



Department of Health

Child Health Sub Network, Queensland Child and Youth Health Clinical Network Breastfeeding Position Statement

Purpose

The Child Health Sub Network Breastfeeding Position Statement provides an overarching framework that can be utilised by Hospital and Health Services within Queensland Health to promote, protect and support breastfeeding.

Background

There is convincing epidemiological evidence of the protective effects of breastfeeding in both developed and developing countries.¹ Breastfeeding is the biological norm for infants and young children, providing the complete nutrition for the achievement of optimal growth and development.¹ Although most babies in Australia are initially breastfed, only 14% are exclusively breastfed to around 6 months.²

Breastfeeding provides many significant health benefits for both the mother and infant.¹ Additionally, the financial benefits of breastfeeding have been estimated at approximately \$1,500/year direct costs and savings for families.³ A further 13 billion savings to health care could be made if 90% of mothers exclusively breastfed their infants for six months.³ The Australian Government has committed to the overall development of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy, with implementation progressed through State and National governments.⁴

The Child Health Sub Network endorses and recommends the following:

- Every mother is offered the appropriate professional and peer support required to breastfeed her baby.⁴
- Families with infants and young children have access to culturally appropriate, evidence-based, consistent and appropriate information to support breastfeeding.⁶

- Health professionals are educated and have access to evidenced-based breastfeeding information, to provide consistent information to support infant and young child feeding.⁵
- Collaborative partnerships with other Government and non-Government organisations are essential in providing a continuum of care for the improvement of infant and child nutrition.⁴
- The provision of “well baby” feeding clinics, which are essential, to support mothers requiring assistance with breastfeeding.⁶
- Developing a Breastfeeding Policy and Clinical Guidelines to support clinical practice to promote, protect and support breastfeeding.⁶
- Successful initiation, establishment and continued breastfeeding, which can be achieved through the implementation of the Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) – Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding in Maternity Services, or the BFHI 7-Point Plan for Community Health Services, as the minimum requirement for all facilities.⁴
- Adherence to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions and the Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula (MAIF) Agreement in their entirety is imperative.⁵
- Establishing a process for monitoring and evaluating the prevalence and duration of breastfeeding rates, to inform best practice through available data.²
- Support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Every infant and child has the right to good nutrition and parents have access to antenatal and postnatal education informing the health advantages of breastfeeding.⁷

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding in Maternity Services⁴

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within half an hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to maintain lactation even if they should be separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming-in - that is, allow mothers and infants to remain together - 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic¹.

Appendices (continued)

Appendix 2: The 7-Point Plan for Community Health Services⁴

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff and volunteers.
2. Educate all health care staff in the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the breastfeeding policy.
3. Inform women and their families about breastfeeding being the biologically normal way to feed a baby and about the risks associated with not breastfeeding.
4. Inform women and their families about the management of breastfeeding and support them to establish and maintain exclusive breastfeeding to 6 months.
5. Encourage sustained breastfeeding beyond six months with appropriate introduction of complementary foods.
6. Provide a welcoming atmosphere for breastfeeding families.
7. Promote collaboration between health care staff and volunteers, breastfeeding support groups and the local community in order to promote, protect and support breastfeeding⁸.

References

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4. Australian Health Ministers' Conference. (2009). Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010 – 2015. Australian Government Department of Health and Aging. Canberra.
5. UNICEF. (2015). Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding. <http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/innocenti.htm>
6. World Health Organization. 2003. Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. WHO: Switzerland.
7. UNICEF. 1990. Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Cited 15 October 2015). <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
8. The Australian Breastfeeding Association. (n.d). Breastfeeding friendly health services. (Cited 4 January 2015). <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/breastfeeding-friendly-health-services>