

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 989 (Delegate R. Lewis)
Health and Government Operations

Hospitals - Care of Infants After Discharge

This bill requires a hospital, prior to discharge, to provide verbal and written instructions to an infant’s parent or legal guardian about how to care for the infant at home. The instructions must include how to (1) provide a “safe sleep environment”; (2) avoid shaken baby syndrome; (3) cope with crying infants and the stress, frustration, and fatigue created by caring for infants; and (4) perform other tasks as hospital staff deem necessary. Before discharge, a hospital must inquire as to whether the parent or legal guardian is able to provide the infant with a safe sleep environment and a bassinet, crib, or portable crib; if they are unable to do so, the hospital must provide a list of resources available to the parent or legal guardian to obtain the necessary items. A hospital must inform the parent or legal guardian of the importance of ensuring the infant has a safe sleep environment and have each parent or legal guardian sign a form confirming they understand the instructions and information provided.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Oversight of the bill’s requirements can be handled with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Safe sleep environment” means an environment in which a newborn may sleep that reduces the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths, including through the (1) use of

supine positioning; (2) use of a firm sleep surface; (3) use of room sharing without bed sharing; (4) avoidance of soft bedding and overheating; and (5) avoidance of exposure to smoke, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

Current Law/Background: There is no requirement for such information to be provided to new parents or guardians by hospitals on discharge.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, approximately 3,500 infants die each year in the United States from sleep-related infant deaths, including sudden infant death syndrome, and accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed. A safe sleep environment can significantly reduce the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, parents or caregivers can easily become stressed, sleep-deprived, and frustrated when caring for infants. If parents or caregivers become overwhelmed, they may not make the best decisions about the care provided to infants. For instance, shaken baby syndrome is a severe form of head injury caused by violently shaking an infant. The violent shaking may result in permanent brain damage or death. Shaken baby syndrome is almost always caused when a parent or caregiver shakes a baby out of frustration or anger, often because the child will not stop crying.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 944 (Senator Hayes) - Finance.

Information Source(s): American Academy of Pediatrics; Cleveland Clinic; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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rh/jc

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