Statewide Progress has Slowed

Statewide efforts for systems change have improved the quality of maternity care in many California hospitals and substantially increased the number of Baby-Friendly hospitals throughout the state. As a result of these efforts, exclusive in-hospital breastfeeding rates have increased from 56.6% in 2010 to 69.6% in 2017.

Unfortunately, the most recent data show the pace of progress has slowed. From 2016 to 2017, rates increased in only 10 counties. Rates did not change in 29 counties and decreased in 10 counties.

Immediate action is needed to identify the sources of the slowdown and provide targeted support where it is needed. Early intervention may provide the boost needed to address barriers, reinvigorate staff, and to continue progress towards providing optimal care for all California mothers and babies.

Breastfeeding provides both mothers and infants with lifelong health benefits that dramatically reduce health care costs. Breast milk provides infants with optimal nutrition along with unique components that promote growth, development, and a strong immune system. For mothers, breastfeeding supports rapid recovery from childbirth and reduces risk for cancer and chronic disease. These benefits are greatest among mothers and infants who breastfeed exclusively.

While breastfeeding is a natural process, most mothers need support during the hospital stay to overcome common challenges. Therefore, hospital policies and practices strongly influence mothers’ abilities to meet their breastfeeding goals. Mothers who experience supportive practices during the hospital stay are more likely to breastfeed exclusively than those who do not.

Sustaining Change in Challenging Times
California Needs Innovative Breastfeeding Support Strategies

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

Lassen County: 2017 Data

Breastfeeding Keeps Mothers and Babies Healthy

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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.

Lassen County In-Hospital Breastfeeding Rates, 2017

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.
Sustaining Change in Challenging Times

- California has long been a national leader in the promotion and support of optimal infant feeding. Advocates and policy makers must work together to develop local and regional action plans to combat potential reversals in breastfeeding rates.10-12
- The California Department of Public Health must provide clear guidance and associated metrics or benchmarks to be used for implementation of SB-402 so that hospital administrators can include compliance efforts in their long-range planning.
- Leaders and clinical champions in California hospitals are needed to identify and adopt innovative partnerships and practices needed to revitalize quality improvement processes and to integrate successful strategies into facility culture and existing processes.10-12

NOTES:

9. California Department of Public Health, Center for Family Health, Genetic Disease Screening Program, Newborn Screening Data, 2010-2017. Available at: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DMCAH/Breastfeeding/Pages/In-Hospital-Breastfeeding-Initiation-Data.aspx.

Lassen County Breastfeeding and Hospital Performance

- County average breastfeeding rates:
  - Any – 93.3%   Exclusive – 64.0%
- County ranked 36th in the state for exclusive breastfeeding

Trends in Exclusive Breastfeeding, Lassen County, 2010-2017

Source: California Department of Public Health Genetic Disease Screening Program, Newborn Screening Data, 2010-2017.