

NH Program Teaches Teens Of The Dangers Of Shaking Babies

By Holly Ramer April 14, 2013



Pictured here is doll from a resource kit prepared by The Injury Prevention Center at Dartmouth-Hitchcock for New Hampshire high schools to teach teens about shaken baby syndrome. (Jim Cole/AP)

CONCORD, N.H. — Bob Logan’s infant grandson died nearly eight years ago on Father’s Day, two days after being violently shaken by his teenage father. Now, the grieving grandfather wants to help teach other young parents how to avoid the same pain.

“The alternative would be to remain angry for the rest of my life,” Logan said. “So I thought a better alternative would be to help prevent this.”

Regardless of official school colors, purple soon will become more prominent at some New Hampshire high schools as part of a project to educate teens about injuries associated with shaking infants.

“[The Period of PURPLE Crying for Teens](#)” builds on a national program aimed at reassuring new parents that it’s normal for babies between the ages of two weeks and four months to experience long bouts of inconsolable crying. Purple is an acronym that describes characteristics of an infant’s crying during this phase — peak of crying, unexpected, resists soothing, pain-like face, long lasting and evening.

“”In my heart, I don’t think they realize that five seconds of shaking a baby can either kill them or lead to them having a lifetime of problems.”

– Bob Logan of Dracut, Mass. whose 6-month-old grandson died from being shaken

New Hampshire hospitals and others across the country have been sending new parents home with brochures, DVDs and tiny purple hats to reinforce the message for years, but the new project marks the first time teenagers in the state are being specifically targeted.

“The main message with this whole project is that abusive head trauma, or shaken baby syndrome, is a preventable public health problem,” said Debra Samaha, program director at the Injury Prevention Center at the Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock. “Crying is a normal

part of an infant's development. You should expect this, you should be prepared for it, and you should know what the dangers are of shaking a baby."

Twenty high schools around the state will be getting free resource kits — large plastic tubs containing a baby doll, a DVD, purple stress balls printed with the project's website address and educational material that can be incorporated into life sciences classes.

The idea came from Logan, whose 6-month-old grandson, Devin Logan, died June 19, 2005, in Nashua. The baby's father, Andrew Roberts, is serving a 15-year sentence for manslaughter. Logan said he suggested a program for high school students that would teach them both about shaken baby syndrome and strategies for soothing a crying infant.

The Dartmouth-Hitchcock center worked with the New Hampshire Abusive Head Trauma Coalition to survey school nurses and administrators around the state. More than 40 replied saying they would like more resources to educate students about abusive head trauma, formerly referred to as shaken baby syndrome.

To start, the kits will be distributed to schools in Grafton County, where Dartmouth-Hitchcock is based, as well as areas that have higher rates of teen pregnancy – Hillsborough County, Sullivan County and Coos County. But the idea is to educate a broad population of future parents, not just teens who already have babies, Samaha said.

About 33 of 100,000 children nationwide are victims of abusive head trauma, Samaha said, but accurate New Hampshire figures are hard to come by because serious medical cases often are handled out-of-state at Boston hospitals. But a review of trauma registry data at Dartmouth-Hitchcock several years ago made it clear that it was a problem, she said.

"When we looked at our own data, this bubbled up as an issue when we saw children that were allegedly being admitted for falls and the more you looked into the cases, it became evident that these were not accidental traumas," she said.

"New Hampshire is a great place to raise kids, but we have these kinds of injuries in New Hampshire," she said. "They're very real and they're catastrophic."

Funding for the teen project comes from Kohl's Cares, the philanthropic arm of Kohl's department stores, through sales of books and stuffed animals at the store in Lebanon.