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A step forward to protect children from dangerous sleep products

by Devin Miller, Washington Correspondent

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recently took long overdue action to protect children from dangerous sleep products. This victory was the result of an unprecedented combination of events and advocacy by the AAP.

Last spring, Fisher-Price recalled the Rock 'n Play sleeper following reports of infant deaths and pressure from the AAP. The Academy took the unusual step of recommending the inclined sleeper be recalled after careful consideration of data demonstrating injury and dozens of deaths even when the product was used as instructed and the ubiquity of the Rock 'n Play in homes across the country.

The Academy's credibility also prompted the CPSC to consider further action. The agency voted unanimously to propose a new standard that essentially would ban inclined sleep products and require all infant sleep products to meet safety standards. It is one of the first steps in a longer regulatory process but important progress, nonetheless. The proposed rule will be open for public comment until Jan. 27, and the Academy will submit comments.

"If finalized, this proposal would finally offer parents needed reassurance that any product marketed as safe for infant sleep would indeed be safe for their child," AAP President Kyle E. Yasuda, M.D., FAAP, said in a press release with a coalition of consumer and medical groups. "This new standard will save lives, and we urge CPSC to implement it right away."

How we got here

The Academy's safe sleep recommendations have been long-standing: The safest environment for a baby to sleep is on his or her back on a flat, firm surface, free of loose bedding and bumpers.

Up to 73 infant deaths caused by inclined sleepers have been publicly reported. The Kids II Rocking Sleeper was recalled shortly after the Rock 'n Play was recalled.

Following the recalls, the Academy and its partners continued to call on the CPSC to take strong regulatory action and remove these and similar products from the market, urging there is no such thing as a safe inclined infant sleeper. Despite the recalls of these dangerous products, many remained on the market and in babies' nurseries and child care centers.

Additionally, the AAP has been concerned about infant sleep products that do not meet any product standard and present potential sleep-related fatality risks, such as in-bed sleepers. It was clear that further action was necessary to prevent more families from losing a child to one of these products.

Even when the outcome was uncertain and the path to victory was unclear, pediatricians spoke out. The Academy amplified their messages, and decision-makers in Washington listened.

Earlier this fall, the agency introduced the proposal that would remove inclined infant sleep products from the market, which required a vote from the CPSC commissioners to advance further.

In short order, the Academy led a letter with 56 national, state and local organizations, including several AAP chapters, urging every commissioner to vote in support of the new safety standard.

"We will be carefully watching the CPSC's vote on this NPR (Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking) and urge all Commissioners to vote in favor of this critically important and lifesaving consumer protection," the



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groups stated.

Nearly two weeks later, all five commissioners voted to publish the new standard, marking a key victory in the regulatory process and an important step forward to protect children.

Of note, the new standard would apply to all infant sleep products that do not fall into a specific category, meaning all products would be held to safety requirements and not handled on a product-by-product basis.

What's next

In addition to submitting comments on the standard, the Academy and partner organizations will continue to urge the CPSC to implement the safety standard without delay.

The AAP calls on baby product manufacturers to stop marketing and selling products that are known to be dangerous. Parents assume that products on store shelves are tested for safety, but that is not the case.

The Academy also is calling for "robust, well-communicated, accountable recalls" that ensure inclined infant sleep products are removed from the market and are no longer used in homes and child care centers across the country. As long as these products are sold in stores and secondhand from other parents, children will be at risk.

The AAP's advocacy to prevent more families from experiencing tragedy caused by dangerous sleep products takes many forms. The regulatory process is made up of several steps with key moments for advocacy. The Academy will be speaking out at every step of the way to ensure these products are removed from the market once and for all.

New advocacy resource

The number of uninsured children increased by 400,000 between 2016 and 2018, reversing the significant progress made in children's coverage, according to a report from the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families.

To see a state-by-state breakdown of the findings and what it means for children across the country, visit <https://kidshealthcarereport.ccf.georgetown.edu/>.

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