummies. They teach 3<sup>rd</sup> graders about wearing seat belts, riding in the back of the car, and the dangers of air bags. We surveyed 287 5<sup>th</sup> graders from the schools that visited the Children’s Safety House two years previous. Our results proved several facts, including:

1. Fifth graders are involved in babysitting, sometimes infants
2. Fifth graders know little about safe sleep habits for infants
3. Fifth graders recall safety lessons from a video two years later

Obviously, if children see a video that is interesting, and full of safety messages, they retain that information. There is no reason why they can’t be trained in safe sleep.

Here are the results of our survey:

Question	Yes	No	% Correct
<b>General Questions</b>			
Do you have a younger brother or sister	167	120	
Have you ever babysat?	185	92	
Did you visit the Children's Safety House in the 3rd grade?	239	48	
<b>Safe Sleep Questions (no formal education)</b>			
Is the best way for a baby to sleep on his back?	166	121	58%
Is it OK for a baby to have stuffed animals in his or her crib?	142	145	51%
Is it OK for a baby to nap on a couch or chair if they can't fall off?	98	189	66%
Is it OK for a baby to sleep in an adult bed if they can't fall off?	97	190	66%
<b>Safety House Video Questions (from video seen 2 years ago)</b>			
Are Vince and Larry crash test dummies?	227	60	79%
Is it OK for a baby in a car seat to ride in the front seat of a car?	9	278	97%
Is it safest for children to ride in the back seat of a car?	275	12	96%

You can see that a third to half of the students polled failed basic knowledge about the safe sleep practices of babies. Meanwhile, information given in a humorous video format was retained most of the time. We are confident that a video with the following script will be equally effective.

### GENERAL STORYLINE

This story is about a family of porcupines that welcome a new baby home from the hospital. They walk upright and have human characteristics, even wearing some clothes. Their home is a modest but modern home, and Kaitlyn even has a video game. Since they are porcupines, many decorations and picture frames are made out of quills. Every time someone gets up from a chair or couch, quills are stuck in the furniture. Mom fills time in the scenes cleaning up after the family, sticking the quills in a giant pincushion that is apparently exclusively for that purpose. Everyone wants to help with the baby, but mom makes sure that everything they do is as safe as possible. It seems grandma and grandpa have some old habits as far as caring for infants go, and Kaitlyn wants to learn as much as she can. This animated safe sleep video is approximately 9 minutes long and is based on information for SIDS risk reduction and creating safe sleep environments for babies.

### CHARACTERS

- Spike- Spike is the newborn porcupine that comes home from the hospital. He wears a diaper, and a one piece pajama dress and has big beautiful eyes.
- Kaitlyn- Kaitlyn is 5 years old and is excited to have a new baby brother in the house. She wants to learn how to help and looks forward to playing with Spike.
- Mom- Level headed and intelligent, mom loves her family but is also pretty stern. She makes sure the baby is safe by making sure everyone knows and follows the rules.
- Dad- Dad is a tall, thin mild mannered man. His speech is limited to “yes, dear” when Mom tells him to do something, and can sometimes be clumsy. He is well dressed, but balding on the top. His quills try to hide the fact with a “comb over” that doesn’t quite work.

Grandma- A little short and a little overweight, but has more love than is deserved. She is just overjoyed to have a new baby in the family, and looks forward to cuddling with him and taking naps. Unfortunately, her methods are not the safest.

Grandpa- Grandpa is a little on the grumpy side, and loves to smoke cigars but he can't because of his health, so he just keeps one in his mouth. He's always a decade behind the times and doesn't appreciate change. He's happy to have a grandchild, but thinks that today's kids are just a little too spoiled.

## SCRIPT

### **Opening      Flying through woods, ends up in home**

*As the camera flies through the forest, it ends up in the Porcupine's House. Opening music is Native American, and although it has no words, it is a variation of the back to sleep song. During the music, the narrator speaks.*

Narrator: Summertime is beautiful up north, and often brings surprises. With the sun poking through the tall pine trees and the locust singing their song. Etc...

### **Scene 1      Living room of Porcupine's home (Dining Room in the background)**

*Grandma is sitting on the couch knitting a baby sweater with porcupine needles, which she periodically pulls out from her back. Kaitlyn is playing a video game on the floor, trying to teach grandpa how to play. He has a fat cigar in his mouth, and is grumbling about how toys aren't toys anymore.*

Kaitlyn: Grandpa, its circle, and "**then**" square up. Triangle makes you go backwards.

Grandpa: Circle- triangle- up- down- all around- dosido. This thing is ridiculous. In my day you didn't have to have a college degree to play a game.

Grandma: *Laughing-* Now Kaitlyn- didn't you ever hear the one about old porcupines learning new tricks?

Kaitlyn: It's not that hard grandpa.

Grandpa: It's not that easy either!

Grandma: And grandpa, don't even think about lighting that cigar. When the baby comes home there is absolutely no smoking in the house or around the baby. Second hand smoke can really damage babies lungs as they try to breathe clean air.

Grandpa: My smoking doesn't hurt anybody.

Kaitlyn: Grandpa- it hurts all of us and it stinks!

*A car door is heard outside. Kaitlyn jumps up and runs to the door, opens it for mom, dad and the baby. Quills are stuck in the carpet. Grandma is right behind her, Grandpa stands up. Quills stuck in the furniture.*

Kaitlyn: They're here, they're here, they're here!

Grandpa: OK, step back from the door and let them come in

*Dad enters with a pile of suitcases in one hand and an infant carrier (which he hands to grandma), in the other. Mom follows him in with her bags, and a balloon on a string. Kaitlyn hugs mom, grabs the balloon and runs over to grandma as she sits on the couch. Dad tries to close the door with his empty hand, juggles the suitcases and drops them.*

Grandma: OHHHH! He is so cute!

Kaitlyn: Mommy mommy, lemme see- lemme see- lemme... *-notices balloon-* Is that balloon for me?

Mom: Now, hold your quills. You can have the balloon, but be careful. You know what happens with balloons. Dad- put that thing away. You have to set a better example for Kaitlyn, and now the new baby. We all do!

Grandpa: Oh for cryin' out loud, I smoked around you and you survived!

Mom: It's a proven fact that babies can't breathe right with smoke in the air. I might have survived, but it's hard to know how it has affected me. Why take the chance? There were no baby car seats when I was a baby, but now everyone knows they have to have one. There are many things we learn every day that help us take better care of babies. Fresh air is important.

Honey, why don't you open up a window and get some fresh air circulating.

Dad: Yes, dear.

*Dad opens the window, Grandpa puts away the cigar. Kaitlyn follows grandma to the couch.*

Kaitlyn: Is this my brother? Let me hold him!

Grandma: Now just wait a minute, I need to get him out of this carrier and get a look at him. We don't want to scare him!

*Kaitlyn can't resist and pulls the balloon too close and it pops. Everyone stops what they are doing and look at Spike to see if he cries. He acts like nothing even happened.*

**POP!**

Kaitlyn: OHHH...

Mom: Kaitlyn, honey someday you'll learn.

Grandpa: I don't even know why they bother giving balloons to porcupines- It's like giving a lollipop to a fish.

*Mom turns to dad*

Mom: Honey, can you make me some tea?

Dad: Yes, Dear.

*Dad walks into the dining room*

Grandma: He is gorgeous. Kaitlyn, he's got your eyes!

Kaitlyn: His quills are so soft! Will they stay like that?

Mom: No, in fact they already are getting sharper. In another day or so they'll be just like yours.

Kaitlyn: Is he gonna be as big as me?

Mom: Yes he will, but not for about... Oh- 5 years!

Grandma: Well- he has got some growing to do, and we aren't gonna rush him. *Babytalk*: Are we now? Goochie goochie goochie goo. Who's your grandma, little porcupine?

Grandpa: There goes grandma again, talking baby talk.

Grandma: Oh you hush up.

Kaitlyn: Grandpa, he knows just what grandma is saying, and so do I.

Grandpa: He really is cute. Reminds me of a young... me!

Grandma: A really, really, really young you.

Kaitlyn: Now can I hold him grandma?  
Grandma: Well I don't know... do you think you can do it?  
Kaitlyn: Yes grandma, I've been practicing with my doll!

*Dad walks in with a cup of tea for mom and sets it on the dining room table. Dad and Grandpa walk off the set. Mom walks in and watches grandma hand Spike to Kaitlyn.*

Mom: Now Kaitlyn, you have to make sure you hold his head up, since he can't do it too well.  
Do you have him?  
Kaitlyn: Is this right?  
Mom: You are going to make a great big sister!  
Grandma: I made him a sweater! (*holds it up*)  
Mom: It's beautiful, but it looks a little big.  
Grandma: I know, but he'll grow into it soon enough. Did you send out the birth notices yet?  
Mom: We picked them up, but I need to write them out and send them. Maybe I'll work on them after I nurse him. Then you can put him down for a nap.  
Kaitlyn: I think he likes me!  
Grandma: I think you're right!

*Mom opens up her diaper bag and pulls out a diaper, setting them on the couch. She walks over to Kaitlyn with her hands on her hips, patiently waiting.*

Mom: Well Kaitlyn, why don't you let mommy feed him.  
Kaitlyn: OK. Can I hold him after he eats?  
Mom: After his nap, you can.

*Mom picks up Spike and sits on the other end of the couch by the diaper bag. She begins breastfeeding.*

Kaitlyn: That's how babies eat?!  
Grandma: Yes, sweetie. Some babies drink milk from their mommy, but some get it from a bottle.  
Kaitlyn: When will he eat real food, like leaves and bark?  
Mom: Not till fall. He has to get some teeth first!

*Kaitlyn watches, amazed. Consider some fill time here, maybe mom hums?*

Kaitlyn: Mommy, he's really hungry!  
Mom: Yep- as soon as he finishes nursing, he'll be ready to go back to sleep!  
Kaitlyn: Why? Did he just wake up?  
Mom: He sleeps most of the day and hopefully most of the night! It's important for him to get a lot of rest.

*Mom picks him up, puts him on her shoulder and pats him on the back. It doesn't take long before he lets out a great big burp. Grandpa walks through just then.*

Grandpa: Excuse Me! *(thinking it was him)*  
Mom: There you go.  
Kaitlyn: Wow! That's better than I can do!  
Grandma: Ok- nappy time. You come right back to grandma!  
Mom: Kaitlyn honey, will you help grandma change his diaper?  
Kaitlyn: OK!  
Mom: Mother, he has some one-zees in the dresser. Don't dress him up too warm.

*Mom hands the baby to grandma, who takes the baby into the bedroom to change his diaper. Kaitlyn follows. Mom pulls quilts out of the furniture and puts them into the pincushion. Mom walks to the table and takes a sip of the tea. She sets it down, then turns and opens up a drawer and pulls out an ink bottle, stamps and other supplies to send out the cards. Grandma walks back into the room with Spike in her arms. Spike has a pacifier in his mouth.*

Kaitlyn: Mommy- I found his binky!  
Mom: Kaitlyn honey, we aren't going to use the pacifier for another month. Will you put it back where you found it please?  
Kaitlyn: OK.  
Grandma: Where did you hear that?  
Mom: The nurse said the best time to start him on a pacifier is about 4-6 weeks after breastfeeding starts.

*Grandma sits back down in the reclining chair and tilts it back with the baby on her chest, belly to belly. Meanwhile, Kaitlyn runs back to the bedroom with the pacifier and returns to grandma. Grandma giggles, then baby and grandma both close their eyes.*

Mom: Mother- take him to his crib. He can't take a nap on your lap, or even in a chair.

Grandma: Oh come now- how do you think you took your naps? Why- even Kaitlyn napped on my chest.

Mom: I know that mother, but times have changed. The doctors and nurses explained that too many times babies can't breathe when they nap that way. The safest place is in their crib.

Grandma: Gosh- sounds like parents need to go to school to be parents.

Mom: There really is a lot of safety information that everyone ought to know!

*Grandma gets up with the baby and walks off set. Mom heads over to the table and takes a sip of her tea while she prepares her cards.*

Mom: Kaitlyn, go get your father for me.

Kaitlyn: (yelling) Daddy! Mom wants you!

*Dad walks in and walks over to mom. She signals him to turn around, and she plucks a quill from his back. He walks out without saying anything, and she dips it into the ink and starts to write. Kaitlyn walks over and climbs up on mom's lap.*

Kaitlyn: Whatcha doin'?

Mom: I have to send out cards to all our friends and family to tell them about your new baby brother.

Kaitlyn: Is he going to sleep in my room?

Mom: Not for quite a while. He has to sleep in his crib, and we'll keep it in our room for now so we can keep an eye on him. He might wake up at night and need to eat. Sleeping is important for babies, but it can also be a little dangerous so we have to be extra careful until his first birthday.

Kaitlyn: What's so dangerous about sleeping?

Mom: Well- you know how you hold your breath when you go swimming?

Kaitlyn: Yeah...

Mom: Babies can't do that too well. When they are sleeping, they have to lie on their back so the sheets don't block their nose and mouth. That's why they don't use a pillow like big girls.

Kaitlyn: Ohhh.

Mom: Come on, let's go see if he fell asleep yet.

## **Scene 2 Master bedroom of Porcupine's home**

*Mom and Kaitlyn walk into master bedroom and find Grandma lying on the bed on her side, dosing off with baby sleeping next to her on his stomach.*

Mom: Mother- He's supposed to be in his crib, and on his back!

Grandma: He's just taking a nap.

Mom: I know, but he has to be in the crib. It's the safest place for him. He has to be on a firm mattress, not a soft one like on my bed. If you want to watch him sleep, you can watch him sleep while he's in the crib.

*The crib has several sheets and blankets, along with a thick bumper pad around the outside edges. Grandma reluctantly gets up and puts the baby in the crib, but on his stomach.*

Kaitlyn: Grandma- on his back!

Mom: Where did all this stuff come from?

Grandma: I got those out of my attic and had them cleaned for you. They were in your crib when you were a baby.

Kaitlyn: Grandma- on his back!

Mom: Well I appreciate it, but they don't recommend using them any more. The bumpers can push up against their face, and they can become tangled in the blankets. That's why I went out and got a new crib.

Grandma: Do you want him to freeze?

Mom: No. All he needs is his diaper, a onesie, and one thin blanket. It's more dangerous if he gets too hot, so no hats.

Kaitlyn: Grandma- on his back!

Mom: That's right honey, babies have to sleep on their backs.  
Grandma: I thought they always said on their bellies, so they sleep better.  
Mom: At his age, the most important thing is to be able to breathe easily, so they say to put him on his back.

*Mom takes out all the extra stuff, puts the baby on his back at the foot of the bed, and covers him with one thin blanket (covering from his mid chest down. She tucks the other three edges of the blanket under the mattress so there is no way he can suffocate).*

Kaitlyn: Can we get him a stuffed animal for him?  
Mom: No. His bed has to be bare for him to sleep in it. We'll save the toys for "Tummy Time".  
When he's awake, you can play with him on the floor while he lays on his tummy!  
Kaitlyn: And he can learn how to crawl!  
Grandma: Laughing- well I don't think he's quite ready for that yet.

*Mom starts singing the back to sleep song, grandma and Kaitlyn join in on the chorus. The scene pans out to the forest where other animals are singing back to sleep. They too are taking care of their babies, following the safe sleep rules. The camera zooms to a family of earthworms, who seem to be puzzled at which side is the baby's back, so they keep flopping him over and over scratching their heads. Although the camera goes to other animals who are doing just fine, it keeps coming back to the worms. Eventually, the worms get it right. The camera ends up high in a tree, where an owl (in a nursing outfit?) is the narrator. The end.*

### Back to Sleep Song

The first rule is to sleep in a crib  
But it doesn't have to be deep.  
As long as babies can't fall to the floor  
When you put them Back to Sleep.

Chorus:

Back to Sleep, Back to Sleep  
All little babies go back to sleep  
Back to Sleep, Back to Sleep  
All little babies go back to sleep

The second rule is to clean out the crib  
No toys or blankets in a heap.  
Just one thin blanket's all that babies need  
When you put them Back to Sleep.

Chorus

The third rule is the air that we breathe  
It must be fresh as we can keep.  
Smokers must leave the smoke outside  
When you put them Back to Sleep.

Chorus

The last rule is the most important one  
Although it's cost is cheap.  
Babies **ALWAYS** sleep on their backs  
When you put them Back to Sleep.

Chorus

*Depending on time, the safety lessons can scroll the screen before the credits. We can add each contributor to the credits, then list the national organizations people can contact for more information or help.*