

When the call comes in:  
“BABY NOT BREATHING”

*Presented by*  
*Susan Moore and Dennis Watt*

## Degree of Expectedness

**Some losses may have a degree of expectedness.**

**Other losses though, have no forewarning.**



Baby found  
lifeless

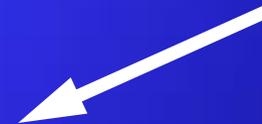


Emergency  
Responders



Cause/Manner of  
death decided

Coroner's  
Investigation



Autopsy



# DEATH INVESTIGATION

## ■ Notification:

- The death is reported to the Coroner's Office directly or is reported to Sheriff's Dispatch.
- The reporting party will be emergency personnel at the scene, if the infant is pronounced dead at the scene, or hospital personnel if the infant had been transported to the hospital.
- The Coroner's Investigator/Deputy Coroner will respond to the infants location. 27491.2 GC

# GOVERNMENT CODE

- **27491 – Duty to inquire into and determine the circumstances, manner and cause of death.**
  - “It SHALL be the duty of the coroner to INQUIRE into and determine the circumstances, manner and cause of all violent, sudden, or unusual death; unattended deaths.”
  - Death known or suspected as the result in whole or in part from or related to accident or injury either old or recent.
  - The coroner shall have the discretion to determine the extent of the inquiry to be made into death occurring under natural circumstances.

# GOVERNMENT CODE

- 27491.2 – Coroner/Deputy Coroner may proceed immediately to where the body lies.
  - Coroner may immediately proceed to where the body lies, examine the body, make identification, make inquiries into the circumstances, manner and means of death.
  - Dead body SHALL NOT be disturbed or moved from the position or place of death without coroner's permission.

# GOVERNMENT CODE

## ■ 27491.3 – Coroner to take charge of personal effects.

- Coroner may take charge of personal effects from the decedent or related to the inquiry (investigation).
- Any property or evidence related to the investigation or prosecution of any known or suspected criminal death may with the knowledge of the coroner, be delivered to a law enforcement agency, receipt for which shall be acknowledged.



Can the Coroner do an autopsy over the objections of family?

# The Face of Fear

- ✧ “What did I do?”
- ✧ “Why, God?”
- ✧ “What happened?”



- Grievors can be frozen, stunned, terrified.
- Grievors can be manic, moving wildly, crying, screaming.

# Parents express feelings of disbelief

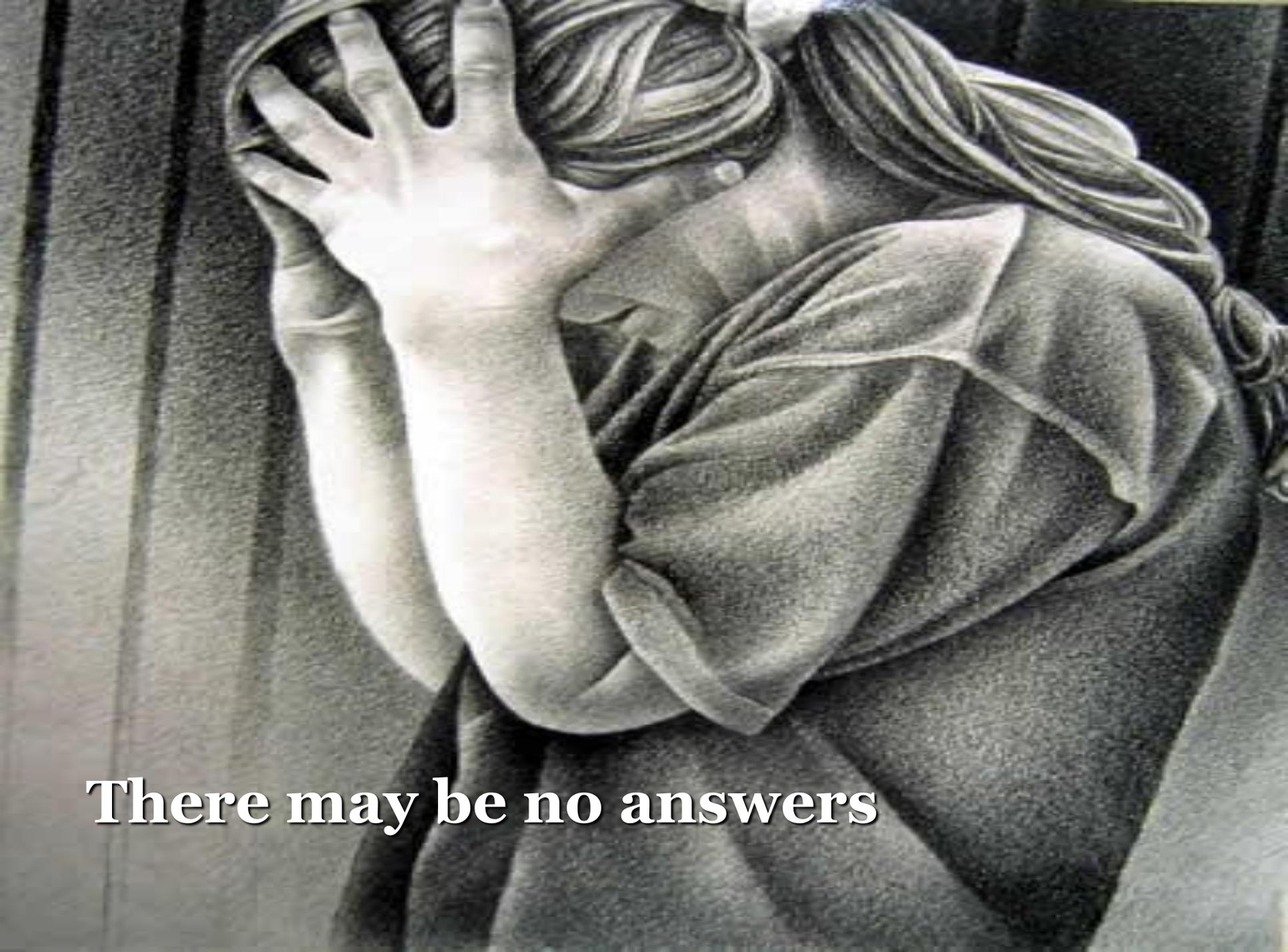
- ✧ **“I must be having a nightmare.”**
- ✧ **“Did this really happen?”**
- ✧ **“I need to bring the baby back.”**
- ✧ **“How can I ever survive this?”**



# Parents search for reasons



- ❖ “I shouldn’t have gone back to work.”
- ❖ “Maybe something happened at daycare.”
- ❖ “Was it my smoking?”
- ❖ “Maybe it was the immunizations.”



**There may be no answers**

# No Chance to say goodbye

## Social Media



## Memorial Jewelry



# New Paradigms in expressing grief: public and personal



# FAQs - Coroner

- Will allowing the parents or others to hold the baby compromise any of the findings at autopsy?
- Can a pathologist tell the difference between trauma that occurs before or after death?

- Can the Coroner distinguish between SIDS and smothering (intentional or accidental)?
- Can there be a viewing at the funeral after an autopsy?
- Can anyone get copies of the Coroner's Reports?
- How long does it take to get a final diagnosis and a death certificate?

*I've learned that  
people will forget what  
you said,*

*People will forget what  
you did,*

*But people will never  
forget how you made  
them feel.*



*~ Maya Angelou ~*

# The grief of parents lasts their entire life

You can make a difference!



# A Crisis of Meaning

- ✧ **What is really important?**
- ✧ **What is worth striving for?**
- ✧ **How do I want to spend my days?**



What is the single best thing I can offer?

