

In February 2010, the Idaho Perinatal Project brought Ronald G. Barr, MDCM to Idaho to talk about his educational program, the Period of Purple Crying. This program was developed after more than 25 years of research on normal infant crying conducted by Dr. Barr, along with other scientists.

Their research has contributed to the understanding that these patterns of early crying, although frustrating, are a part of normal infant development. The Period of Purple Crying is used to help describe these characteristics of early infant crying in normal, healthy infants. The crying usually begins at about 2 weeks of age and usually ends by 4 to 5 months of age and often earlier. 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 much longer

Evening crying - crying occurs more in the late afternoon and evening

The Period of Purple Crying program has 3 components:

1. Each family receives a Period of Purple Crying DVD and booklet on the mother/baby unit after delivery, accompanied by brief education by their nurse.
2. Education is provided by pediatricians, family medicine physicians, health clinics and others to reinforce the message.
3. Public education and a media campaign to help bring a cultural change to our understanding of increased early crying and educate all caregivers of children, including childcare providers.

The Idaho Perinatal Project and the Idaho Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly endorse this evidence-based method of educating parents regarding the danger of Abusive Head Trauma, and are working with their local birthing hospitals to implement this program. Idaho facilities that have already started the program include: St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, Mercy Medical Center in Nampa, and Portneuf Medical Center in Pocatello, and many others are in the process. For more information, please contact Sherry Iverson at iversons@slhs.org or visit the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome at www.dontshake.org.