



National WIC Association
Your child has you. And you have WIC.



NWA Statement on the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative

As the nation's premier public health nutrition program, WIC is a cost-effective, sound investment—ensuring the health of our children.

NWA'S MISSION

NWA provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

The National WIC Association (NWA) – the education arm and advocacy voice of the nation's leading preventative public health nutrition program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) – endorses breastfeeding as the optimal way to feed and nourish infants. Serving more than half of the infants born in the United States, WIC is in a unique position to ensure that our nation's infants begin life with the nourishment to flourish.

A critical strategy in this effort is the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) – an enterprise of UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) – launched in 1991.(1) This initiative seeks to ensure that all maternity units whether free standing or in a hospital, become centers of breastfeeding support.

NWA strongly believes that hospitals and maternity units set a powerful example for new mothers, especially when 99% of infants are born in hospital settings in the United States.(2) In their research, Rosenberg (3) and Murray (4) have shown, respectively, that breastfeeding duration increases when hospitals implement at least some of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. This finding was echoed by the CDC in its Vital Signs report of August 2011 "When hospitals support mothers to feed their babies only breastmilk, it helps mothers to

continue to feed only breast milk at home and when hospitals have more of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding in place, mothers breastfeed longer. We must help hospitals support mothers to breastfeed." Unfortunately, according to the CDC, "...most US hospitals do not fully support breastfeeding; they should do more to make sure mothers can start and continue breastfeeding." (5)

NWA urges all birthing hospitals and facilities adopt the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding to ensure delivery of high quality care to all mothers and babies. In endorsing the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, NWA seeks to highlight WIC's role as an advocate and resource for breastfeeding promotion and support.

In this capacity, NWA:

- ➔ developed a national breastfeeding strategic plan
- ➔ endorses the 2011 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding (6)
- ➔ supports the United States Breastfeeding Committee's vision for breastfeeding
- ➔ collaborates with national stakeholders, including the American Hospital Association, to advance the adoption of the of Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding by birthing centers and hospitals
- ➔ promotes policies and legislation that support, promote, and encourage breastfeeding

At the state and local levels, WIC agencies:

- ➔ collaborate with state and local coalitions to increase the number of baby friendly hospitals
- ➔ offer assistance to local hospitals with lactation training for staff
- ➔ create referral communication with hospitals to coordinate post discharge lactation support for mothers
- ➔ celebrate and recognize hospitals that have earned the Baby Friendly designation

The 2011 Surgeon General's Call to Action on Breastfeeding urges the United States to accelerate the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. It states, "Maternity care of high quality will be delivered to all patients only if the standards are consistently applied to every mother and baby." It also encourages hospitals to "establish and implement policies and programs to ensure participants in WIC have services in place before discharge from the hospital."

NWA fully endorses and supports the Surgeon General's recommendations and seeks every opportunity to assist hospitals in achieving the ultimate goal of becoming "Baby-Friendly."

References

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3. Rosenberg KD, Stull JD, Adler MR, Kasehagen LJ, Crivelli-Kovach A. 2008. Impact of hospital policies on breastfeeding outcomes. *Breastfeeding Med.* 3(2):110-6.
4. Murray, E et al. 2007. Hospital practices that increase breastfeeding duration: Results from a population-based study. *Birth* 34:3 (202-210).
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vital Signs: Hospital Practices to Support Breastfeeding—United States, 2007 and 2009. *Morb Mortality Wkly Rep.* 2011. 60:1020-5.
6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding.* Washington D.C. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General: 2011.