Memo

To: WIC Coordinators and Breastfeeding Coordinators
From: WIC Nutrition Unit
Date: March 25, 2015
Subject: Supporting Breastfeeding & Minimizing Formula Use: Impact of Hospital Practices

Minnesota hospital practices are changing. We now have seven Minnesota hospitals that are officially designated as “Baby-Friendly”. That designation required a big commitment on the part of these hospitals and years of work. Many more hospitals are making positive changes and working toward “Baby Friendly”.

“Baby-Friendly” practices promote exclusive breastfeeding - more MN babies are leaving the hospital receiving only breastmilk.

- University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital (formerly Amplatz) - exclusive breastfeeding rates increased from 41% → 71%, between 2009 and 2011.
- Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) -- within one year exclusive breastfeeding rates increased from 18% → 45% from 2012 to 2013.

Other “Baby-Friendly” recognized hospitals in Minnesota and around the world have seen similar increases in exclusive breastfeeding. To learn more about the Ten Steps important for breastfeeding support in hospitals and the Minnesota program that will recognize hospitals as they complete these steps see the MDH website.

Breastfeeding support reduces health disparities.

- Baby-Friendly hospitals have demonstrated that as practices change, breastfeeding initiation rates increase across all racial/ethnic groups.
- Each woman is unique and each has the potential to breastfeed when given the opportunity to share concerns and provided the support to build on her strengths and overcome barriers.

WIC has an important role to play in continuing to encourage & support breastfeeding – contributing to a healthy start for all.

While many hospital staff initially thought these changes weren’t possible, they’ve achieved them and in making the changes have demonstrated amazing successes in breastfeeding. Through the efforts and support WIC staff have provided, we all have made great strides in breastfeeding initiation. We can do the same for duration and exclusivity, and help minimize formula use.

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How can WIC build on these positive outcomes?

❖ Work with hospitals in your area.
  - If you haven’t already, introduce yourself to perinatal leadership at the hospital.
  - Ask what they know about WIC and share how WIC supports breastfeeding and prepares women for their hospital experience: materials used (including WIC “Blocks” posters); promoting Biological Nurturing/Laid-back BFg; etc.
  - Learn how the hospital supports breastfeeding & how you can work together to ensure continuity of care between hospital and WIC.
  - Provide outreach brochures and/or let them know how to refer to WIC.

❖ Work with your WIC Staff
  - Review with staff why it's important to establish exclusive breastfeeding.
    - Best way to establish milk supply.
    - Vital to infant health – now and for long term chronic disease prevention.
    - Key to sustaining breastfeeding over time, extending duration.
    - Benefits mom’s health and well-being, too!
  - Share local hospital practices with your staff.
    - If hospital promotes baby w/ mom skin-to-skin, staff can talk w/ participants about how great it is that the hospital gives mom & baby the chance to be together right away.
    - If this isn’t part of hospital routine, WIC staff can encourage women to discuss their BFg plans w/ their health care provider and request 1) to have baby skin-to-skin right after birth, 2) that the baby room-in; and 3) that baby be given nothing except the opportunity to breastfeed, and no pacifiers.
  - Promote anticipatory guidance to help participants get off to a great start.

❖ Review the app from Coffective™ and discuss with staff. The app can be downloaded for free from iTunes store or Google Play. What do you think of the app? Consider asking a pregnant woman (someone on the WIC staff? A friend?) to use the app and let you know if she finds it helpful. If so, what is helpful? Let us know what you think and what pregnant women say about it.

SHARE your stories: how have you been successful in helping women achieve their breastfeeding goals? Share with your regional consultant or send your stories to mary.b.johnson@state.mn.us.