

## **LOVING SUPPORT BUILDS BREASTFEEDING-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES**

*Montana partners change policies to encourage recommended breastfeeding*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Longer breastfeeding duration makes it less likely a child will be overweight or develop diabetes.
- Many women in Montana initiate breastfeeding but only about half of them continue to breastfeed for at least six months.
- Recommended strategies for increasing initiation and duration of breastfeeding include implementing “baby-friendly” maternity practices, education, support for breastfeeding in the workplace, and peer and professional support for breastfeeding.

### **Program**

- The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Nutrition and Physical Activity Program and its partners such as the Montana Dietetic Association were trained on evidence-based interventions to create breastfeeding-friendly communities by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Nutrition and Physical Activity program funder.
- The state and its partners developed the first Montana Breastfeeding Coalition which is implementing policy and environmental changes statewide to promote breastfeeding.
- Activities include publication of a document supporting breastfeeding as a cost-effective health practice, influencing policies on breastfeeding in the workplace, implementation of a survey on existing hospital practices related to breastfeeding, support for expanding the WIC breastfeeding peer counseling program, training health professionals, establishing communication mechanisms, implementing a media campaign, and promotion of a breastfeeding hotline.
- Hospital surveys revealed that most facilities were interested in initiating tracking breastfeeding duration.

### **Impact**

- Coalition partners advocated for successful passage of Montana Senate Bill 89 requiring break time and privacy to support breastfeeding mothers in public employee workplaces. Web-based materials were developed to help employers comply with the law.
- For the first time, breastfeeding advocates across the state are working together to support and promote breastfeeding for all Montana mothers and infants, a key obesity-prevention strategy.
- Based on a need identified by hospital surveys, the Nutrition and Physical Activity Program is developing a breastfeeding data collection system for maternity facilities that will be applied statewide after a pilot in two sites.
- Criteria are developed and available for worksites to use in identifying themselves as Breastfeeding Friendly, including policies, privacy issues, and education of employees.

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