Breastfeeding Holds the Promise of Health for All Babies

- Breastfeeding is a crucial first step in protecting the health of mothers and infants; the nutritional, immunological, and biological components in human milk nourish infants and build a foundation for lifelong health advantages.¹

- Hospital policies have an enormous impact on infant-feeding success.² - ⁴ Although breastfeeding is a natural process, a mother’s experience in the hospital has a powerful influence on her ability to follow through with her decision to breastfeed her baby.

- Hospitals that have instituted Baby-Friendly practices have high rates of breastfeeding, no matter where they are located or what populations they serve.⁵ - ⁶ These evidence-based reforms must reach hospitals serving the state’s poorest families.

Practices that Support Breastfeeding are Essential to Quality Health Care

- The Joint Commission and state and federal agencies are monitoring breastfeeding rates and perinatal medical practices in California hospitals; outdated institutional policies that create disparities in health care are no longer acceptable.

- Collaboration has been shown to improve breastfeeding support and care.⁷ Working together, common barriers can be addressed by sharing information, pooling resources, and implementing quality improvement procedures.

- Hospital breastfeeding support aligns with the preventative and cost savings strategies of Health Care Reform. (www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts/timeline/index.html)

Humboldt County: 2012 Data

Humboldt County In-Hospital Breastfeeding Rates, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>ANY BREASTFEEDING</th>
<th>EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAD RIVER COMMUNITY HOSPITAL</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDWOOD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>64.7</td>
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</tbody>
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Barriers to Policy Improvement Can Be Overcome

- Recent state and federal policy benchmarks confirm growing public expectation that hospital environments should fully support breastfeeding. The number of Baby-Friendly hospitals in California continues to increase, from only 12 in 2006 to 59 in August 2013, yet this designation has been achieved by only a fraction of the birthing hospitals in the state. More work is needed to ensure that all hospitals are providing the best possible care to mothers and babies.

- The foundation of best practice is spelled out in 10 well-defined evidence-based “steps” (www.babyfriendlyusa.org) which have been shown to reduce barriers to exclusive breastfeeding.

- County average breastfeeding rates:
  - Any – 93.8%
  - Exclusive – 76.9%
- Ranked 20th in the state for exclusive breastfeeding

Baby-Friendly hospitals have high breastfeeding rates no matter what populations they serve.

- The Joint Commission, an organization that accredits and certifies hospitals, adopted 5 Perinatal Care Core Measures in 2010. This set of objectives includes rates of exclusive breastfeeding, as well as elective deliveries and cesarean sections, which may affect in-hospital breastfeeding rates (www.jointcommission.org/perinatal_care/).

- Hospital policies that do not directly support exclusive breastfeeding are not only outdated, but fail to reflect what is now considered standard, high-quality care.