

(H. B. 1885)

(No. 66-2015)

(Approved May 12, 2015)

AN ACT

To declare the third week of April of each year as “Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Week,” in order to raise awareness and prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and its consequences.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Shaken Baby Syndrome is one of the most common causes of death in infants. This syndrome is a type of brain trauma that results from forcefully shaking a baby, causing brain injury that leads to bleeding, bruising, and swelling. Injuries consistent with this syndrome include subdural hematoma, retinal hemorrhage, spinal cord and neck injuries, rib fractures, and sometimes the death of the baby. According to Dr. Brenda Mirabal, pediatrician and expert from the Medical Sciences Campus, about 20% of shaken babies die.

Most people who shake babies are not trying to hurt them, but to calm them down. The shaking usually occurs when a baby will not stop crying and the caregiver becomes frustrated and loses control. Symptoms associated with the syndrome include seizures, decreased appetite, vomiting, fever, difficulty breathing, extreme irritability, lethargy, and loss of consciousness, among others. Symptoms can vary from mild to severe. The long-term effects of the syndrome include hearing loss, total or partial blindness, speech and behavioral disorders, seizures, among others. For these and other reasons, it is important for parents to share this information with all family members or any caregiver of their baby. There is a great need for education and awareness of the dangers of shaking small children in order to prevent other babies from suffering from this form of abuse.

In recent years, parents, relatives, and caregivers have been made aware of the effects of shaking a baby. As part of an awareness effort, a collaboration agreement was signed in 2013 by the Administration for Families and Children (ADFAN, Spanish acronym) of the Department of the Family and Abbot Nutrition to deliver educational presentations about the syndrome. According to information provided by Dr. Mirabal, between 1999 and 2009, at least forty (40) autopsies were carried out in the Institute of Forensic Sciences on babies who ranged from days old to age one in which it was determined that they had died after being violently shaken by an adult.

Therefore, this Legislative Assembly deems it necessary to pass this legislation in order to declare the third week of April of each year as “Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Week.” It is important to start raising awareness in Puerto Rico about Shaken Baby Syndrome and the effect of forcefully shaking a baby.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1. – The third week of April of each year is hereby declared as the “Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Week.”

Section 2. – Every year, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, at least ten (10) days before the third week of April, shall issue a proclamation regarding the observance of this week in order to raise awareness and encourage prevention of this syndrome and its consequences.

Section 3. – The Department of Health, in coordination with the Department of the Family and the Secretary of State of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, as well as with public entities and organizations and the Municipalities of Puerto Rico, shall adopt the necessary measures to achieve the purposes of this Act by organizing and carrying out appropriate activities related to the “Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Week.” The involvement of citizens and private entities that deal with this topic shall also be encouraged.

Section 4. – A copy of the annual proclamation shall be distributed to mass media for the broadcasting and publication thereof.

Section 5. – This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following **Act No. 66-2015 (H. B. 1885)** of the **5th Regular Session** of the **17th Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico**:

AN ACT to declare the third week of April of each year as “Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Week,” in order to raise awareness and prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and its consequences.

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 23rd day of January, 2018.

Orlando Pagán-Ramírez
Acting Director