

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Bryna Warshawsky, Acting Medical Officer of Health

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## **BABY-FRIENDLY ORGANIZATION POLICY**

### ***Recommendation***

*It is recommended that the Board of Health endorse the Baby-Friendly Organization policy attached as Appendix A to Report No. 119-12.*

### **Key Points**

- Breastfeeding promotes optimal nutrition, immunologic protection, growth, and development of infants and toddlers. Recommendation calls for exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer in addition to other foods.
- The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is a global evidence-based strategy that promotes, protects, and supports the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding.
- All Health Units in Ontario are required to work towards achievement of Baby-Friendly designation and the Middlesex-London Health Unit is working towards this designation.
- An organizational policy has been developed that will support the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative at the Health Unit as required for BFI designation ([Appendix A](#)).

### **Background**

Health Canada and the World Health Organization promote breastfeeding for the optimal nutrition, immunologic protection, growth, and development of infants and toddlers. The recommendation calls for exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and sustained breastfeeding for up to two years or longer in addition to other foods.

The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is a global evidence-based strategy that promotes, protects, and supports the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. As of 2011, Baby-Friendly designation has been selected by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care as an Accountability Agreement Performance Indicator for all public health units in Ontario. The BFI outlines ten steps to support successful breast feeding ([Appendix B](#)). These steps include: policy development; staff education; revision of prenatal curriculum; postpartum education and support; encouragement of exclusive and sustained breastfeeding; discouragement of the use of artificial teats or soothers; seamless service provision between hospitals, community health services and peer support programs; and compliance with the World Health Organization (WHO) Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes.

### **Update on the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative at the Health Unit**

The Reproductive Health and Early Years Team within Family Health Services is providing leadership to move the Health Unit towards BFI designation. A multidisciplinary BFI Task Force has developed a logic model and implementation plan with clear deliverables set out for 2012, 2013, and beyond. BFI Task Force members are providing leadership to six smaller workgroups that are focused on specific requirements as set out by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Breastfeeding Committee

for Canada. An Advisory Group made up of a broad range of community partners and Health Unit stakeholders has also been established to support and guide the implementation work.

Work to-date has included the development of the Health Unit's Baby-Friendly organizational policy ([Appendix A](#)), and the review and revision of print resources and prenatal curricula to ensure compliance and consistency with BFI standards. A plan is being developed to capture required data and documentation. Efforts are underway to raise awareness about BFI within the community and to collaborate with key partners. In addition, educational opportunities are planned for all staff over the next few months.

### **Policy development**

In order to meet the requirements for Baby-Friendly designation, the organization requires a written policy that identifies how it will support the practices outlined in the BFI. This policy must be communicated to staff, volunteers, clients and the community, and must be endorsed by the Board of Health. The Health Unit policy ([Appendix A](#)) has gone through an in-depth development and review process, which included gathering information from other designated health units in Ontario, and input from a Breastfeeding Committee for Canada BFI Assessor, the BFI Task Force and Advisory Group, and the Health Unit's Directors Committee.

### **Requirements for Board of Health members**

In order to achieve Baby-Friendly Initiative designation, there are specific requirements of Board of Health members as follows: 1) acquire knowledge related to the BFI; 2) formally endorse the Health Unit's BFI policy and implementation process; and 3) participate in orientation to the Health Unit's BFI policy, initially and on a regular basis. The package of information Board members received for the April 19, 2012 Board of Health Meeting (Report 060-19), [the attached policy \(Appendix A\)](#), and the Board of Health presentation this month will serve as initial orientation to BFI. Regular Board of Health reports, periodic presentations to the Board, and details outlining how Board of Health members can find out more information about BFI will be provided to meet ongoing BFI requirements.

### **Conclusion**

This Health Unit is progressing well towards achieving key requirements set out by both the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Baby-Friendly Initiative. As part of this progress, the Board of Health is being asked to formally endorse the Health Unit's Baby Friendly Organization policy and work towards fulfilling other requirements for Board of Health members as outlined above.

This report was prepared by Ms. Laura Dueck, Public Health Nurse, and Ms. Heather Lokko, Manager, Reproductive Health Team.



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<p><b>This report addresses</b> the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Child Health, Requirement #4, #7 and an Area of Focus: Facilitate the effective and efficient implementation of the Public Health Accountability Agreement</p>
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