



Snuffing out SIDS

It seems like children have been tagging around after Amanda Sue Bordeaux all her life – and Bordeaux couldn't be happier about it. As the third-oldest in a family of nine kids, Bordeaux learned at a young age how to comfort and care for babies. When she was in high school, she ran a tutoring and nutrition program for younger children after school. Now that she's a grandmother, Bordeaux isn't slowing down; she runs an in-home daycare program with 12 to 15 children.

"I think my daycare career really started when I was 10 years old," laughed Bordeaux as she chased her two-year-old grandson around her home in Rosebud, South Dakota.

But a moment later, she turned serious. Bordeaux, who is Native American, has become increasingly worried about the number of babies on her reservation who have died in their sleep from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS.

"Recently there have been a lot of baby deaths, and I'm kind of baffled about it," Bordeaux said. "Because I take care of a lot of kids I hear about it from different people. Fortunately I've never had anything happen to a child in my care, but one of my fellow daycare providers had taken care of a child who passed away from SIDS recently."

That's why Bordeaux, who is a member of the Comanche tribe, attended a recent two-day conference on SIDS held in Rosebud, which drew experts from as far away as Washington, D.C. The conference was both scary and reassuring, said Bordeaux. It frightened her to realize that South Dakota is in the region of the country that has the highest rate of SIDS. But she felt better knowing that parents and caregivers can do many things to decrease the chance that SIDS will strike their babies.

The conference was really a brainstorming session, said Bordeaux. "The main objective was how we can get the word out to the Native American

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people about SIDS being at the highest rate in our area and how we can promote awareness of ways to prevent it.”

Although Bordeaux already knew the importance of putting babies to sleep on their backs, rather than on their stomachs, and of keeping soft bedding and stuffed animals out of the crib until a child turns one year old, other tips she learned at the conference came as a surprise.

“I didn’t realize there was an association with cigarette smoking and SIDS,” she said. “Everybody talks about how you shouldn’t smoke around kids, but I never realized smoking could be so bad for kids even before they’re born.”

So now Bordeaux warns pregnant women on her reservation not to smoke—and not to stand too close to anyone else who is smoking either.

“My own daughter is due with her baby in July, and she didn’t even know that,” said Bordeaux.

When that baby arrives, it’ll be grandchild number three for Bordeaux – but she sometimes feels as though she’s a grandmother to hundreds of kids. Just recently, a young woman who once attended Bordeaux’s in-home daycare telephoned and asked Bordeaux to come with her to the hospital: It was time for her to deliver her own baby.

Bordeaux can’t wait to sing that new little baby girl a lullaby – before she puts the baby down to sleep on her back, of course.