

# The Period of **PURPLE** Crying®

a program of the



National Center on  
Shaken Baby Syndrome

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## FAQ for Professionals

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### 1. What is the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program and why is it different from other shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma (SBS/ABT) prevention programs?

The program is **unique** among SBS/AHT efforts in several important ways:

- It approaches prevention through child development education about normal infant development, specifically, about crying in normal infants, rather than being limited to warnings of the negative consequences of shaking.
- It is based on over 60 years of research on normal infant crying conducted by Dr. Ronald G. Barr, MDCM, FRCPC and experts in the field of infant and child development.
- It is based on strong evidence about infant crying, since we know that crying is shown to be the most important stimulus for shaking.
- It aims to bring about a cultural change in caregivers and the community in general about our understanding of infant crying; it is a positive program that gives all parents encouragement that aims to improve their relationship with their baby.

### 2. What has the testing of the program included?

The program was initially tested over a three-year period and it continues to be evaluated by partners and other researchers. In the first year, the new materials, a 10-minute video and booklet were revised through testing with 19 parent focus groups in the United States and Canada. The focus groups included 16 groups for mothers, 2 for fathers, and 1 for Native Americans/First Nations. The groups were multicultural and had various socioeconomic backgrounds. The materials were also reviewed by 35 highly regarded clinical pediatric and academic research physicians, public education consultants and public health nurses. The program was then rigorously tested in two parallel randomized controlled trials in Seattle, Washington (USA) and in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada). The largescale trials included 4,400 parents and assessed their ability to change knowledge and behavior of mothers related to the information provided in the educational materials. The settings where the program was delivered included: (1) prenatal classes; (2) maternity wards; (3) pediatric practices; and (4) home visits by public health nurses. In March of 2009 these studies were published in *Pediatrics* and the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. The studies show positive results of parents changing their behaviors and increasing their understanding of normal infant crying and the dangers of shaking a baby.

The summary of the results are as follows:

- Crying knowledge increased significantly
- Increases were from 4.5 to 22% on crying knowledge scale questions
- Parents who thought shaking was a “good” way to soothe an infant decreased by 63%
- Walk away behavior increased by 74%
- Sharing information on crying, walking away, and shaking dangers was increased by 9%, 12% and 13% respectively

Additionally, there has been important recognition that the evidence-based prevention program, *Period of PURPLE Crying*, has received. The recognition sources are diverse and yet all very important on a national level.

- Testimony from Dr. Bob Block, Past President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, to the Senate Sub-Committee on Children and Families. The *Period of PURPLE Crying* program is described as an effective prevention program on pg. 19. <http://help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Block.pdf>
- The California Evidence Based Clearinghouse is a collection of child welfare programs that have been evaluated for their relevance and research evidence to allow child welfare professionals to make informed decisions about the programs and services they offer. The *Period of PURPLE Crying* program has been evaluated and is included on their website. <http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/period-of-purple-crying/>
- In the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed a Journalist's Guide to Shaken Baby Syndrome: a Preventable Tragedy. This useful guide describes the *Period of PURPLE Crying* as a normal part of normal infant development. [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/SBSMediaGuide.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0ZVDLXkCO\\_Qe45FMPU9vqlfnnGmUfTbC\\_50An8m-jOquZ1op\\_UjromGxk](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/SBSMediaGuide.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0ZVDLXkCO_Qe45FMPU9vqlfnnGmUfTbC_50An8m-jOquZ1op_UjromGxk)

### **3. Has there been any studies conducted showing the program is effective in reducing the incidence of shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma?**

The *Period of PURPLE Crying* program was evaluated through a cost-effectiveness analysis study conducted in British Columbia, Canada. The *Period of PURPLE Crying* program, a rigorously tested and comprehensive SBS/AHT and infant abuse prevention program, has been evaluated in parallel studies in the state of North Carolina (NC), 2007-2012 and in BC, Canada, 2008-2016, for its effectiveness at reducing SBS and infant abuse. These are the largest funded studies ever performed on a child abuse prevention program. The NC evaluation was funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Duke Endowment. The BC evaluation was funded by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development and the BC Children's Hospital.

In both evaluations, a team comprised of researchers, academics, economists, doctors, social workers and nurses worked to implement the program jurisdiction-wide following the three-dose strategy. In BC, they reported a 35% decrease in SBS incidence in the journal *Child Abuse & Neglect* in 2018 and in 2020 received the prestigious award as the article of the year for the journal. In NC, the evaluation was completed in 2012 and the findings have been reported in two publications: *JAMA Pediatrics* and *Nurse Education in Practice*.

For more information on the studies mentioned above or to review the extensive research library focused on the *Period of PURPLE Crying* prevention program visit: [Period of PURPLE Crying Research](#).

### **4. What is the difference between the PURPLE program and the program of Dr. Mark Dias that was published in Pediatrics in 2006?**

The published article by Dr. Mark Dias describes a "process" model or "steps of how to deliver" an SBS/AHT prevention program. The *PURPLE* program is the "content." These two can be combined for a very effective program. Dr. Dias is very clear that his model refers to the "process" not the "content." The Dias published model is an "open source" model regarding the materials that are delivered.

### **5. What are the advantages of this program?**

The program materials were designed to overcome recognized barriers of delivering educational information to parents that occur with other prevention materials by ensuring that the materials are:

- Educational and attractive to parents of newborns on the first day of life
- Interesting and valuable for all parents because of the information about normal increased infant

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- crying whether or not they would ever consider shaking their baby
- Clear, memorable, and meaningful with a positive message
- Presented at a grade three language level
- Inclusive of many cultural and ethnic backgrounds
- Acceptable to public health nurses: no bottles, blankets, or bumper pads
- Economical
- Designed for each family of a new baby to receive a copy of their own to review and to share with others

## 6. What does the *PURPLE* program model include?

The program that was tested to be effective in changing knowledge and behaviors in mothers included the 10-page full color booklet and the mobile app which includes the 16-minute *Period of PURPLE Crying* video. **The tested model is that every family of a new baby receives their own set of program materials.**

There are four very good reasons families must each have their own copy:

- *The Period of PURPLE Crying* starts at about 2 weeks, peaks at about two-months, and usually comes to an end by about 4-5 months, and often earlier. **It is very important that parent(s) have access to the materials with them while their baby goes through the *Period of PURPLE Crying*.**
- It is vital that other people who care for the baby, including relatives, friends, boyfriends, also look at the video and read the booklet. **The parent(s) must have these materials to share and to educate others.**
- People do not usually learn things only by hearing or watching the information one time. They must also be willing to “receive/hear” the message when it is relevant to them. **Parents and other caretakers must be exposed to the messages as many times as is necessary to understand the message.**
- When parents experience having a baby that cries a lot, even for one day, **they need something immediately that can give them accurate and supportive advice so they do not get frustrated with the baby.** They need permission to put the baby down in a safe place and walk away for a while and take some time to calm down when they become frustrated.

## 7. What is the process for implementation of the *PURPLE* program?

The program has two aims. The first aim is to support caregivers in their understanding of early increased infant crying. The second aim is to reduce the incidence of shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma. The *PURPLE* program is designed to educate parents and others about the normal properties of early infant crying, and to reduce the stress and frustration parents experience when they have a baby who cries. In this aim, it is similar to the “Back to Sleep” campaign for the reduction of sudden unexplained infant death syndrome (SUIDS). This approach brought about a cultural change in the way we put babies to sleep. The *PURPLE* program has been designed to change the way we understand early increased infant crying so that parents and caregivers will have reasonable expectations for their baby and for themselves as caregivers. Since the program is designed to bring about a cultural change in attitudes and beliefs about infant crying, we recommend the following triple dose approach.

### Dose One: Delivery of the *PURPLE* Program Materials to Parents

Dose One describes delivery of the intervention materials to parents of all newly born infants via a demonstration of the materials by a trained educator or provider. This would replicate current “best practice” based on available studies. The timing of each Dose delivery depends on several factors; however, the first Dose of the program needs to take place within the first two weeks of the baby’s life before the baby’s crying increases. For example, a maternity delivery setting is ideal because it is universal, meaning most babies are delivered at hospitals. Home visiting programs, pediatric well baby visits and public health, to name a few, have also been a good fit for Dose One: Delivery.

## Dose Two: Reinforcement of the Messages

Does Two reinforces important messages of the program to parents, such as: “babies can still be healthy and normal even if they cry five hours per day” and the “the crying will come to an end.” Reinforcement of the messages often takes place at public and state department of health programs, home visiting, and/or pediatric well baby visits. The services available in the community will determine where parents receive the second dose. Dose Two: Reinforcement is a little more flexible in terms of timing than Dose One: Delivery, generally occurring throughout the first three months following the baby’s birth.

## Dose Three: Public Education Campaign Toolkit

Dose Three is a public education campaign. Dose Three is important to make sure that all other members of society hear about and understand the *Period of PURPLE Crying*. Visit the [Dose Three Public Education Campaign Toolkit](#) which has resources and downloadable assets for small or large campaigns, single events (like a radio or TV advertisement) and case studies describing events and successful campaigns. The timing for Dose Three is not set to the timing of a baby’s birth. It is dependent upon a jurisdiction or an organization’s capacity to educate the community where Dose One: Delivery, and ideally Dose Two: Reinforcement, is occurring.

### 8. Can the *PURPLE* video be shown in the hospital and be given to the parents?

Yes, it is recommended that hospitals who invest in the program model provide at a minimum a 3-minute presentation at the bedside or in a discharge class about the *Period of PURPLE Crying*, show the 16-minute *PURPLE* video and answer any questions about the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program. Talking points are provided for the presentation. However, each family must receive their own copy of the program materials as this is the tested model. The program is also designed to be presented at pre-natal programs, discharge classes, childcare classes, health departments, and other places where families are served. These sources of information serve as “enhancements” or “reinforcements” of the program. Talking points are available for these settings as well so that the message remains consistent and correct. The NCSBS offers a Copyright Permission Form for those organizations interested in uploading the 16-minute *PURPLE* video to closed circuit television systems. Ask the *PURPLE* staff for more information or request the copyright release form at [PURPLE@dontshake.org](mailto:PURPLE@dontshake.org).

### 9. How much does the program cost?

The tested model is that each family of a new baby receives its own set of program materials. The materials are distributed and can be purchased as a booklet with web and mobile application (App). This includes the *PURPLE* video, full-color 10-page reading materials, and a 17-minute video called *Crying, Soothing, and Coping: Doing What Comes Naturally*.

The cost of the *PURPLE* program materials are offered at the following flat rates (plus shipping fees):

App + Booklet:  
\$2.50 per package  
English, Spanish and French

The *PURPLE* program is not distributed in increments of less than 50. English and Spanish App + Booklet must be ordered in quantities of 50. For orders of 10,000 or more, the NCSBS offers complimentary personalization on the Parent Reminder Card that is located within the booklet. This may include information like local contact numbers, program sponsors and logos.

## 10. What supporting materials for the *PURPLE* program are offered?

The NCSBS has developed supporting materials to be used as enhancements or to reinforce the message and have been recently updated. Some items include a:

- Dad's Card
- App Posters
- *PURPLE* Magnet
- Community Flyer
- Reminder Poster in English or Spanish plus Bilingual Poster in English and Spanish
- Visual Aids for Classes
- Crying Curve Graph in English and Spanish
- *PURPLE* Acronym in English and Spanish
- 3-Minute Delivery Talking Points
- 10-Minute Delivery Talking Points
- Certificate for Parents
- Reinforcement Reminder Card
- Reinforcement Talking Points
- Training Quiz for Providers
- Completion of Training Certificate for Providers

## 11. What languages does the program come in and how much do the other languages cost?

The App + Booklet package is available in English and Spanish. The unique app activation code can also be used to access the materials on [PURPLECryingapp.info](http://PURPLECryingapp.info) website in 3 languages: English, Spanish, and French. The English version also includes closed captioning for the hearing impaired. The translation process has been completed with the most sophisticated process possible for all written materials.

## 12. How am I able to preview the *PURPLE* program materials?

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome (NCSBS) has developed Online Modules found at [training.dontshake.org](http://training.dontshake.org) that allows professionals to learn about the lines of evidence supporting the development of the *Period of the PURPLE Crying* program, view the 16-minute *PURPLE* video, 10-page booklet, and 17-minute *Crying, Soothing, Coping: Doing What Comes Naturally* video in their entirety. This training offers continuing education credits for nurses and social workers.

## 13. What learning materials does the online training module contain?

The *Period of PURPLE Crying* training module includes the *Period of PURPLE Crying* video, *Period of PURPLE Crying* booklet, *Crying, Soothing, Coping: Doing what Comes Naturally* video, Lines of Evidence and Rationale for the *Period of PURPLE Crying* and How to Access the *PURPLE* Program App. There are also several additional documents available for download. These documents include but are not limited to: the Program Overview, Implementation Protocol, Fidelity Agreement, 3 and 10-minute delivery talking points, TeachBack Guide, reinforcement talking points, Mobile App FAQs for Professionals, Mobile App FAQs for Parents, Dose 1 and Dose 2 Checklists, FAQs for Professionals, FAQs for parents, Dose 2 materials. To access the training module visit [training.dontshake.org](http://training.dontshake.org).

## 14. I have heard about an initiative being organized in some jurisdictions to distribute knitted purple caps with the program materials. What is this and how can we get involved?

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome launched a campaign to help spread awareness of the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program. The campaign called, *CLICK for Babies: A Period of PURPLE Crying Campaign*, is a grassroots effort that involves partnering with crafters throughout North America to help make purple-colored baby caps. The caps are collected from April through October each year and then distributed in birthing hospitals to new babies during the months of November and December. All hospitals and child welfare organizations that deliver the *PURPLE* program to families are invited to participate in the campaign depending on their progress with implementing the *PURPLE* program. To learn more about the campaign or to get your organization involved please visit [www.CLICKforbabies.org](http://www.CLICKforbabies.org) or call 801-447-9360 extension 1 or by email at [PURPLE@dontshake.org](mailto:PURPLE@dontshake.org).

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