

Making New London County Breastfeeding Friendly



New London County Healthy Families Partnership | Thames Valley Council for Community Action | New London, CT | Presented By: Jessica Seyfried, MPH, MSW, Community Health Coordinator

Introduction

Our Needs Assessment found the top three needs facing resource limited mothers and children in New London County were

- Lack of access to affordable healthy food
- Perinatal mental health
- Lack of support for breastfeeding

This poster will address our work surrounding breastfeeding support. As our project began, there was 1 hospital breastfeeding support group per week, 1 La Leche League meeting per month, and 1 Breastfeeding USA meeting per month. Only one of our pediatrician providers had a Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) on staff, and 1 of the 2 hospitals had an Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) who had the ability to see patients.

88% of infants in Connecticut are breastfed at least one time, but only 21% of dyads achieve the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months. The Surgeon General reports that breastfeeding rates for black infants is over 50% lower than those of white infants. This project sought to improve the duration rates of breastfeeding to address health disparities and rising chronic disease rates in our county. Breastfeeding is associated with lower rates of ear infections, gastrointestinal infections, asthma, allergies, obesity, type 2 diabetes, some childhood cancers, and SIDS, to name a few. TVCCA's WIC program has a long history of collaborating with partners who serve our mutual clients, so having a uniform breastfeeding message has been successful in supporting our youngest and most vulnerable population.

Project Overview

To address the lack of support and low duration rates of breastfeeding in our county, our coalition identified strategies to increase the support available to our families. Our coordinated approach of multidisciplinary activities allowed us to target multiple aspects of breastfeeding support to achieve our ultimate goal of making New London County a more breastfeeding friendly community.

Activities

- Trained 68 Certified Lactation Consultants (CLCs) within our county's pediatric & obstetrician offices, and home visiting agencies
- Opened Connecticut's first BabyCafe
- Worked with businesses to implement Mother Friendly Policies, and/or achieve 'Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite' designation
- Print & social media campaign #magicmilk
- Opening a breast milk bank depot at a partner agency
- Coordinated a Nurturing Station for use by local agencies
- Conducted literature review on the cultural influences & practices around breastfeeding
- Hosted community forums about the status of how breastfeeding friendly our county is, and how businesses can support breastfeeding
- Developing a 'Breastfeeding 101' training for WIC staff



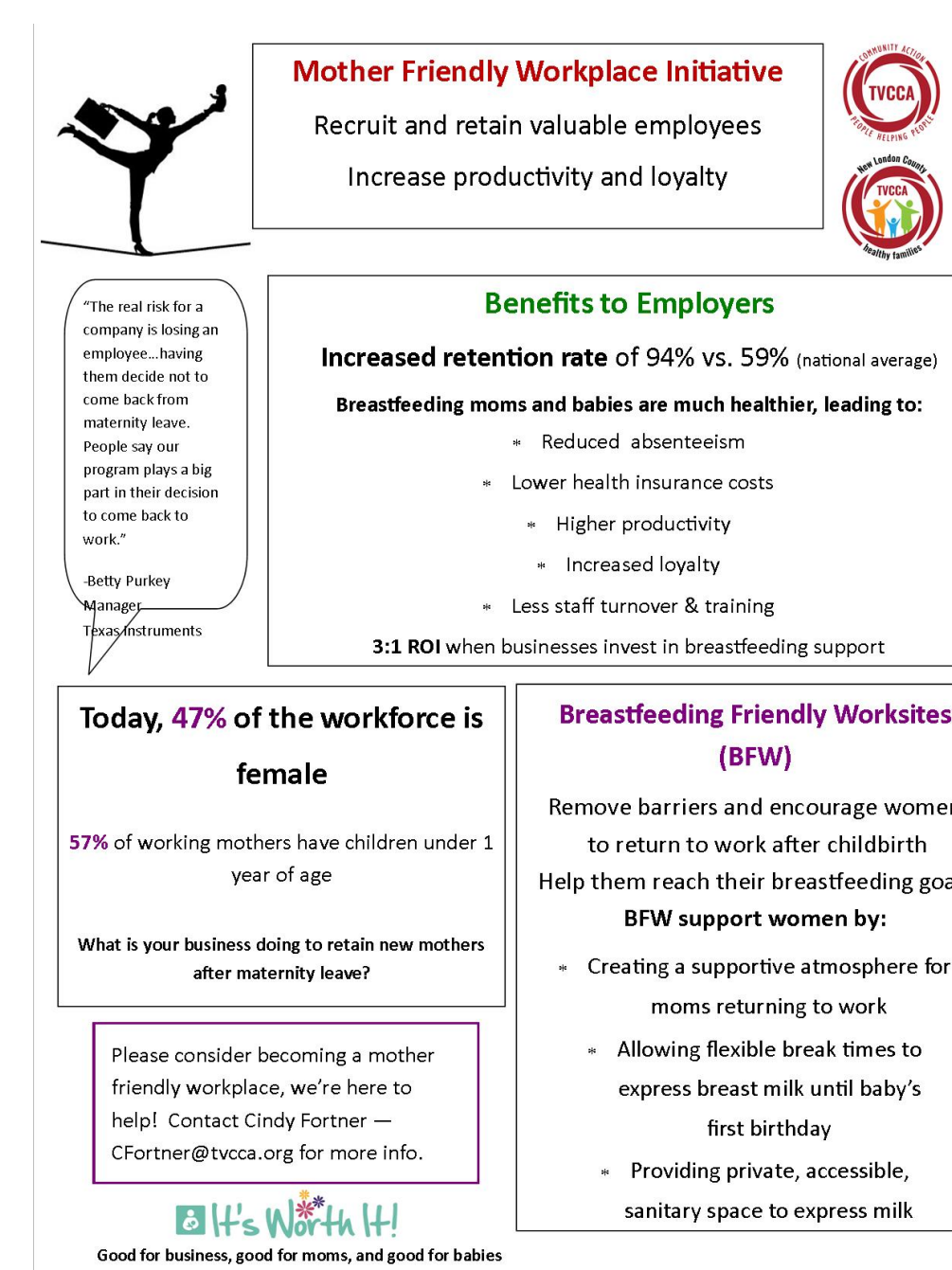
Nurturing Station



Sticker Campaign

Outcomes

- By collaborating with our local hospital and health department, we have been able to add 'improving breastfeeding duration rates' as a strategy to their Community Health Improvement Plan.
- New London County has 68 more CLCs now!
- Our Nurturing Station is now available for any agency to borrow for their community events. This provides a safe space to breastfeed, while also providing education and normalizing breastfeeding.
- Our Baby Café meets once per week at a local library and has been able to support many moms – both socially and with professional lactation support.
- Our Breastfeeding Champions help spread our breastfeeding messages to their respective sectors – healthcare, business, schools, etc.
- We have hosted two forums to share best practices, hear about what others are doing to support breastfeeding, and share ways agencies can work together to make New London County a more breastfeeding friendly community.
- We created a toolkit to inform and encourage businesses to become a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite. Many new businesses have adopted mother friendly policies, and some have achieved our Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition's designation of, "Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite."
 - We're creating a mentoring program through our Chamber of Commerce for new businesses to reach out to those who have already gone through the process of bringing mother friendly policies to their places of employment.



Next Steps

In order to keep our Baby Café up and running for the next year, we have been applying to grants to fund at least one CLC for a few hours a week to continue running the Café with our WIC Peer Counselor.

Our Coalition is a subgroup of a larger coalition, so members of our subgroup will be invited to attend the larger coalition meetings to ensure breastfeeding stays in the chronic disease section of our county's Community Health Improvement Plan.

We're developing a newsletter to send out to our 68 newly trained CLCs with opportunities to continue their education through the required CEUs to ensure they remain certified after the duration of the grant.

We're continuing to reach out to our partners with information on how to borrow the Nurturing Station for their next community event. When possible, a WIC staff member will bring the tent to the event and conduct outreach while there.

Lessons Learned

Mothers report not liking the wording, "support group" as that implies they have a problem. As we searched for other formats, we found Baby Cafe which combines the same peer support, and also includes access to professional support. Baby Cafes are required to be staffed by a minimum number of lactation professionals.

Starting up a Baby Café was easier than we thought! We were excited to find that our WIC Peer Counselor could be a co-facilitator and expand her contacts with moms. Going forward we are looking into providing limited WIC services at the Cafe. Including our state WIC staff throughout the whole process enabled us to work through some of these ideas and issues with their expertise.

Know your audience - When working with businesses to encourage the adoption of breastfeeding and mother friendly policies, we found it was important to focus in on the bottom line benefits, and less heavily on the health benefits.

Following up with coalition members personally after larger meetings keep partners more involved and can sometimes get action items done faster.

babycafé



Best Practices

Baby Cafés – combine both the Surgeon General's and CDC's recommendations to strengthen peer support programs, and increase access to professional lactation support.

Certified Lactation Counselors – this grant enabled us to facilitate 68 pediatric/OB providers/staff, and home visitors to become certified as CLCs. Increasing access to CLCs within the first few weeks of breastfeeding increases duration rates of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding Friendly Worksites – women cite returning to work and a lack of support as the top two reasons they do not reach their breastfeeding goals. Working with businesses to encouraging the adoption of policies making it as easy as possible for women to transition back from maternity leave is beneficial to both mom and the business' bottom line.

Great Resources: "The CDC Guide to Strategies to Support Breastfeeding Mothers and Babies," and "The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding"