

The Period of **PURPLE** Crying®

a program of the  National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome

Implementation Protocol

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome (NCSBS) in partnership with Dr. Ronald G. Barr, MDCM, FRCPC, developed the world's leading evidence-based prevention program called the *Period of PURPLE Crying*. It is a program that gives parents a new way to understand their baby's crying. It is a skill-building program that approaches shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT) and infant physical abuse prevention by using a child development approach. It helps parents and caregivers to better understand the features of crying in normal infants that can be frustrating and can lead to shaking or abuse. The program is designed to create a cultural change in the way parents and others think about infant crying, especially inconsolable crying. If parents can understand and handle this normal early crying period, they are less likely to feel stressed to the point where they shake their baby out of frustration and anger.

This program provides the opportunity for parents to learn about the crying characteristics they are experiencing during this unique period in the first few months of life and gives this period a name. This crying begins at about two weeks of age and usually ends by four or five months of age. The letters in the *PURPLE* acronym describe these normal characteristics of infant crying:

Peak of Crying – Crying peaks during the second month, decreasing after that
Unexpected – Crying comes and goes unexpectedly, for no apparent reason
Resists Soothing – Crying continues despite all soothing efforts by caregivers
Pain-like Face – Infants look like they are in pain, even when they are not
Long Lasting – Crying can go on for 30-40 minutes at a time, and often for much longer
Evening Crying – Crying occurs more in the late afternoon and evening

The word "Period" is used to let parents know that this experience of increased frustrating crying is temporary and eventually does come to an end. To learn more about the research that supports the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program, visit the NCSBS website at www.dontshake.org/purple-crying.

Protocol for Implementation

Minimum Requirements When Using the *Period of PURPLE Crying* Program

1. Each Family Needs to Receive Their Own Set of Materials

The tested model requires that the parent(s) of a new infant receives their own set of program materials (App +Booklet package.) There are some very good reasons why the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program makes this requirement. For instance, when parents initially receive the materials, they may not realize how relevant they are until their baby is actually going through the *Period of PURPLE Crying*. They will want and need to review the content again. It is understood that people learn in different ways, some through reading and some through viewing a video. The *PURPLE* program messages are given in both video and written formats to address learning style differences. Additionally, parents who have the *PURPLE* program materials can easily share the materials with others who may be caring for their baby. Since many babies are shaken by temporary caregivers, it is critical these people receive the program in addition to parents.

2. Consistent Messages and Fidelity of the Program

It is critically important that consistent, clear and correct (evidence-based) messages are given to the parents and the public. The *PURPLE* program is committed to only offering

information that meets this criterion. The tested program will not be effective if those delivering the program create their own version of the presentations or change the training materials in any way. Further, the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program materials should not be distributed with other educational materials that express a conflicting message (e.g. all infant crying can be soothed if only parents respond in the correct way.)

3. Ideal Delivery of the *Period of PURPLE Crying* Program

The NCSBS strongly recommends delivering the *PURPLE* program in accordance with the three Dose approach outlined below. The NCSBS can be helpful in supporting any organization in this effort by providing: 1) free online training access eligible for continuing education for all organizations, 2) free downloadable supplemental items and 3) free print and broadcast media ads for communities implementing the program.

Triple Dose Strategy

Dose One: Delivery of the *PURPLE* Program Materials (App+Booklet) to Parents

The first “Dose” of the program is the delivery of the intervention materials, App+Booklet package, 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: Parent Presentation and Providing the Program Materials to Families:

The following steps are ideal:

1. Go through the booklet, page-by-page, with parent(s) pointing out the important messages:
 - a. *PURPLE* Acronym
 - b. Early Increased Crying is Normal
 - c. Ways to Comfort Your Crying Baby
 - d. Important Action Steps
 - e. Why Crying is Frustrating
 - f. Why Shaking a Baby is Dangerous
 - g. Be Sure to Tell others
2. Gently ask parent(s) to describe in their own words what they think are the important *PURPLE* program messages or describe what they may say when they share the program with others. It is recommended that the professional(s) teaching the program use the [“TeachBack”](#) model that asks the parent to repeat back what they believe the important messages are. This way the person delivering the materials knows if the parent(s) have really understood the correct messages.
3. Tell parent(s) that there are two videos for the program. The first video is about the *Period of PURPLE Crying* and the second video, *Crying, Soothing, Coping: Doing What Comes Naturally*, offers specific ways to soothe their baby and strategies for coping when soothing does not work. The *PURPLE* program video should be shown to the parent(s), whenever possible, following the presentation of the booklet.
 - a. The provider can leave the room while the *PURPLE* video is playing but should return shortly after to answer any questions.
4. Provide the parent(s) with the *PURPLE* program materials and encourage them to review the materials again and to share the information with others who care for their baby.
 - a. The activation code for the web and mobile application can be used on up to five

personal devices and is available for eighteen months after activation.

5. Allow an opportunity for parents to ask questions.
 - a. Additional items for demonstration purposes are also available for purchase through the NCSBS including a life size doll and an audio CD of infant crying. Use of these items are helpful but not universal and it is better to use as enhancements rather than the only method of distribution.

Dose Two: Reinforcing the Message

Public health nurses, home visitors, pediatricians, family doctors, public health clinics, or other similar organizations are a good fit for Dose Two and should reinforce the key messages by talking to parents about the concepts taught in the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program. Reinforcement of the key messages is most effective after 2 weeks of age to 2 months of age, when infant crying is increasing or even peaking. If needed, the physician (or other personnel) should provide materials to parents who were missed and did not receive the *PURPLE* program materials at the hospital after having their baby. If the program materials are not being distributed through the before mentioned organizations, then they are ideal for Dose One. These health care professionals need to comply with the Dose One training and distribution requirements that the maternity nurses use, outlined above.

Other groups who serve parents should be specifically targeted to facilitate complete community coverage about the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program messages. Pediatricians, family practice physicians, childcare providers, foster care workers, midwives, nurse help line personnel, hot line personnel, emergency room personnel and others serving parents should be given the opportunity to receive training on the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program. This will ensure that the parents get the same information wherever they go for help and advice.

Delivery: Reminding parents about program messages and resources.

In short, the following steps are ideal:

1. Ask parent(s) if they received the *PURPLE* materials and education after the birth of their baby
 - a. If parent(s) responds, “yes”, continue into Dose Two reinforcement
 - b. If parent responds, “no”, follow the Dose One delivery described above
2. Remind parents:
 - a. Infant crying is normal in the first 4-5 months.
 - b. Crying increases at about 2 weeks, peaks at 2-3 months and declines by 5 months.
 - c. Some normal babies may cry as long as 5 hours a day, some less.
 - d. Call your doctor if you are worried about the crying.
 - e. Shaking is very dangerous, in many cases causing brain damage and even death.
 - f. If the crying becomes too frustrating, put your infant in a safe place, walk away and take a break for 5-10 minutes. And remember, the second video, *Crying, Soothing, and Coping: Doing What Comes Naturally*, provided within the app offers advice about ways to soothe your baby.
 - g. Be sure to tell everyone who cares for your infant about the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program.

Dose Three: Public Education and Media Campaign

A public education campaign provides this information to everyone, and especially to all those who did not receive it through the previous two methods. This is an important part of bringing about a cultural change in our understanding of the normality of early increased crying. Understanding the *Period of PURPLE Crying* among the general population can help ease the stress, and even criticism, of parents dealing with the inconsolable crying. It also enables mothers and fathers to receive support and reinforcement from those who understand the *Period of PURPLE Crying* concept. Dose Three content is available for free through the NCSBS.

Training Requirements

The NCSBS recognizes the limited time available for managers to educate providers and for providers to educate parents. With these time limitations in mind, the online training modules were developed for fast and efficient use and are provided at no cost. The NCSBS coordinates a unique account for each implemented organization to log on to as many times as necessary to train existing and new staff.

Recommended staff training procedures for the *PURPLE* program's Dose One and Two:

- Read the *Period of PURPLE Crying* program Protocol for Implementation (this document)
- Watch the 16-minute *PURPLE Crying* Video and read the 10-page *PURPLE* booklet
 - Recommended: watch the 17-minute *Crying, Soothing, Coping: Doing what Comes Naturally* video
- Watch the narrated "Training for Implementation" presentation
- Take and pass the 10-question quiz
- Complete "*PURPLE* Feedback Form"

Other supplemental tools located on the training module:

- Program Overview, Fidelity Agreement, FAQs for Parents, FAQs for Professionals, 3-Minute Talking Points, 10-Minute Talking Points, Reinforcement Talking Points, TeachBack, Dose 1 and Dose 2 Checklists, Grant Template, etc.
- 17-minute soothing video titled *Crying, Soothing, and Coping: Doing What Comes Naturally*
- View the *Safe Sleep Segment* videos

Dose Three: Public Education Campaign

As described above in the triple dose strategy, a public education campaign helps disseminate *PURPLE* program messages to society generally. It is available upon request and at no cost. The components listed below are part of a media tool kit with additional items continuously being added as developed:

- Normal [campaign] Print Advertisement (various sizes)
- 30 and 60-second radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- 5-, 10-, and 30-second video Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Outdoor Ads
- Social Media Graphics

In-Service Training

In some areas, NCSBS personnel can go directly to provide training. Arrangements and special circumstances will be given full consideration upon request. In other cases, a provider or educator from the implementing organization needs to be trained to deliver the training presentation to other staff. If this is the case, then the NCSBS will provide a "train the trainer" session online or in-person (if possible) to prepare the appropriate person.

Additional Mobile App Content

The *Period of PURPLE Crying* program interactive mobile app was designed for parents to have quick access to multiple health and safety topics. Each topic addressed is based on years of peer-reviewed published research. It was most recently updated in December 2024 and offers many unique features parents find extremely useful during the first year of their baby's life.

- Exclusive *Period of PURPLE Crying* program materials
- Baby Development Tracker
- Articles and videos related to the topics of Crying, Soothing, Coping, Safe Sleep, Infant

Safety, and Self-Care

- News Section to update parents about important product recalls and other new baby information.

Fidelity Agreement

For the purpose of program fidelity, the NCSBS asks all Dose Delivery partners to sign and return a Fidelity Agreement after reading this Implementation Protocol. It is not intended to be a legally binding document, but rather a good-faith measure to ensure that the program is being implemented per the evidence-based model.

The Fidelity Agreement outlines the training and support that comes with the purchase of the *PURPLE* program. It also asks that the Dose One organization agree to provide each family with their own copy of the program materials to take home and share with anyone else who will be caring for their infant. Please read and sign the [Fidelity Agreement](#).

Conclusion

The NCSBS is very proud to offer this evidence-based program to hospital personnel, home visitors, and others serving parents of new babies. It is our intent to make it easy to offer and affordable. The only cost associated with this program is the cost of the program materials. The NCSBS recognizes that hospitals and other organizations have limited budgets for many educational programs. That is why the cost for this program is as low as \$2.50 a family. Everything else is complimentary. We feel it is very important that this program be complimentary to parents so that all families can benefit from it. It has been designed to be attractive to parents, user-friendly, economical, and evidence-based.

Assistance with Fundraising Strategies

The NCSBS developed a grant template for the *PURPLE* program with the research, lines of evidence, and program development information for organizations seeking funding support. The information in the template was designed to be copied and pasted into grant applications found by the participating organization seeking funding. The template is shared upon request from *PURPLE* program staff and is located in the “additional downloads” section of the online training modules.

Ongoing Consultation and Support

The NCSBS *PURPLE* program staff is available to guide organizations through the implementation process, provide full access to complimentary online staff training, and keep a shared Fidelity Agreement on file stating an understanding of the program protocol, purchasing procedures, program updates, ongoing support, and overall guidance. For assistance with the *PURPLE* program, contact the NCSBS *PURPLE* Team by email at PURPLE@dontshake.org, visit the website at www.dontshake.org, or call the Center at 801-447-9360 extension 1.