



# Washtenaw County

*Leading Breastfeeding  
Support*



**Why is breastfeeding important?**

**What are the barriers to breastfeeding?**

**What can the Board of Commissioners do?**

# HEALTH BENEFITS

- *Breastfeeding protects babies from infections and illnesses that include diarrhea, ear infections and pneumonia.*
- *Breastfed babies are less likely to develop asthma.*
- *Children who are breastfed for six months are less likely to become obese.*
- *Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).*
- *Mothers who breastfeed have a decreased risk of breast/ovarian cancers.*



# Social Benefits

- *Early psychological attachment, accomplished through bonding AT THE BREAST, leads to improved emotional development & stability.*
- *Breastfed infants are more likely to graduate high school, be emotionally secure, and be of higher intelligence.*
- *Breastfed infants are less likely to later be incarcerated, addicted to drugs, and have mental health problems.*
- *Breastfeeding protects against childhood abuse and neglect.*
- *Breastfeeding mothers are less likely to suffer from postpartum depression.*



# Economic Benefits

- *Families who follow optimal breastfeeding practices can save between \$1,200-\$1,500 in expenditures on infant formula in the first year alone.*
- *A study estimated that if 90% of U.S. families followed guidelines to breastfeed exclusively for six months, the U.S. would annually save \$13 billion from reduced medical and other costs.*
- *For both employers and employees, less employee time off to care for sick children, and higher productivity.*
- *Mutual of Omaha found newborn health care costs are three times lower for babies whose mothers participate in the company's employee maternity and lactation program. Better infant health means fewer health insurance claims.*
- *WIC costs to support a breastfeeding mother are 55% of those for a formula-feeding mother.*



# Breastfeeding Rates

National medical organizations promote 6 months exclusive breastfeeding followed by continued breastfeeding for at least one year.

Healthy People 2020 breastfeeding goals:

Ever: 81.9%

Exclusively at 6 months: 25.5%

Michigan Rates:

Ever: 79.1%

Exclusively at 6 months: 17.9%

Washtenaw County WIC Rates:

*(Currently WIC serves over 50% of all infants born-FNS/USDA)*

Ever: 75%

Exclusively at 6 months: 16.5%



# Biologically Normal Feeding

Breastfeeding experts recommend feeding "on-demand" rather than on a schedule. This promotes an adequate milk supply that adjusts with the infant's growth. Frequency ranges from every three hours to every hour throughout a 24 hour period.

Breastfeeding is not only nutritional but also nurturing, providing comfort, soothing, and bonding.



# Barriers

Mothers' perception that others disapprove.

Active disapproval in the public sphere through words, actions, or facial expressions.

Sexuality of breasts in the media.

Belief that bottle feeding is equal to direct breastfeeding.

Mothers' feelings of anxiety, fear, shame, embarrassment, or lack of social support.



# local mothers

*“I am pregnant and expecting my baby in September. I heard many horror stories about breastfeeding in public. It’s unfortunate that moms have to either be home bound or be forced to use bottles. Why should we be punished for doing what’s best for our children?”*

*“My main concern is breastfeeding in public. I am very worried about being told it's ‘inappropriate’ and being accused of indecent exposure! I really want to breastfeed as it is special for so many reasons - the bonding, the cost savings, and the health benefits for both mother and baby”*



# local mothers

*"Whenever I am out I always mentally check if I'm within the Ann Arbor city limits because I know I'm protected from harassment then. If I'm not, I'm very nervous about what someone might say."*

*"I'm scared to breastfeed in public because of what people think and what comments they would say to me. If there were signs that said it was allowed I would feel better because it lets people know ahead of time."*

*"I am very nervous about nursing in public. People stare at you, kids stare at you, men stare at you. I'm scared because of all the people who will stare at me. If I was protected or someplace where it was okay to nurse, I would feel much more comfortable to nurse in public."*



# Breastfeeding Policy

Since 2006 Ann Arbor city has had an ordinance protecting public breastfeeding from harassment in spaces where mothers and children are otherwise allowed.

2750 counties protect public breastfeeding, 382 have no policy protection in place. Michigan is one of only five states that does not.

**We request the Board of Commissioners consider a policy to extend the protection of public breastfeeding to all Washtenaw County government properties.**

*This new policy ties in with Washtenaw County's Guiding Principle #6:*

*Focus on the root causes of problems that affect the quality of life of County citizens by aggressively pursuing prevention strategies*



**Breastfeeding Friendly Zone**