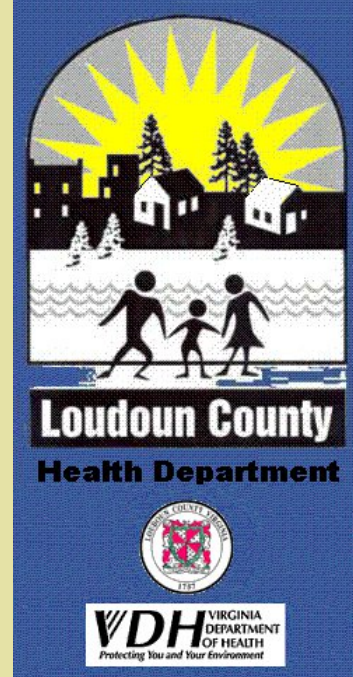


Increasing Equity in an Infant’s First Food Environment: Loudoun County, VA Breastfeeding Success Stories



Loudoun Pediatric Obesity Coalition | Loudoun County Health Department | Leesburg, VA | Presented By: Jennifer Brady, CPHMC Project Coordinator

Introduction

Loudoun County, VA is a rapidly growing and diversifying county. Between 2000 and 2010, the county saw a 84% population change compared to just a 9% change in the rest of the state. During the same time period in Loudoun, the Hispanic population increased by 282% and the Asian population increased by 407% contributing to diversification. In our community, Hispanic families are 4 times more likely than non-Hispanic families to live below the federal poverty line.

US and international health policy organizations describe optimal breastfeeding as exclusive breastfeeding through 6 months, however gaps still exist in the US between policy and practice. Disparities in breastfeeding exist and are pronounced for low-income, ethnic-minority women, with a greater burden of disease associated with suboptimal breastfeeding for Hispanic women. At our local WIC agency, we saw low rates of optimal breastfeeding, high rates of early introduction of formula and women reporting not meeting their personal breastfeeding goals.

To improve equity in an infant's first food environment, we implemented policy, systems, and environmental changes to support a mother's ability to set and reach her breastfeeding exclusivity and duration goals. Loudoun County Health Department's (LCHD) previous work surveying physicians' knowledge of breastfeeding and promoting the Business Case for Breastfeeding, allowed the team to build on established partnerships to make further efforts in enhancing breastfeeding support systems across a broad spectrum of community stakeholders during the CPHMC project timeline.

Project Overview

Our breastfeeding interventions took a holistic view of increasing breastfeeding support for a new mother by addressing her breastfeeding support needs from time of pregnancy to returning to work after having a baby. Specific project initiatives were determined based on the results of a previous community needs assessment and the results of a survey of WIC mothers performed specifically for this project which captured data on ~12% of Loudoun WIC families, including data on infant feeding practices and vitamin D supplementation.

Increased training in breastfeeding support services was offered to community providers in the form of a best practices toolkit and by bringing a Certified Lactation Counselor training course to Loudoun County.

To improve support for breastfeeding women when they return to work, the LCHD developed a model lactation support program with a comprehensive breastfeeding policy for employees based on HHS' Business Case for Breastfeeding. This program was the first of its kind for a county government in the state of Virginia.

Recognition of breastfeeding-friendly businesses was performed through a partnership with the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce who has been working with businesses over the last few years to enhance workplace wellness programs.

Activities

--Distributed a "Best Practices in Breastfeeding Support in the Outpatient Setting" toolkit to all Loudoun County OB/Gyns, pediatricians, and family medicine practices.

-Hosted a CLC training course with 65 participants, including Loudoun County WIC staff and 20 WIC staff from across the state of Virginia.

-Implemented a Lactation Support Program at Loudoun County Government.

-Created two permanent nursing mother's lounges located at the main government office buildings in the county.

-Trained all government Human Resources liaisons on implementing a Lactation Support Program and creating temporary pumping rooms.

-Developed "The Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace" toolkit and distributed to businesses through the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce.

-Incorporated breastfeeding criteria into the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce's "Healthy Business Challenge" as a way to recognize breastfeeding-friendly businesses.

Outcomes

We surveyed 193 WIC families, and found that 50% of women reported not meeting their breastfeeding duration goals and 60% reporting giving formula to their babies within the first few days of life. The study also showed that only 42% of mothers knew about Vitamin D recommendations and only 27% of infants received a Vitamin D supplement. Our team presented these results at the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), thanks to support from the Virginia State Breastfeeding Coordinator, where discussions arose about WIC's provision of formula in the first month and WIC's possible role in educating families on the AAP's recommendations for Vitamin D supplementation. From these study results, two presentations were accepted for the National WIC Association Annual Conference. Additionally, a Vitamin D supplementation document was created and submitted to VDH for approval for use in all Virginia WIC agencies.

The "Best Practices in Breastfeeding Support in the Outpatient Setting" toolkit was created and distributed to all 81 pediatric, OB/Gyn, and family medicine providers in the county. The toolkit was added to the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatric's website, under their Breastfeeding Resources page, potentially reaching every pediatrician in the state. As a follow-up to the toolkit, fliers were sent to all community providers inviting them to register their staff for a Certified Lactation Counselor training hosted by our team. 65 people attended the course including 26 staff members from Virginia WIC agencies and nurses and PA's from 4 regional hospitals and several local pediatric clinics.

Implementing a comprehensive Lactation Support Program at the Loudoun County Government brought a breastfeeding policy to ~700 women who may need it. The model policy received a lot of press and was shared with other CPHMC Cohort 2 agencies. "The Breastfeeding Friendly Business" toolkit was developed which includes a sample policy along with resources for training employees on Virginia's Public Breastfeeding Law. This toolkit was distributed to businesses through Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce (LCCC) and is available as a resource as part of LCCC's Healthy Business Challenge, an annual competition to recognize businesses in their efforts to increase workplace wellness for employees. Last year, nearly 100 businesses participated.



Next Steps

By continuing to present the results of our work and share our resources with partners, we hope to expand the reach of our initiatives. Our WIC survey data provided our team an insight into next steps for tailoring breastfeeding support interventions to hopefully improve self-efficacy and increase the percentage of women setting goals for optimal breastfeeding and meeting their personal exclusivity and duration goals. We are in the process of applying for more funding to continue this work.

In the meantime, we will build on partnerships established during this project, such as our relationship with the Virginia State Breastfeeding Coordinator and our increased connections to community providers through the CLC week-long training.

We will continue to sit on the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce's Health & Wellness Committee to reach more local businesses and attempt to make breastfeeding support a workplace norm.

Lessons Learned

Surveying our local WIC population was a critical step in identifying the infant feeding practices of our WIC families and discovering the areas to target for interventions. After the survey, we learned that the best interpretations of the data came when the team presented the results out in the community instead of trying to understand the results solely within our own group.

After a challenging experience creating a breastfeeding policy with the Loudoun County Public School System, the team learned the hard way that breastfeeding policy development and implementation needed to be followed through to completion in detail, including designing employee brochures, training HR liaisons, and outlining how the policy will be advertised to employees in order for the lactation support program to be truly impactful.

Another important lesson learned during this project is the importance of taking the time to establish long-term partnerships with community stakeholders by attending and sitting on various community coalitions and committees. An unexpected outcome of the project was the opportunity to develop a breastfeeding-friendly business recognition program which only came about after several years of sitting on the LCCC's Health and Wellness Committee and helping them develop their Healthy Business Challenge.

By keeping the State Breastfeeding Coordinator in the loop on our project activities, we were able to receive "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" decals from VDH which we will distribute to businesses successfully meeting the breastfeeding criteria outlined in the Healthy Business Challenge. Continuing our partnership with her, also led to the development of a Vitamin D supplementation flyer by our team and approval from the Virginia Department of Health for use as an official VDH document.



Best Practices

We started by researching best practices for our project objectives and avoided recreating the wheel in our work. Our breastfeeding policy interventions were based on HHS' Business Case for Breastfeeding and we reached out to CPHMC Cohort 1 agencies for guidance on breastfeeding-friendly business recognition programs and providing lactation counselor trainings to our community.

Getting to know our community through needs assessments, a detailed survey of our WIC families, and by engaging partners were all practices that guided our project successes. Establishing partnerships with local champions, like our State Breastfeeding Coordinator, or atypical breastfeeding partners, like our local Chamber of Commerce were key elements in expanding the reach of our project activities.

Made possible with funding from the National WIC Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and does not necessarily represent the views of CDC.