

# SUID

The sudden, unexplained death of an infant is a tragic family event. Families experiencing such grief have the right to receive a thorough investigation, so they can understand the true medical causes of such deaths. In addition, parents and other caregivers deserve an investigation that is sensitive to their grieving state and not one that is accusatory or insensitive to the emotions they are feeling.

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is just one of several causes of sudden, unexplained death in infancy, but it is the most frequently reported. Since the early 1990s, SIDS rates have declined by more than 50%, in large part due to the national Back-to-Sleep Campaign's efforts to increase the number of infants placed on their backs to sleep. Despite this success, SIDS is still the third leading cause of infant mortality in the United States and remains an important public health priority.

Two recent U.S. studies provide evidence that cause-of-death reporting and classifying of sudden, unexplained infant deaths (SUID) may be unreliable. These studies found that the decline in the SIDS rate since 1999 was offset by an increase in mortality rates for accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed and for unknown/unspecified causes (Shapiro-Mendoza, Tomashek, Anderson, & Wingo, 2006; Malloy & MacDorman, 2005).



Some deaths that were previously reported as SIDS are now reported as deaths due to accidental suffocation or unknown cause. This finding suggests that changes in reporting of cause of death might account for part of the recent decrease in rates of SIDS.

To address this change in reporting, we need (1) standardized data collection at infant death scene investigations and (2) consistent translation of DSI findings into cause-of-death on the death certificate. Having accurate and reliable national reporting of SUID, including SIDS, is a priority goal for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To prevent these infant deaths, valid and reliable data are needed to support research and prevention efforts. Inaccurate reporting and non-standard practices of classifying infant deaths hinder the ability to (1) monitor trends in SUID, (2) conduct research to identify risk factors, (3) design interventions to prevent these deaths, and (4) evaluate programs aimed at prevention.



## Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Investigations

# Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Investigations

Sudden unexplained infant death (SUID) is the sudden and unexpected death of an infant due to natural or unnatural causes. Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is one of several causes of SUID. However, SIDS, unlike the other SUID causes, is a diagnosis of exclusion. Although most conditions or diseases usually are diagnosed by the presence of specific symptoms, SIDS is a diagnosis that should be given only after all other possible causes of sudden, unexplained death have been ruled out through a careful case investigation, which includes a thorough examination of the death scene, a complete autopsy, and a review of the infant's medical history (Willinger, James, & Catz, 1991). Suffocation (asphyxia), drowning, electrocution, hyperthermia, hypothermia, carbon monoxide poisoning, and homicide are examples of other causes of SUID that can be explained after a careful case investigation.

A thorough death scene investigation (as described in this text) is often the only way to make a distinction between SIDS and suffocation as a cause of death (Hanzlick, 2001).

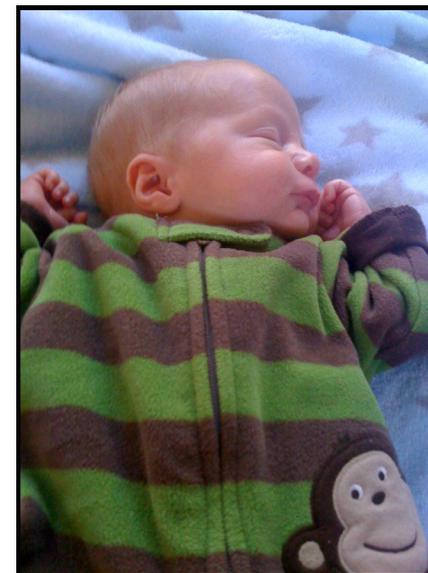


## Suggested additional Items for investigator kits include:

<b>MEASURING DEVICES:</b>	<b>EST COSTS</b>
Soft ruler both 6" and 12" , measuring tape	<b>\$20.00</b>
<b>ALTERNATIVE LIGHT SOURCES:</b>	<b>\$180.00</b>
Min of 3 LEDs that recharges quickly Light for Life UC3.400 recommended	
<b>CARBON MONOXIDE MONITOR</b>	<b>\$230.00</b>
CO gas is odorless & tasteless and is highly toxic to humans especially infants sources such as gas heaters should be tested	
<b>DIGITAL THERMOMETER</b>	<b>\$34.00</b>
Ambient room temperature is critical in excluding hyper-thermic injury	
<b>COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
NW Infant Survival & SIDS Alliance www.nwsids.org	
<b>WEIGHTED GENERIC RAG DOLL</b>	<b>\$40.00</b>
www.suididolls.com	
<b>SHAKEN BABY DOLLS</b>	<b>\$45.00</b>
www.dontshake.org	
<b>SUIDI TRAINING MATERIAL</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
www.suidi.org www.cdc.gov/sids/suid	

# SUIDI

Having knowledge about the many causes of SUID, in addition to SIDS, is of utmost importance for the death scene investigator. At the scene, the investigator will gather evidence as well as information from the parents or caregivers who were with the infant and who may be in a great deal of distress. All of this information is crucial for distinguishing between a natural death, an accidental death, or a homicide.



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14448 121st PL NE  
Kirkland, WA 98034  
Phone: 425-343-3701  
E-mail: [deborah.robinson@suidi.org](mailto:deborah.robinson@suidi.org)  
[pthoth@cjtc.state.wa.us](mailto:pthoth@cjtc.state.wa.us)