

It Takes a Village

A Tool Kit for Creating Breastfeeding Friendly Communities

PREPARED BY THE MATERNAL-CHILD HEALTH TASK FORCE
OF THE GREATER LOWELL HEALTH ALLIANCE



GLHA
GREATER LOWELL HEALTH ALLIANCE



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About The Breastfeeding Friendly Communities Project

The Maternal-Child Health Task Force of the Greater Lowell Health Alliance is a collaborative working group of doctors, midwives, nurses, IBCLCs, breastfeeding counselors, community health workers, social service providers, educators, policy makers, and community members who undertake projects to improve the wellbeing of pregnant people, parents, and their infants and children.

Providing babies with human milk is considered by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization as one of the most critical and fundamental strategies for the promotion of lifelong wellness. While infant feeding can take many forms beyond just exclusive breastfeeding or exclusive formula feeding, many families choose or desire an infant feeding relationship that incorporates breastmilk at some point, in some form.

For families that do desire to breastfeed, many report barriers that make achieving their personal goals challenging. While some of these barriers are individual and physiological (for example, underlying health conditions that impact milk supply), most of them are social, environmental, and structural (for example, experiencing discrimination regarding breastfeeding in public, or lacking support at their workplace regarding the right and ability to pump).

The Tool Kit serves as a resource for business owners and community members to build our shared knowledge and understanding about breastfeeding from a public health perspective. While breastfeeding may seem like an individual health decision, we all benefit when new parents feel like they are able to achieve their infant feeding goals. Through a better understanding of the rights and needs of breastfeeding dyads, we can create a community where all parents are supported in their infant feeding journeys.

Acknowledgment

This Tool Kit was modified from the Make Breastfeeding Your Business: An Action Support Kit by JustFood Ottawa and the Breastfeeding Friendly Business: A Tool Kit from the Grey Bruce Health Unit Baby-Friendly Initiative. It has been customized to reflect the specific needs, interests, and rights of the Greater Lowell community and is freely available to be utilized as a resource throughout the Greater Lowell region and beyond. Thank you to Ashleigh Brogna for her work on this project!

Contact

If you have any questions or comments about this ToolKit, email Hannah at htello@greaterlowellhealthalliance.org.

Why Feeding Babies Matters

All parents are invested in keeping their babies as healthy as possible. How babies are fed is one of the most important keystones in not just infant health, but health throughout the lifespan. Even babies who only receive some breastmilk are afforded important health benefits.

Benefits for Babies

Babies who are breastfed receive a unique combination of essential nutrients and antibodies that meet all of their nutritional needs as well as provide protection against infection and disease. Babies who receive breastmilk have lower rates of illnesses in infancy, and are less likely to develop asthma, ear infections, and diabetes. Breastfed babies also have lower rates of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Benefits for Parents

People who breastfeed have lower risk of developing breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and heart disease, and the longer a person breastfeeds, the less likely they are to develop these conditions. People who breastfeed also report enjoying the experience of bonding through breastfeeding. For some families, breastfeeding provides a method of feeding that is more affordable than purchasing infant formula. Families also may find breastfeeding more convenient than preparing and storing bottles and bottle accessories.

Benefits for Businesses

New parents who feel supported about how to feed their babies are more likely to return to work after parental leave, increasing employee retention. Babies who are breastfed are also sick less often, reducing parents' need to utilize sick time. Employees with access to infant feeding resources feel less pressure to make difficult decisions about the needs of their families and the needs of their workplaces.

Benefits for the Community

While breastfeeding may seem like an individual health choice, there are benefits to the broader community as well as to individual families. Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly with limited waste. Breastfeeding supports lifelong health and wellness, which reduces the shared cost burden of illness and hospitalization. Communities that support breastfeeding ensure that breastfeeding families feel fully supported to engage in the workforce and other community services and activities, increasing productivity and reducing social isolation.



The Role of the Community in Supporting New Families

How families decide to feed their babies involves consideration of several factors. Desire to breastfeed, underlying medical concerns and the use of certain medications might be factors that influence a person's decision to breastfeed; these individual factors hold considerable weight in decision-making.

But there are also factors that are not necessarily in the control of the individual. For example, a person may be discouraged from breastfeeding because they do not have a supportive employer, or because they feel judged when they need to breastfeed in public. These external pressures may discourage a person from breastfeeding even if the person has a desire to breastfeed.

The role of the community in supporting new families as they decide how to feed their babies is to reduce the number of environmental conditions that make breastfeeding harder for people who want to breastfeed. That way, families can be confident that the decisions they make about feeding their babies are based on their personal goals, beliefs, and circumstances, instead of external conditions beyond their individual control.

In practice, the community can help support new families interested in breastfeeding by:

- » Making breastfeeding education materials, like brochures and flyers, readily available in public spaces
- » Incorporating images of breastfeeding into public health campaigns or marketing materials
- » Increasing the availability of private areas for feeding babies who may be easily distracted, or for parents who prefer more privacy
- » Endorsing protections for breastfeeding families, including affirming the right to breastfeed in public and the right to adequate break time for pumping
- » Enacting best-practices for supporting parents in the immediate postpartum period, particularly as parents prepare to return to work while still maintaining a breastfeeding relationship with their child

And much more that we will outline in this toolkit!



Creating Breastfeeding-Friendly Community Spaces

Communities can support breastfeeding families by making publicly-accessible spaces as welcoming and accommodating as possible. When places like coffee shops, libraries, and museums are accessible and show visible support of infant feeding and care, new parents are more likely to stay engaged with their communities, access resources, and build support networks to reach their goals.

The following recommendations can be used in community spaces to make breastfeeding families feel welcomed and supported.



Good Recommendations:

- » Provide all staff or volunteers with information about laws protecting a parent's right to breastfeed in any space where a baby is otherwise allowed to be (for example, at a playground or in a restaurant)
- » Provide comfortable spaces to sit, especially chairs with backs or arms, which make comfortably holding a nursing baby easier
- » Offer space for parents to fold and store strollers
- » Install a changing table in at least one bathroom



Better Recommendations:

- » Provide all staff or volunteers with a copy of your written policy about supporting parents who want to breastfeed or feed their babies in your space
- » Offer cushioned seating in a more secluded or quiet space in your space; if your space includes an outdoor area, consider including seating in the shade
- » Provide infant seating when possible (for example, high chairs that can accommodate an infant seat)
- » Install changing tables in all bathrooms



Best Recommendations:

- » Provide a training for all staff and volunteers about the rights of breastfeeding parents, and strategies for making breastfeeding parents feel welcome (including greeting and making eye contact with parents, responding affirmatively that your space is breastfeeding-friendly if a parent expresses concern or hesitation about breastfeeding in public, and rehearsing safe strategies for intervening with other patrons who may react negatively to breastfeeding)
- » Offer a Parents' or Mothers' Room or Space that is equipped with comfortable seating and a changing table and supplies (like wipes); when possible, an outlet and sink are especially useful for parents who need to pump breastmilk
- » Incorporate "Breastfeeding Friendly Business" signage into your space (See Appendix)
- » Offer resources about breastfeeding support, parent groups, or local activities for parents in a visible place, like a community bulletin board

Becoming a Breastfeeding-Friendly Employer

For many new parents, returning to work can be an overwhelming and stressful experience, especially for new parents who are breastfeeding. Many parents who are breastfeeding indicate that their employment interfered with their feeding goals; some parents even cite unsupportive workplaces as the reason they don't attempt breastfeeding at all. Fortunately, there are several high-impact strategies employers can use to ensure that their employees feel welcome, supported and ready to return to work, without interrupting their infant feeding goals.



Required by law:

- » Any employer with at least six employees must provide breastfeeding employees with reasonable break time and a private space (other than a bathroom) equipped with an electrical outlet, a table, and a place to sit, to pump



Good Recommendations:

- » Establish via verbal agreement with the employee their options for protected break time to pump breastmilk
- » Provide flexible breaks of at least 20 minutes during which the employee can pump
- » Designate a multi-use space that can also serve as a private pumping room



Better Recommendations:

- » Provide all employees with a copy of the company's policy on breastfeeding and pumping upon returning to work, including information about pumping spaces
- » Dedicate a specific pumping room that is not used for other purposes to protect privacy and ensure access
- » Provide a refrigerator to store pumped milk
- » Consider if the employee could work flexible hours, work remotely on some days, or participate in job sharing, even is temporarily during the transition back to work



Best Recommendations:

- » Provide all employees with a written copy of the company's breastfeeding support policy as well as education resources for new parents
- » Provide a dedicated and clearly labeled lactation room with refrigerator, comfortable chair, wall clock, sink, small table and electrical outlets
- » Expand pumping protections to include the option for employees to nurse their infants directly instead of pumping, when feasible (for example, when on-site childcare is available)
- » Offer employees the option to return to work on a modified schedule to accommodate part-time hours, remote options, and job sharing
- » Provide coverage of lactation services via insurance or paid by the employer

Breastfeeding Friendly Business Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate your business to see how breastfeeding friendly it is for clients and customers, and spot potential areas of improvement!



- Good**
- ☐ Provide comfortable spaces to sit, especially chairs with backs or arms, which make comfortably holding a nursing baby easier
 - ☐ Offer space for parents to fold and store strollers
 - ☐ Install a changing table in at least one bathroom
 - ☐ Provide all staff or volunteers with information about laws protecting a parent's right to breastfeed in any space where a baby is otherwise allowed to be (for example, at a playground or in a restaurant)



- Better**
- ☐ Provide all staff or volunteers with a copy of your written policy about supporting parents who want to breastfeed or feed their babies in your space
 - ☐ Offer cushioned seating in a more secluded or quiet space in your space; if your space includes an outdoor area, consider including seating in the shade
 - ☐ Provide infant seating when possible (for example, high chairs that can accommodate an infant seat)
 - ☐ Install changing tables in all bathrooms



- Best**
- ☐ Provide a training for all staff and volunteers about the rights of breastfeeding parents, and strategies for making breastfeeding parents feel welcome
 - ☐ Offer a Parents' or Mothers' Room or Space that is equipped with comfortable seating and a changing table and supplies (like wipes); when possible, an outlet and sink are also especially useful for parents who need to pump breastmilk
 - ☐ Incorporate "Breastfeeding Friendly Business" signage into your space
 - ☐ Offer resources about breastfeeding support, parent groups, or local activities for parents in a visible place, like a community bulletin board



Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Checklist

Use this checklist to see how breastfeeding-friendly your company or organization is for your employees, and spot potential areas of improvement!



- Good**
- ☐ Establish a verbal agreement between mother & her direct supervisor regarding her break times and space to pump
 - ☐ Private room with a lock
 - ☐ Flexible breaks



- Better**
- ☐ Written breastfeeding support policy
 - ☐ Education about policy provided to all employees
 - ☐ Private room with a lock on the door
 - ☐ Comfortable chair for pumping and/or nursing
 - ☐ Refrigerator for milk storage
 - ☐ Nearby sink with running water
 - ☐ Flexible breaks
 - ☐ List of local breastfeeding resources

One or more of the following:

- ☐ Part-time/work from home option
- ☐ Flex-time offered
- ☐ Job-sharing
- ☐ Extended maternity leave
- ☐ On-site childcare



- Best**
- ☐ Written breastfeeding support policy with education provided for all employees
 - ☐ Breastfeeding resources given to all expectant parents
 - ☐ Lending library of breastfeeding resources
 - ☐ Lactation consultant services provided for employees (via insurance or paid by employer)
 - ☐ Private lactation room with all of the following: Lock for door; refrigerator; comfortable upholstered chair; wall clock; nearby sink with running water; small table; electrical outlet
 - ☐ Breast pump provided by employer
 - ☐ Flexible breaks
 - ☐ Paid extended maternity leave

One or more of the following:

- ☐ Part-time/work from home option
- ☐ Flex-time
- ☐ Job-sharing
- ☐ On-site childcare

Signage Examples



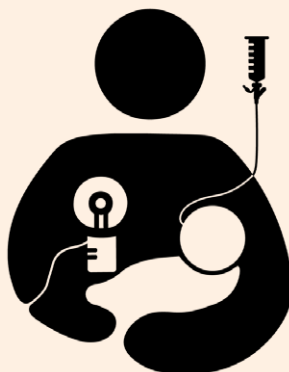
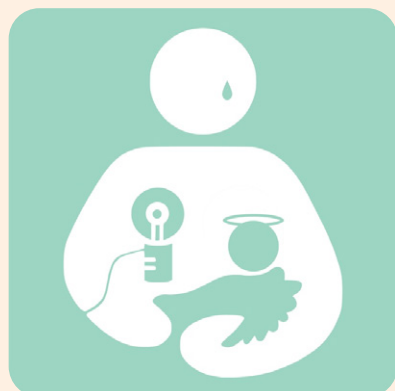
Download at:
<http://clipart-library.com/clipart/1436462.htm>



Download at:
<https://kellymom.com/blog-post/breastfeeding-welcome-here/>



Download at:
<https://babyfeedingsymbols.com/>



Program Name	Description	Address	Phone	Website
Lowell General Hospital	Free weekly in-person support groups. Individual outpatient clinic appointments.	295 Varnum Ave. Lowell, MA	978-937-6334	lowellgeneral.org/locations/lowell-general-main-campus/breastfeeding-clinic
Healthy Families Lowell	Healthy Families Lowell is part of Healthy Families Massachusetts. Healthy Families Massachusetts is a statewide program of the Children's Trust. Free support program for first-time moms and dads aged 23 and under. Home visitors provide curriculum on the benefits of breastfeeding and help to educate participants that they can go to school or work and breastfeed.	151 Warren Street Suite 240 Lowell, MA	978-513-2365	healthyfamiliesma.org/
Welcome Family Program	Provides a universal, one-time nurse home visit to caregivers with newborns in Boston, Fall River, Lowell, Holyoke and Springfield. Including breastfeeding education and related referrals as needed.	126 Phoenix Ave. Lowell, MA	978-453-8331	thomchild.org/locations/lowell-anne-sullivan-center/
Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition	Supports hospitals that promote breastfeeding. Assists hospitals to become Baby Friendly based on a core set of evidence-based maternity care practices that support positive breastfeeding outcomes.	254 Conant Road Weston, MA	781-893-3553	massbreastfeeding.org/
ZipMilk Massachusetts	Breastfeeding resource and service hub searchable by zip code.	N/A	Contact form on website	zipmilk.org/

Program Name	Description	Address	Phone	Website
La Leche League of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont	Nonprofit organization dedicated to helping parents, families, and communities to breastfeed, chestfeed, and human milk feed their babies through parent-to-parent support. Encourages, informs, educates, supports, and promotes the use of human milk.	Meetings held at Andover YMCA 165 Haverhill Street Andover, MA	978-475-2690	LLAndover@yahoo.com lllmarivt.org
Lowell WIC Nutrition Program	Free nutrition program for families that provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals. Offers mother-to-mother peer counseling for breastfeeding support; counselors are trained and have lived experience with breastfeeding. IBCLC support available.	45 Kirk Street 1st Floor Lowell, MA	978-454-6397	mass.gov/locations/lowell-wic-program-main-clinic
Nursing Mothers Council	Provides breastfeeding resources and education.	N/A	617-244-5102	bace-nmc.org
Massachusetts Lactation Consultant Association	Provides MA families with lactation support in homes, offices, virtually, in hospitals, and through support groups.	1 Washington Mall #1037 Government Center Boston, MA	Contact form on website	masslca.org
Breastfeeding USA	Provides evidence-based breastfeeding information and support.	N/A	Contact form on website	breastfeedingusa.org
REACH LoWell	Seeks to eliminate disparities among the Southeast Asians and Hispanic/LatinX communities as it relates to diabetes, including through the promotion of breastfeeding.	161 Jackson Street Lowell, MA	978-937-9700	lchealth.org/health-wellness/healthy-community/reach-lowell/

Become a GLHA-Certified Breastfeeding Friendly Business!

Let the community know: **parents are welcome here!**

If you've review the checklists on pages 7 or 8 in this toolkit and meet the criteria below, then the Maternal-Child Health Taskforce of the Greater Lowell Health Alliance will issue a formal certification that your business or organization is breastfeeding- and/or parent-friendly! There are two levels of certification:

If you want to be recognized as a place that is welcoming and supportive of breastfeeding or parenting clients, customers, consumers, etc., then meet the following criteria to be recognized as a **Breastfeeding-Friendly Business**.

If you want to be recognized as an employer that is welcoming and supportive of breastfeeding or parenting employees, then meet the following criteria to be recognized as a **Breastfeeding-Friendly Employer**.

Criteria		Benefits of Certification
Breastfeeding-Friendly Business	Meet all of the "Good" recommendations, OR at least three of the "Better" recommendations, OR at least two of the "Best" recommendations on pg. 7 of the Toolkit Submit a copy of your checklist, indicating which criteria are met, to the GLHA Complete a short site audit with a GLHA Taskforce member	Official signage and promotional materials identifying your business as GLHA-Certified Breastfeeding-Friendly OR Parent-Friendly (your choice) Recognition of your business as breastfeeding-friendly on our website, newsletter, social media, at our annual meeting, and other relevant GLHA print/web materials Reduced or waived tabling fees at GLHA community events
Breastfeeding-Friendly Employer	Meet all of the "Good" recommendations, OR at least six of the "Better" recommendations, OR at least six of the "Best" recommendations on pg. 8 of the Toolkit Submit two written testimonies from current employees who are parents Submit a copy of your checklist, indicating which criteria are met, to the GLHA Complete a short site audit with a GLHA Taskforce member	All of the above PLUS: Recognition of your business/organization in the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce community guide Early access to registration for GLHA activities and events Reduced or waived fees for employees at GLHA professional development trainings (including events that provide CEUs, CECs, etc.)

For more details about becoming certified Breastfeeding-Friendly, visit greaterlowellhealthalliance.org/health-priorities/maternal-child-health or email Hannah at htello@greaterlowellhealthalliance.org



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