

Strategy 6. Support for Breastfeeding in Early Care and Education

Definition

Early care and education (ECE) is a term used to describe various types of child care arrangements, including prekindergarten (pre-K) programs, Head Start programs, child care centers, and in-home care. ECE programs play an important role in supporting breastfeeding mothers and their infants by welcoming breastfeeding mothers and making sure staff members are trained to handle breast milk and follow mothers' feeding plans. Increasing access to ECE programs that support breastfeeding families will help women start and continue breastfeeding.

Rationale

In 2012, 57% of all mothers with infants were employed.⁵⁹ As a result, many children are regularly cared for by someone other than their mother from birth to age 4 years.⁷⁰ ECE providers and teachers influence the lives and health of the families they serve and can be an important source of support for working mothers who want to breastfeed.⁷¹

All ECE programs, including those in personal homes, can lower a breastfeeding mother's anxiety by allowing her to feed her infant on-site, having a posted breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated, making sure procedures for storing and handling breast milk and feeding breastfed infants are in place, and making sure staff members are well-trained in these procedures.⁷²

Evidence of Effectiveness

Data from the Infant Feeding Practices Study II (IFPS II), a longitudinal study that followed mothers from the third trimester until children were age 1 year, found that breastfeeding at 6 months was significantly associated with support from child care providers to feed expressed breast milk to infants and allow mothers to breastfeed on-site before or after work.⁷³ The IFPS II used a questionnaire to ask mothers five questions about breastfeeding support. Results showed that mothers who said they received five

Infant Feeding Guidelines in *Caring for Our Children*

In 2011, the AAP and the American Public Health Association (APHA) published the third edition of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*. This publication provides national guidelines on how ECE programs should accommodate breastfeeding mothers.

Specifically, the APA and APHA recommend the following: "The facility should encourage, provide arrangements for, and support breastfeeding. The facility staff, with appropriate training, should be the mother's cheerleader and enthusiastic supporter for the mother's plan to provide her milk. Facilities should have a designated place set aside for breastfeeding mothers who want to come during work to breastfeed, as well as a private area with an outlet (not a bathroom) for mothers to pump their breast milk. A place that mothers feel they are welcome to breastfeed, pump, or bottle feed can create a positive environment when offered in a supportive way."⁷²

of the supports were three times as likely to be breastfeeding at 6 months as mothers who said they received fewer than three supports.⁷³



Key Considerations

- Setting and enforcing ECE standards is the responsibility of individual states and territories, although some local jurisdictions also have the authority to set additional standards. The 2011 *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs* is based on scientific evidence and expert consensus. The document recognizes that, “Caregivers/teachers have a unique opportunity to support breastfeeding mothers, who are often daunted by the prospect of continuing to breastfeed as they return to work.”⁷²
- As of December 2010, only six states had licensing regulations with language that fully meets best care guidelines, as defined by *Caring for Our Children*, such as encouraging and supporting breastfeeding and the feeding of breast milk.⁷² These states are Arizona, California, Delaware, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Vermont.⁷⁴
- ECE providers often find it difficult to attend training. Breastfeeding support training can be incorporated into other professional development or continuing education opportunities. Information about breastfeeding support can also be included in other annual trainings.
- Support for mothers is not limited to feeding an infant breast milk. It can include welcoming mothers to breastfeed on-site and providing a space. ECE providers should let mothers know what services are available so they do not wean their infants prematurely.
- Giving out printed materials and resources that communicate policies and procedures and the benefits of breastfeeding for mothers and children is helpful for both staff and parents.

Action Steps

1. Review state ECE regulations related to breastfeeding practices. If licensing or regulation change is not appropriate, seek to integrate breastfeeding standards into statewide Quality Rating Improvement Systems.
2. Consider including breastfeeding materials that encourage breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity in preservice and professional development education and trainings for ECE providers.
3. Recognize ECE facilities that meet high standards for breastfeeding support.
4. Develop a model breastfeeding policy that can be shared with child care programs in your state or community.
5. Facilitate training for ECE providers on how to support breastfeeding mothers and feed breast milk to infants.
6. Encourage ECE facilities to develop breastfeeding policies that support breastfeeding employees.



Program Examples

Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care in Wake County

The Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care in Wake County project seeks to improve breastfeeding support in child care centers in North Carolina, especially those serving low-income families. It is a collaboration between the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute, the Wake County Child Care Health Consultants, and Wake County SmartStart.

Activities include identifying the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of current child care staff in the state and developing a self-appraisal tool called the 10 Steps for Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Centers. Future plans include the creation of a Breastfeeding-friendly Child Care Award.

How to Support a Breastfeeding Mother: A Guide for the Childcare Center

The Mississippi Department of Health's WIC Program developed this training curriculum for child care providers. The curriculum includes guidelines on how to support breastfeeding mothers and how to store and handle expressed breast milk. It has been adopted by other state health departments across the United States. The Texas Department of Health houses these materials, and the curriculum and teaching materials can be downloaded free from the department's Web site.

Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services developed this publication to help child care centers develop policies and provide an environment that supports breastfeeding mothers.

Resources

Nutrition & Physical Activity in Childcare Settings: Breastfeeding

Arizona Department of Human Services

This program aims to empower children to make good choices about nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco. It includes information on breastfeeding.

<http://azdhs.gov/empowerpack>

Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care in Wake County

Learn about this North Carolina project that seeks to improve breastfeeding support in child care centers, especially those serving low-income families.

<http://cgbi.sph.unc.edu/child-care>

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition

Guidance on how to feed infants and prepare for breastfeeding infants in child care settings.

<http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/index.html>





Proper Handling and Storage of Human Milk

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Instructions on the proper handling and storage of human breast milk.

http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm

**How to Support a Breastfeeding Mother:
A Guide for the Childcare Center**

Mississippi Department of Health

Information and resources on this WIC training program are available on the Texas Department of Health's Web site.

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/bf/childcare.shtm>

Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

This resource kit includes a self-appraisal questionnaire to help child care centers review existing practices.

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/Childcare/BFFChildCare.pdf>

Family Checklist for Nutrition in Early Care and Education

A checklist on nutrition practices that parents can consider when choosing an ECE provider.

<http://nrckids.org>

