

In Brief: Babies spend a large amount of their early lives asleep – it’s crucial to ensure that they are sleeping safely. In Virginia, over 200 **voluntary registered family child care homes operate with no requirement for safe sleep practices** (as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics). **Safe sleep practices save lives.**

Infant Sleep Deaths in Virginia

In Virginia in 2021, there were [84 infants](#) whose deaths were due to Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), sometimes referred to as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

SUID and SIDS are related to the unexplained death of a seemingly healthy baby less than a year old. Most of these deaths occur while babies are sleeping, which is why they are often referred to as “sleep-related deaths.” SUID and SIDS are the leading cause of death among infants.

Using decades of research, the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has developed safe sleep guidelines for families and caregivers to reduce the likelihood of infant sleep-related deaths. Safe sleep practices can significantly reduce the risk of SUID and SIDS and prevent families from suffering enormous tragedy.

Regulated Child Care & Safe Sleep Practices

Virginia law mandates a license for home-based providers who care for 5 or more children, while voluntary registered providers care for 4 or fewer children. In Virginia, licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, and [license-exempt](#) or [religious-exempt](#) care providers are required by law to abide by the safe sleep guidelines set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).



However, voluntary registered home-based providers are not subject to this requirement. While they do self-certify to a [Health and Safety Checklist](#), the AAP safe sleep guidance is not included.

Parents and caregivers can help reduce the risk of SUID and SIDS by consistently placing babies on their backs on a firm, flat surface that meets Consumer Product Safety Commission safety standards (like a crib, bassinet, or play yard) to sleep for naps and at night. However, voluntary registered and other less-regulated home-based providers may not be aware of the latest research-based recommendations from pediatricians.

Babies should never sleep on a fluffy comforter, with excess/loose bedding, on a couch or armchair, a waterbed or padded play space because soft surfaces can easily block their noses and airways. In 2022, to further reduce accidental infant deaths, Congress passed [bipartisan legislation](#) to ban the sale of crib bumpers effective November 12, 2022.

Child Care Aware of Virginia Recommends:

- ✓ **Require voluntarily registered providers to complete basic training and follow American Academy of Pediatrics safe sleep guidance**