

For Immediate Release

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August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month

Communities Need to Work Together to Provide Support for Breastfeeding Mothers

Wauseon, OH - August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Ohio and August 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week. This year's theme, "Breastfeeding, Foundation of Life," focuses on breastfeeding as a key to preventing hunger and malnutrition by guaranteeing food security for babies. Breastfeeding provides a low-cost way to feed babies which can help lower poverty.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and World Health Organization (WHO) recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding with the addition of appropriate solid food for the first year and beyond.

One of the most important things businesses and the community can do is to allow mothers to feel comfortable nursing in public. Hungry babies need to eat, and Ohio law allows breastfeeding in public. Businesses can show their support by placing a "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" sign in their windows and educate staff on the acceptance of breastfeeding in their establishments. They can also encourage their employees and provide a private space (other than a restroom) to pump. This will increase employee satisfaction and reduce overall medical costs. A 2010 study found that if 90% of new mothers breastfed, the United States would save 13 billion dollars per year in healthcare costs.

Hospitals can adopt the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding as an indication that they are dedicated to supporting new mothers who choose to breastfeed. By eliminating formula gifts to breastfeeding mothers, they send the message that they believe mothers can make enough milk to breastfeed exclusively.

Social media can also provide support to breastfeeding mothers through Facebook and Twitter.

Breastfeeding mothers can reach out through groups and chatrooms and get the support they need to feel normal in a formula-feeding culture.

Here, in Fulton County, the WIC program has one Certified Lactation Counselor and two Peer Helpers. The entire WIC staff encourages and supports breastfeeding. The Peer Helper's main function is to counsel moms and provide prenatal education as well as follow-up support. This is accomplished through phone calls, face-to-face conversations with WIC moms, distribution of pumps, and facilitating our Moms Group. Our Moms Group is open to all moms and prenatal women, not just those enrolled in WIC. Although the WIC staff provide a valuable service to breastfeeding moms, it is crucial that they receive support from families, friends, health care providers, and employers in order to achieve their overall goal.

For further information or assistance, please feel free to contact Fulton/Henry Co WIC program 419-337-6979 (Fulton County) or 419-591-3075 (Henry County).

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