



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Dr. Gayane Hovhannisyan, Acting Medical Officer of Health  
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## **BABY-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE UPDATE AND ANNUAL BOARD OF HEALTH ORIENTATION**

### ***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No.026-17 re: Baby-Friendly Initiative 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 toward achievement of Baby-Friendly designation.
- Middlesex-London Health Unit was formally designated as Baby-Friendly in November 2015.
- Our Baby-Friendly Organization Policy is reviewed annually, and requires Board of Health members to complete an annual orientation on 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 Ontario public health units. The Middlesex-London Health Unit began the implementation process in November 2011, and followed clearly defined steps laid out by both the Ministry and the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC), the national designation authority. Over four years, the Health Unit worked through the implementation and designation process. In November 2015, the Health Unit was formally designated a Baby-Friendly organization.

### **Progress Update on the Maintenance of the Baby-Friendly Initiative**

The implementation process for the Baby-Friendly Initiative included a comprehensive mix of policy implementation, staff education, review and revision of curricula and resources, practice changes, data collection, and community outreach. The past year has enabled the Health Unit to build upon this work. Activities included:

- BFI policy revised to include an Appendix outlining staff responsibility when caring for a client who is feeding, or planning to feed, their child formula
- All-staff BFI policy refresher module implemented using the Learning Management System (LMS)
- LMS module developed and implemented for all new employees and students to complete in order to meet our BFI learning requirements as per the Health Unit's BFI policy
- Provided the World Health Organization's 20-Hour Breastfeeding Course to ten new Public Health Nurses working with prenatal and postpartum families

- Continued to implement the Middlesex-London Infant Feeding Surveillance System, with an initial report produced with analysis of feeding practices between birth and six months postpartum
- Launched and subsequently expanded a weekly breastfeeding peer support group
- Implemented a number of community outreach and collaboration activities focused on raising awareness about BFI and the importance of breastfeeding, and streamlined the information and care families receive from the prenatal period to postpartum:
  - MLHU-LHSC Partnership
  - Community screening of the documentary *Milk ... Born into this World*
  - World Breastfeeding Week Campaign – October

### Conclusion/Next Steps

To maintain Baby-Friendly designation, an annual report must be submitted to the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada that provides an update on our efforts to maintain and improve care and support provided to families regarding infant feeding. MLHU's Annual Report was submitted and accepted in fall 2016. To maintain and further enhance Baby-Friendly practices within the Health Unit and the community, MLHU will continue to:

- Strengthen partnerships with hospitals and other key stakeholders
- Gather and monitor local data using the Middlesex-London Infant Feeding Surveillance System
- Provide an orientation on the Health Unit's BFI policy to all new staff, including Board of Health members, on an annual basis (see [Appendix A](#)).

Every five years, organizations must undergo an assessment process for re-designation as Baby-Friendly; for MLHU, this will be in 2020.

This report was submitted by the Reproductive Health Team, Healthy Start Division.



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