**A Policy Update on California Breastfeeding and Hospital Performance**
Produced by California WIC Association and the UC Davis Human Lactation Center

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**Kern County: 2013 Data**

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**Exclusive Breastfeeding Provides Lifelong Health Advantages**
- Breastfeeding is a crucial first step in protecting the health of mothers and infants, nourishing infants and building a foundation for a healthy immune system.1
- Hospital practices have an enormous impact on infant-feeding success.2-4 Mothers who receive in-hospital support to breastfeed exclusively, often continue to do so after discharge.
- Hospitals that have instituted Baby-Friendly policies have high rates of breastfeeding, no matter where they are located or what populations they serve.5-6 As more California hospitals have adopted these evidence-based reforms, in-hospital exclusive breastfeeding has increased since 2010 from 56.6% to 64.6%.7

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**Ongoing Support is Essential to Quality Perinatal Care**
- The Joint Commission and government agencies are monitoring breastfeeding rates in California hospitals. Breastfeeding support aligns with the quality improvement and cost-saving strategies of the Triple Aim and Health Care Reform.8-9
- Working together, staff from hospitals, clinics, medical offices, and public health agencies address common barriers by sharing information, pooling resources, and creating and implementing common quality improvement procedures.
- Breastfeeding support should not stop at hospital discharge. All mothers deserve access to skilled support after they bring their babies home. Collaborative efforts are needed to establish communities of care.

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The UC Davis Human Lactation Center used data reported by the California Department of Public Health Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program to create the following charts showing in-hospital breastfeeding rates.7

**Kern County In-Hospital Breastfeeding Rates, 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>ANY BREASTFEEDING</th>
<th>EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAKERSFIELD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELANO REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KERN MEDICAL CENTER</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERCY SOUTHWEST HOSPITAL</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIDGECREST REGIONAL HOSPITAL</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAN JOAQUIN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Continued on page 2*
Nearly 93% of California mothers start breastfeeding, but 30% of their infants receive formula supplementation during the hospital stay.7

The number of Baby-Friendly hospitals in California continues to increase, from only 12 in 2006 to 62 in July 2014. With all California hospitals required to have this designation, or adopt comprehensive policies by 2025,10 prompt actions are needed to ensure all hospitals are providing the best care to mothers and babies.

Changes in hospital policies and practices have made an important difference for California mothers. However, this early support may be the only help that mothers receive. Because milk supply is not established during the hospital stay, but over the first few weeks, mothers need better preparation and help after hospital discharge to overcome early challenges.1,11

Too many California mothers give up on their breastfeeding goals; nearly two-thirds of women plan to exclusively breastfeed, but less than 40 percent are doing so at one month postpartum.12 Hospitals, health care providers, public health agencies, and support groups must work together to ensure all mothers have the needed resources to breastfeed in the hospital and at home.

### Kern County Breastfeeding and Hospital Performance

- County average breastfeeding rates:
  - Any – 87.6%
  - Exclusive – 54.0%
- Ranked 41st in the state for exclusive breastfeeding
- One hospital among the 15 lowest-scoring in the state:
  - Kern Medical Center

### References:

10. SB 502 (De León and Pavley) The Hospital Infant Feeding Act, 2011.

### Photograph Sources:

- www.Istockphoto.com
- Dina Marie Photography
- William Mercer McLeod

This project was supported by Kaiser Foundation Hospitals

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