

NEW LAW: [HB 358](#) was approved by the 2024 Virginia General Assembly and signed into law on April 2, 2024. The measure became effective July 1, 2024 and requires the Health and Safety Checklist used by Voluntary Registered Family Day homes to include safe sleep practices. **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. [HB 358](#) requires safe sleep practices to be on the checklist.

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.

Enactment of this legislation was a priority for Child Care Aware of Virginia.