

CDC FUNDING IN ACTION

MINNESOTA LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAM FOR BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Ten-Step Toolkit Helps Local Health Departments Promote Breastfeeding



Challenge

Breastfeeding is the optimal method for infant feeding and promotes positive health outcomes for both mothers and infants. Experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding for about 6 months. However, in Minnesota, only 48.6% and 21.7% of mothers are exclusively breastfeeding at 3 and 6 months, respectively. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified worksites as a setting that can support breastfeeding.



Approach

The Dakota County Health Department developed the BFHD program to provide breastfeeding support at local public health agencies and tribal health boards. The program developed 10 key steps that were adapted from other programs (e.g., Wisconsin BFHD project). Minnesota piloted BFHD in 10 local health departments. The 10-step process practices include to have a written breastfeeding policy in place and support mothers to initiate and maintain breastfeeding for 12 months and beyond. After the successful pilot of the BFHD program, staff in the Dakota County Public Health Department developed a toolkit to guide local health departments to become breastfeeding-friendly through the 10 steps.



Results

The 10 local health departments that participated in the BFHD pilot all completed pre-and post-initiative self-assessments. Across all departments, the self-assessment data showed progress in using all of BFHD's 10 steps. Respondents noted that these improvements increased the capacity of the health departments to promote breastfeeding and develop policies that promote breastfeeding. In 2015—based on the overall success of the BFHD pilot program in 10 sites—MDH launched a statewide BFHD recognition program. MDH developed a three-tiered recognition system (bronze, silver, and gold) for local health departments to be acknowledged for their achievements in breastfeeding-friendly practices. Two of the 10 BFHD pilot sites—Dakota and Freeborn counties—achieved the highest recognition level.



At A Glance

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) provides technical assistance and program support for the statewide Breastfeeding-Friendly Health Departments (BFHD) program. The program was originally piloted by 10 local public health departments in Minnesota. BFHD provides a 10step process and toolkit for supporting breastfeeding practices at local public health agencies and tribal health boards. MDH also recognizes local public health departments and tribal health boards that put into action all or some of the 10 steps at the bronze, silver, and gold levels.

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