



**Ministry of Human Services' Response to the
AL Fatality Inquiry Report**

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Background

The Ministry of Human Services has carefully reviewed the fatality inquiry report into the May 3, 2011 death of 14-week-old AL, released on December 1, 2015.

The inquiry found that both the cause of death and the manner of death were undetermined and cited that it was likely Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The child was in provincial government care at the time of death.

Fatality inquiries provide a valuable opportunity for an external review of tragic incidents involving individuals receiving services and supports from Human Services. The information in the fatality inquiry report has been reviewed and considered, and any learnings have been shared with staff who support children and youth in care. The ministry response includes information gathered from a review of existing policies and current ministry initiatives related to issues identified in the report.

Response to the Recommendations

The fatality inquiry report makes three recommendations for the ministry with the intent to support the prevention of similar deaths. The recommendations are focused on ensuring awareness and practice of safe sleep practices for infants by new parents and caregivers.

Recommendation 1: *It is recommended that Human Services annually review its various care policies to ensure they reflect current best practices.*

Ministry Response: The ministry accepts this recommendation.

The ministry engages in an ongoing cycle of quality assurance and continuous improvement related to child intervention policies and practices. This ongoing cycle is relevant to policies related to placement resources as well as child intervention assessment and service planning and provision. The ministry stays abreast of current research to support evidence informed policies and leading practices through collaboration with many partners, including Health Canada, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, and the contracted agency sector.

Recommendation 2: *It is recommended that Human Services prepare a short film outlining best practices for infant sleeping arrangements, and that every new parent be required to view the film before taking their baby home from the hospital.*

Ministry Response: The ministry accepts the intent of this recommendation.

While it is not the mandate of child intervention to be engaged with every family who has a birth in Alberta, the intent to increase awareness and practice of safe sleep practices for all infants is understood. The mechanism suggested in the recommendation may not be the best, or only, approach and does not cover home births and infants who move with their family and/or caregiver to Alberta. Current initiatives underway include information provided prenatally, in hospital, at discharge and after birth through medical professionals, Public Health

Clinics, social workers, Parent Link Centres, Home Visitation staff, etc. Although not mandatory, many pediatricians promote the joint statement on safe sleep by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society¹. The ministry will continue to support the dissemination of awareness information developed by our health partners to any audience caring for infants.

Recommendation 3: *Because practices involving sleeping positions have varied significantly over time, it is recommended that all caregivers, including grandparents for example, be shown the film or be instructed to view it online or thorough post-natal community care.*

Ministry Response: The ministry accepts the intent of this recommendation.

As noted above, the ministry works closely with our service delivery partners and health care experts in relation to current evidence-based policies and practices related to infant safe sleep and infant care. The ministry does not engage with all grandparents. As noted above, we will support the dissemination of information developed by our partners to any audience caring for an infant, including parents, extended family, and caregivers.

Conclusion

The recommendations provided in this fatality inquiry report are intended to protect the youngest, most vulnerable members of our society. The report highlights the need for increased awareness, understanding and promotion of current infant safe sleep practices.

We look forward to working collaboratively with our health care and service delivery partners to promote up-to-date, relevant information on infant safe sleep.

¹ [Public Health Agency of Canada - Joint Statement on Safe Sleep: Preventing Sudden Infant Deaths in Canada](#)