



# Breastfeeding Friendly Health Departments (BFHD)

BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH THE 10 STEP PROCESS

Step 2 - Have a written breastfeeding policy that meets criteria including addressing all BFHD 10 steps.

## Breastfeeding Today

78 out of 100 babies born in Minnesota today are getting their first breast milk. These babies and their moms are starting to reduce their risk of cancer, diabetes, obesity, respiratory disease, and much more.

But something goes wrong before those breastfeeding babies' 6 month birthday according to the [United States Breastfeeding Report Card](#).

- By 3 months old, only 35% are exclusively breastfeeding
- By 6 months, only 16% are exclusively breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes that infants who exclusively breastfeed less than 6 months do not get the full benefit of breastfeeding. With current exclusive breastfeeding rates, only 16% of Minnesota babies reach this breastfeeding goal.

Breastfeeding Friendly Health Departments that incorporate breastfeeding protection, education, promotion, and support into public health policies have the power to change the breastfeeding rates.

## Breastfeeding and Policy: A Call to Action

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding recognizes that the success rate among mothers who want to breastfeed can be greatly improved through active support from their families, friends, communities, clinicians, health care leaders, employers and policymakers.

The American Public Health Association's Call to Action on Breastfeeding recognizes that breastfeeding is a public health issue and that breastfeeding should be incorporated into comprehensive public health policies.

## Breastfeeding Friendly Health Department Policy

A step in becoming a BFHD is having a Breastfeeding Policy that addresses the Ten Steps for Successful Breastfeeding for Health Departments. Many Minnesota hospitals and birth centers are on the pathway to Baby-Friendly designation by the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. The Baby-Friendly first step requires organizations have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all staff. Public health departments are positioned to complement the breastfeeding support mothers and babies receive at health care facilities. Similar to the Baby-Friendly designation, to be a BFHD, a breastfeeding policy is required.

## Policy Components

Effective BFHD breastfeeding policy supports:

- Developing a breastfeeding training plan for all staff
- Eliminating materials & messages promoting infant formula feeding
- Collaborating with community partners to identify and remove barriers for mothers who breastfeed
- Educating parents and community partners about the benefits of long-term breastfeeding
- Incorporating breastfeeding messages into Public Health messaging about nutrition



## Five Action Steps to Develop a Policy:

1. Convene a workgroup to assess the policy (or lack of)
2. Develop or assess the policy language
3. Edit/Revise as needed
4. Adopt and approve
5. Post and disseminate the policy

## Resources

- <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827.full.pdf>
- <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/breastfeeding/index.html>
- <http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/about-us/baby-friendly-hospital-initiative>
- <http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/about-us/baby-friendly-hospital-initiative/the-ten-steps>
- <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1360>

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