

**TO MEDIA:**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EXCELA HEALTH FAMILY ADDITIONS MATERNITY CENTER ENHANCES SAFETY FOR NEWBORNS THROUGH SLEEP SACK GIVEAWAY**

**GREENSBURG, PA, March 28, 2022** ... The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) notes nearly 3,500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep-related infant deaths, including sudden infant death syndrome, accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed. Infant sleep clothing, such as a wearable blanket, is preferable to loose bedding and other coverings to keep the infant warm while reducing the chances of overheating through accidental head covering or entrapment that could result from blanket use.

Excelsa Health has long utilized sleep sacks in its Family Additions Maternity Center at Westmoreland Hospital to swaddle newborns in the hours after delivery. Now all new parents will leave the hospital with a pair of sleep sacks to promote continuing safe sleep practices at home. The gift is made possible by ongoing support from the Westmoreland/Frick Hospital Foundation. Beginning in 2022, the foundation will provide approximately \$21,000 annually for the purchase of the monogrammed sleep sacks. The continuing grant will vary based on the number of births each year and product costs. Typically, 1,250 babies are born in the Family Additions Maternity Center annually.

“Improving the health and well-being of our patients, beginning with newborns, is what Excelsa Health has pledged to our community to do,” noted

John Sphon, Excela Health Chief Executive Officer. “Doing so means delivering the highest quality of care in a safe environment. Being able to encourage safe health practices beyond our facilities is what contributes to a healthy population and a robust community for all.”

The use of sleep sacks is just one reason Excela Health is recognized as a Safe Sleep leader by [Cribs for Kids®](#), the only national infant safe sleep organization. Based in Pittsburgh, PA, Cribs for Kids® is dedicated to preventing infant sleep-related deaths due to accidental suffocation. As a Nationally Certified Safe Sleep Hospital, Excela Westmoreland is recognized for following all of the safe sleep guidelines recommended by the AAP, and providing training programs for healthcare team members and family caregivers.

Excela Health’s certified childbirth educators teach safe sleep practices during classes offered to expectant parents. Those practices are reinforced following delivery as part of postpartum care for mothers and newborns, and during subsequent checkups with the child’s care provider.

In addition to its Safe Sleep certification, Excela Health Westmoreland Hospital is recognized by both *Newsweek* and *US News* as a **Best Maternity Hospital** based on best-practice benchmarking data.

Beyond championing safe sleep practices, Excela Health is also committed to improving the incidence of infant mortality from all causes. As such, the health system has received a \$294,000 grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation to support data harvesting by Excela’s Information Technology team as part of a broader infant mortality project being conducted by Magee-Womens Research Institute, RAND Corporation and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. That project focuses on human life in the first nine months as a tool to predict and change the course of illnesses that can occur over a lifetime. With Excela’s participation, the project has been expanded into Westmoreland County where the population and demographic information differs from that of Allegheny County where the study originated.