

# The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative in Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

## What is the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative?

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to recognize hospitals and birthing centers that maintain excellence in lactation care.

The BFHI promotes and protects breastfeeding through the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding for Hospitals, as outlined by UNICEF/WHO (Please see reverse/page 2).

## Why do we need the BFHI?

- Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants.
- Research shows that breast milk contains crucial antibacterial, antiviral, and antiallergenic factors, as well as hormones, enzymes, and growth factors that decrease an infant's risk for ear infections, respiratory infections, diarrhea, bacterial infections, allergies, and childhood obesity. Recent studies also suggest that breast milk may reduce infant's later risk for diabetes and cancer.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for an infant's first six months of life, continuing to one year with complementary foods.
- Only 27% of women in Los Angeles County breastfeed exclusively, compared to 42% of women at the statewide level.

## Benefits to Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

- Breastfeeding is the first step to affordable health care.
- Benefits of breastfeeding can translate into financial savings to our health care system, through decreased hospitalizations and pediatric clinic visits.
- BFHI certification improves hospital public image through positive media attention, and is a useful marketing tool to recruit and retain health care providers and patients.

## Where are we now?

- Los Angeles County birthing hospitals are already on the road to the BFHI.
- Hospital assessments show strengths in breastfeeding promotion through rooming-in policies, formula-free discharge bags, and lactation support staff.
- LADHS Health Leadership Board is prepared to move forward with BFHI.

## Where are we going?

- BFHI intra- and inter-hospital committees will soon be formed to encourage both individual work within each LADHS hospital, as well as collaborative efforts between hospitals, on implementing the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding protocols.
- Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Programs will provide technical support services and act as a liaison to hospitals throughout the BFHI certification process.

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## **The Ten Steps To Successful Breastfeeding**

1. Maintain 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 one hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation, even if they are separated from their infants.
6. Give infants no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice "rooming in"-- allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage unrestricted breastfeeding.
9. Give no pacifiers or artificial nipples to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.