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Contact: Becca Doten

213-847-7777 (office)

213-219-5534 (cell)

ALARCÓN AND CHILD SAFETY ADVOCATES RECOGNIZE “SAFE SLEEPING DAY” IN LOS ANGELES BY SHARING INFORMATION ON HOW TO KEEP INFANTS SAFE WHILE THEY SLEEP

Los Angeles, CA – Today, Los Angeles City Councilmember Richard Alarcón joined with fellow child safety advocates to host a press conference in honor of “Safe Sleeping Day” in Los Angeles, which is today, June 19, 2009. This day, which was created through a resolution introduced by Councilmember Alarcón last month, highlights the importance of informing parents about the dangers of sleeping in the same bed as an infant (“co-sleeping”) and is an opportunity to share safe sleeping techniques with parents. Today’s press conference included a demonstration by Dr. Carol Berkowitz, former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, on the proper way to put an infant to bed. Other speakers included Raquel Delgado, a Coroner Investigator for the County Coroner’s office, and Cynthia Harding, Director for Maternal Child and Adolescent Health, with the County Department of Public Health. These speakers spoke about their personal experiences of working on cases that included accidental deaths of infants while sleeping.

“As the father of an infant, I am well aware of the desire to be close to your child, to protect them and shield them from danger, but sometimes, what we think is protecting them is actually putting them in harms way,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “Most people don’t know that sleeping in the same bed as an infant can be fatal. Safe Sleeping Day is an opportunity to educate parents on how they can be close to their infants and bond with them, without putting them at risk of accidental strangulation or suffocation.”

Deanne Tilton Durfee, Executive Director, Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect said, “Although most of us were placed on our stomachs as infants and survived, and many of us may have slept in the same bed as our parents, our research is showing that it is just not worth the risk. We’re talking about tiny, helpless babies who can’t walk and talk and can’t lift their heads from out from under a pillow, a blanket or you.”

A recently released report from the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) indicates that in Los Angeles County, from 2006 up to 2008, 86 infants under the age of one were determined by the Coroner to have suffocated while sharing a bed with adults. A report released in February 2009 by the National Center for Disease Control indicated a four fold increase in the rate of infant death during the past twenty years due to a rise in numbers of babies who share a bed with their parents.

Public health officials give the following “safe sleeping” tips for infants under the age of one: your baby should always sleep on his or her back for naps and at night; keep your baby’s sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep; place your baby on a firm sleep surface, keep soft objects, toys and loose bedding out of your baby’s sleep area; never allow smoking around your baby; never let your baby get overheated; don’t use products just because they claim to prevent SIDS; provide “tummy time” by placing your baby on his or her stomach when the infant is awake and someone is watching; and be careful about breastfeeding in bed or in any situations where you may fall asleep with your baby while breastfeeding.

Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) and its partners, the County Department of Child and Family Services, the County Department of Public Health, ICAN Associates and First5LA recently began a Safe Sleeping Campaign to Save Infant Lives campaign, to prevent the tragic deaths of babies under one year who suffocate while sleeping. The City’s Commission on Children, Youth and Families will be working with Councilmember Alarcon and ICAN to bring information on “safe sleeping” to LAUSD parent centers and also will be collaborating with Councilmember Alarcon and Channel 35 (CityView) to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA). More information on “safe sleeping” can be found at: <http://www.ican4kids.org/>.