



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2016 April 21

BABY-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 022-16 re: “Baby-Friendly Initiative” be received for information.

Key Points

- The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is a global evidence-based strategy that promotes, protects, and supports the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. All Ontario Health Units are required to work towards achievement of Baby-Friendly designation.
- Middlesex-London Health Unit held their BFI External Assessment last fall, and has recently been awarded designation as Baby-Friendly.
- Our Baby-Friendly Organization Policy is reviewed annually and Board of Health members must complete an annual orientation to this policy.

Background

Breastfeeding increases the health and development of infants and children, and provides health, social, and economic advantages to women, families, and society in general. Current recommendations from the World Health Organization advise exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, with continued breastfeeding up to two years and beyond. The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is a global evidence-based strategy that promotes, protects, and supports the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding.

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care selected Baby-Friendly designation as an Accountability Agreement Performance Indicator for all public health units in Ontario. The Health Unit signed a Certificate of Intent to begin the implementation process in November 2011. The implementation process has clearly defined steps laid out by both the Ministry and the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC), the national designation authority. Over the past four years, the Health Unit has worked through the implementation steps and began the formal designation process in November 2013. In October 2015, the Health Unit reached the final step in the designation process.

Progress Update on the Implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative

The implementation process for the Baby-Friendly Initiative includes a comprehensive mix of policy implementation, staff education, review and revision of curricula and resources, practice changes, data collection, and community outreach. The Health Unit has worked through each of these requirements, and on October 28, 29, and 30th a team of four BFI Assessors from the BCC were on-site to assess whether or not the Baby-Friendly requirements had been satisfied.

The 3-day assessment included confirmation of the knowledge and skill of staff/managers/Directors from across the Health Unit, through more than 60 individual interviews as well as observation of clinical work (i.e., client phone calls, home visits, prenatal classes and postpartum clinics). The Assessment Team also interviewed the Board of Health Chair and key community partners, such as LHSC, La Leche League, and the Ontario Early Years Centre. As well as reviewing our system for collecting and monitoring local data on

breastfeeding initiation and duration rates, the Assessment Team interviewed 50 prenatal and postpartum clients.

The Assessment findings included:

1. There is evidence of considerable growth and development in the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative;
2. The attitudes, knowledge, and skills are in place to support women to meet their breastfeeding goals; and
3. There are areas of practice to continue to develop (e.g., promotion of skin-to-skin for painful procedures).

In December, the final Assessment report was received, confirming the BCC's recommendation that Middlesex-London Health Unit receive Baby-Friendly Initiative designation.

Conclusion/Next Steps

On February 4th, 2016 the Health Unit held a celebration event at which time the formal announcement was made to the community that it had been awarded Baby-Friendly designation. As well as many staff and key community partners, Kathy Venter, Lead Assessor with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC), was on hand to present the Health Unit with a plaque.

To maintain Baby-Friendly designation, it is required that an annual report be submitted to the BCC that provides an update on our efforts to maintain and improve the care and support that is provided to families regarding infant feeding. As a part of this process, we are strengthening our partnerships and continuity of care for clients by reviewing best practices in the community and at the hospital level with key individuals at LHSC. Local data will be monitored using the Middlesex-London Infant Feeding Surveillance System. We will also continue to provide an orientation to the Health Unit's BFI policy to all new staff, including the Board of Health, on an annual basis ([Appendix A](#)). Every five years, the Health Unit will be required to go through an assessment process in order to be re-designated as Baby-Friendly.

This report was prepared by Ms. Laura Dueck, Public Health Nurse, and Tracey Gordon, Program Manager, Reproductive Health Team, Healthy Start.



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