STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Childcare Safe Sleep SOP

Document no.	SOP-CHC-003
Revision	1.0
Owner	Center Director
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death by following widely accepted safe sleep practices for every nap and every infant, every time.

2. Scope

Applies to sleep and nap time for infants in care at the center. Sleep arrangements for toddlers and preschoolers on cots are covered by a separate procedure.

Definitions

Safe sleep environment	A crib with a firm, flat mattress with a fitted sheet and nothing else in it, following current widely accepted safe sleep guidance.
Visual sleep check	A caregiver looking directly at each sleeping infant on a set interval to confirm safe positioning and breathing.
Rolling infant	An infant developmentally able to roll from back to front and front to back on their own.

3. Responsibilities

Infant Room Teacher	Places infants on their back to sleep in a safe crib and performs scheduled visual sleep checks.
Assistant Teacher	Supports sleep checks, prepares cribs and helps maintain a distraction-free sleep area.
Center Director	Audits crib setup and sleep check documentation and keeps sleep policy training current.
Parent/Guardian	Communicates the infant's sleep needs and any medical sleep plan from their pediatrician.

RACI matrix

Activity	Infant Room Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Center Director	Parent/Guardian
Set up the crib for safe sleep	R/A	R	I	-
Place the infant down and monitor sleep	R/A	R	I	-
Perform and document visual	R/A	R	I	-

Activity	Infant Room Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Center Director	Parent/Guardian
sleep checks				
Respond to a sleep emergency	R/A	R	C	I

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Crib meeting current safety standards with a firm, flat mattress
- Fitted crib sheet
- Sleep check log or timer
- Wearable infant sleep sack in place of loose blankets
- Written medical sleep plan on file, if applicable

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Confirm the crib meets safe sleep standards** Before each use, confirm the crib has a firm, flat mattress with a well-fitted sheet and nothing else in it, and check for any recalled or damaged equipment.	Assistant Teacher	☐
5.2	**Remove all soft items from the crib** Keep the crib completely clear of blankets, pillows, bumpers, stuffed toys and positioning devices before the infant is placed down. **Checkpoint:** The crib is empty except for the fitted sheet before any infant is placed in it.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.3	**Check for a medical sleep plan** Check the infant's file for a written medical sleep plan from a pediatrician before placing them down, and follow it exactly if one is on file.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.4	**Place the infant on their back** Place every infant on their back to sleep for every nap and at night, unless a written medical exception from a pediatrician is on file. **Warning:** Always place infants on their back to sleep. Never place an infant on their stomach or side unless a documented medical exception is on file.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.5	**Dress the infant appropriately for sleep** Use a wearable sleep sack sized for the infant instead of a loose blanket, and dress the infant appropriately for room temperature rather than relying on extra bedding.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.6	**Position one infant per crib** Place only one infant per crib, keeping cribs spaced according to your facility's licensing requirements.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.7	**Keep the sleep area free of hazards** Keep cords, mobiles out of reach, and any monitoring equipment mounted so it cannot fall into the crib.	Assistant Teacher	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.8	**Perform visual sleep checks** Check every sleeping infant visually at the interval required by your facility's policy and local licensing rules, confirming safe positioning and normal breathing. **Checkpoint:** Every infant has a documented visual sleep check completed at the required interval, with no gaps.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.9	**Document each sleep check** Record the time and outcome of each visual sleep check in the sleep log immediately after performing it.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.10	**Reposition a rolling infant safely** If an infant who can roll independently rolls onto their stomach during sleep, you do not need to reposition them onto their back, but continue to place them on their back at the start of every sleep period.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.11	**Respond immediately to a sleep emergency** If an infant is found unresponsive or not breathing normally, start your facility's emergency response immediately, including calling emergency services and beginning infant CPR if trained and needed. **Warning:** Do not delay calling emergency services while attempting to assess the infant further.	Infant Room Teacher	☐
5.12	**Follow local licensing rules and review the policy** Follow your state or local licensing rules for safe sleep practices exactly, and review this policy with all staff whenever guidance is updated.	Center Director	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every crib is empty of soft items before and during use.
- Every infant is placed on their back for every sleep period, without exception documentation missing.
- Visual sleep checks are documented at the required interval with no gaps.
- All staff complete safe sleep training on the center's required schedule.

7. Records

- Visual sleep check log
- Medical sleep plan documentation on file
- Safe sleep training completion records
- Sleep emergency incident reports

8. KPIs

- Percentage of sleep periods with on-time visual checks documented
- Percentage of infants placed on their back with no missing documentation
- Safe sleep training completion rate
- Crib safety audit pass rate

9. Common mistakes

- Adding a blanket to keep an infant warm instead of using a properly sized sleep sack.
- Skipping a scheduled visual sleep check when the room is short-staffed.
- Placing more than one infant in a crib during a busy nap time.
- Not checking for a medical sleep plan before placing an infant down.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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