[**World Breastfeeding Week**](http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/) **/ Breastfeeding Awareness Month News Release Template 2021**

Theme – A Shared Responsibility

FOR IMMEDIATE USE Contact: [Name]

[Date] [Organization]

[Phone], [Email]

**[Insert WIC Agency] Offers Support to Parents to Improve Breastfeeding Rates that Slipped During the Pandemic**

A key focus for Minnesota Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (MN WIC) during Breastfeeding Awareness Month is to call attention to the importance of breastfeeding and to support parents to get back to all the benefits of higher breastfeeding rates.

[Breastfeeding rates among MN WIC participants](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/reports/bf/covid19.pdf) declined during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to drop in early 2021. Approximately 76 percent of MN WIC participants initiated breastfeeding and 65 percent continued when the baby was eight to 14 days old as of March 2021. Those numbers are down from 80 and 71 percent respectively in January 2020. Some factors contributing to the decline include:

* Infants and mothers unnecessarily separated immediately after birth due to concerns about parent-to-child COVID-19 transmission.
* Less or no lactation support in some birthing facilities.
* Early discharge and fewer post-discharge resources for breastfeeding help.

Breastfeeding benefits babies and mothers. The [insert WIC] Program is celebrating Minnesota Breastfeeding Awareness Month in August to emphasize the importance of breastfeeding and help pregnant and new moms participating in MN WIC reach their breastfeeding goals.

**COVID-19 vaccine recommendations during breastfeeding**

As more Minnesotans receive the COVID-19 vaccine, breastfeeding mothers should know the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html) says COVID-19 vaccines are not considered to be a risk to breastfeeding moms or their babies. Breastfeeding parents should talk about the vaccine benefits and risks with their health care provider before choosing to receive the vaccine.

* Recent reports show breastfeeding parents who received COVID-19 vaccines have antibodies in their milk, which could help protect their babies.
* Based on similar vaccines, the risk of serious illness from getting sick with COVID-19 is greater than the small relative risk from the vaccine.

Additional resources about breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic are on [the MN WIC website.](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/bf/covid19.html)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we provide services and support women and their children, but this important work continues,” said [Agency Spokesperson]. “Being a new mom is wonderful, challenging and sometimes overwhelming. We want to be a key part of a support system and a valuable resource for new moms as they work hard to reach their breastfeeding goals. Breastfeeding Awareness Month calls attention to the importance of breastfeeding and having a strong support system.”

**Breastfeeding Awareness Month**

* [World Breastfeeding Week](http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/) (Aug. 1-7) – Protect Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility
* [Native Breastfeeding Week](https://www.facebook.com/NativeBreastfeedingWeek/) (Aug. 8-14) – Nourishing Our Futures
* [Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Breastfeeding Week](http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/p/bl/et/blogid=61&blogaid=2319) (Aug. 15-21) – Reclaiming Our Traditions
  + This is the first year this breastfeeding week is recognized nationally.
* [Black Breastfeeding Week](https://blackbreastfeedingweek.org/) (Aug. 25-31) – The Big Pause: Collective Rest for Collective Power

[Add event information if your agency is hosting an in-person or virtual event to celebrate during Breastfeeding Awareness Month.]

**MN WIC Supports Breastfeeding**

WIC serves low-income people who encounter greater barriers to achieving their breastfeeding goals. Those who enroll in WIC earlier in pregnancy have improved outcomes, including higher breastfeeding rates. [Local Agency] supports and celebrates MN WIC moms as they navigate breastfeeding. Staff provide resources explaining the importance and benefits of breastfeeding and answer any questions at every WIC visit. Breastfeeding moms also receive extra foods to support their nutrition as they feed their babies.

[Add the Peer Breastfeeding Program section if your agency has a Peer Breastfeeding Program]

**Peer Breastfeeding Program**

The [Peer Breastfeeding Support Program](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/bf/support.html) is adding four new programs and expanding capacity in current programs beginning January 1, 2022. The program features women who have successfully breastfed, who are recruited from the communities they serve, and trained to help WIC participants with common breastfeeding issues. The expansion makes peer breastfeeding support available to 15 percent more WIC families statewide and allows existing agency peer programs to serve a higher percentage of families. [Option: Add two-three sentences introducing your peer counselor(s) and how they connect to and support your community.]

**Additional statistics**

* [MN WIC participant monthly breastfeeding initiation](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/reports/bf/covid19.pdf) rates by race or ethnicity and cultural identity:
  + In 2020, breastfeeding initiation rates dropped:
    - 7.2 percent among Black (African American) WIC families.
    - 4.4 percent among non-Hmong Asian WIC families.
    - 4 percent among White WIC families.
    - 1.4 percent among Hispanic WIC families.
  + In 2020, breastfeeding initiation rates increased:
    - 0.9 percent among American Indian WIC families.
    - 0.9 percent among East African families.
    - 0.8 percent among Hmong WIC families.
* In 2020, MN WIC served 37 percent of all infants born in Minnesota.

For more information, contact [insert local WIC contact here].

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