

# Finding the Way Forward to Improved Infant Product Safety

Alison Jacobson



Saving babies. Supporting families.

*First Candle's efforts to support families during their most difficult times and provide new answers to help other families avoid the tragedy of the loss of their baby are without parallel.*

*“Last month’s International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization (ICPHSO) annual conference brought up an issue that has a direct bearing on infant health and is one that our organization is aware of as it works to end sleep-related infant death.”*

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ICPHSO members represent U.S. and global government agen-

cies, manufacturers, importers, retailers, trade associations, certification/testing laboratories, law firms, consultants, academia, health educators, standards writing organizations, media, consumer advocacy groups, and others involved in the consumer product safety community. Members meet annually to exchange ideas, share information, and address health and safety concerns affecting all consumers.

*“This panel discussion included manufacturers, advocates, and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The discussions focused on how to improve collaboration among the various constituents, what other players need to be involved, and current obstacles to collaboration and how they can be eliminated.”*

I was particularly interested in Enhancing Safety Through Collaboration and Communication. This panel discussion included manufacturers, advocates, and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The discussions focused on how to improve collaboration among the various constituents, what other players need to be involved, and current obstacles to collaboration and how they can be eliminated.

As a key player in efforts to align various stakeholders toward reducing rates of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), First Candle has been engaged in dialogue with regulators and juvenile product manufacturers. What we have seen, and what was pointed out by the panel, is that trust and transparency seem to be missing between these two groups.

The CPSC works to reduce the risk of injuries and deaths from consumer products by developing voluntary standards with industry; issuing and enforcing mandatory standards; banning consumer products if no standard would adequately protect the public;

Did you know that premature and low birth weight babies have a 4x greater risk for SIDS?

At First Candle we're educating parents, grandparents and caregivers about safer sleep to make sure all babies reach their first birthday. Learn more at [firstcandle.org](http://firstcandle.org)



informing and educating consumers through media, state and local governments and private organizations; and by responding to consumer inquiries.

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Manufacturers share the same goal of creating safe products that support parents’ needs in caring for their babies. Advocates and non-profit organizations also play a key role, bringing the voice of parents and consumers to the table. Many times these parents have lost a baby to a tragedy associated with a product.

While all three constituencies want the same goal – safe products for infants – the mistrust between them hinders progress. Manufacturers, in some cases, have been cast as the bad guy by advocates and regulators, and manufacturers believe regulators are not being transparent regarding sharing data on research and incidents.

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However, the voice missing from the conversation is that of the public health professionals and community organizations who regularly engage with families. For this reason, we are continuing to expand our [Let’s Talk Community Chats](#), a program that allows us to hear from these groups. (1)

We believe these components need to work together:

- **Manufacturers and advocates** can reach families, informing them on the proper use of products.
- **Regulators** have the data to help manufacturers continue to innovate and create even safer products.
- **Community organizations** are the on-the-ground conduits to receiving and delivering messages and meeting families where they are located.

I was encouraged that this panel happened. We will only move the needle in reducing the SUID rates by providing families with safe

products that help them create a safe sleep environment. This requires a unified effort by all stakeholders, who can and should work together to make this happen.

#### References:

1. <https://firstcandle.org/lets-talk-community-chats/>

**Disclosure:** *The author is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of First Candle, a Connecticut-based not-for-profit 501(c3) corporation.*

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#### About First Candle

First Candle, based in New Canaan, CT, is a 501c (3) committed to eliminating Sudden Unexpected Infant Death while providing bereavement support for families who have suffered a loss. Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), which includes SIDS and Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in Bed (ASSB), remains the leading cause of death for babies one month to one year of age, resulting in 3,500 infant deaths nationwide per year.

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