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NJSHAD Helps New Jersey's Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Center Reduce Infant Deaths

An average of 70 New Jersey families whose infants have died suddenly and unexpectedly are referred each year to the [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Center of New Jersey](#) (SCNJ), a program of Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Hackensack University Medical Center. As Program Director of the SCNJ, Dr. Barbara M. Ostfeld is always looking for additional tools, data, partnerships, and funding to help enhance services for New Jersey families whose infants have died, and to help prevent additional infant deaths by promoting safe infant sleep practices. The SCNJ tackles many issues related to sudden and unexpected infant deaths:



A safe infant sleep environment does not contain pillows, blankets, bumpers, toys, soft objects, or loose bedding.

- providing bereavement support for families;
- conducting research into the etiology of sudden and unexpected infant death;
- providing education and advocacy for the training of health, child care, and social service providers and new parents consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics' evidence-based safe infant sleep guidelines;
- developing risk factor profiles associated with an elevated risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related infant deaths by maternal and child demographics, region, and other factors;
- evaluating where unmet needs exist; and
- obtaining additional funding to better serve the needs of New Jersey families.

How does NJSHAD help reduce infant deaths?

Dr. Ostfeld regularly uses NJSHAD in four distinct ways to enhance the SCNJ's etiological research and educational outreach:

- to conduct etiological research on sudden and unexpected infant mortality by population group, maternal and infant characteristics, and other risk factors using the [infant and fetal mortality data query](#);
- to identify which New Jersey communities have high risk populations using the [birth query](#) so that enhanced educational outreach can be conducted within high risk families, institutions, and providers in these communities;
- to monitor and publish the finalized rates of SIDS and safe-sleeping practices in New Jersey and the United States by year, and demographic groups using, in part, the NJSHAD [SIDS](#) and [Safe Infant Sleep](#) indicators; and
- to educate parents, infant caregivers, and medical professionals regarding safe sleep practices which help prevent sudden and unexpected infant deaths through the information, resources, and outreach programs provided by Dr. Ostfeld and described in the NJSHAD [SIDS](#) and [Safe Infant Sleep](#) indicators.

As stated by Dr. Ostfeld, "NJSHAD gives us a very clear picture of infant mortality drilled down to the regional and demographic level. NJSHAD assists me in identifying many of the risk factors associated with diagnoses related to sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) in New Jersey for further study. Because NJSHAD has so many options to individualize queries by infant and maternal characteristics, I can develop profiles of risk for population groups and regions. We use these risk profiles as we implement our educational outreach campaigns, which are based on the national campaign called [Safe to Sleep](#)[®]. While NJSHAD doesn't contain information on all behavioral risks related to SUID, it does have a wealth of essential information on prenatal care, delivery, premature birth, gestational age, birth weight, Apgar scores, smoking, and maternal demographics including poverty. I can show our state's health care providers very specific data on increased risk levels by maternal and infant characteristics, so that educational interventions can be enhanced for the most at-risk families. NJSHAD is definitely helping the SCNJ's efforts to reduce the risk of infant deaths in New Jersey."

NJSHAD serves as the main data portal for NJDOH and provides public access to data and information from the entire New Jersey Department of Health. NJSHAD provides static public health indicators which combine data and information, and dynamic custom public health query tools. The functionality, content, and utility of NJSHAD are constantly being enhanced.