

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Breastfeeding and Michigan's New Law – Anytime Can Be The Right Time!

Coldwater, MI. The facts are clear: breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed a baby. Among its many benefits, breastfeeding strengthens an infant's immune system; protects him/her from obesity and diabetes; and forges a strong bond between mother and child. It also helps protect the mom from breast and ovarian cancer and post-partum depression. Yet in spite of breastfeeding being 'nature's way', many moms are uncomfortable about feeding their baby in public.

August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Michigan and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Center and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) invite you to join in celebrating a new Michigan law that encourages and protects a mother's right to practice breastfeeding in public. According to Maria Ansett, RN, a local International Board Certified Lactation Consultant that oversees the Peer Breastfeeding component at the tri-county health department, "Accommodating and encouraging moms to breastfeed anytime and anywhere will help create a culture of acceptance for breastfeeding in public. This will promote breastfeeding initiation and duration rates that can lead to healthier children for generations to come."

Communities can support mothers and babies by making them feel welcome to breastfeed in public places and local establishments. According to the Michigan WIC Director, Stan Bien, "Breastfeeding is a natural act with many proven benefits" and "By supporting new mothers, we help ensure good infant health, reduce infant mortality rates and prevent obesity."

WIC staff members from the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency have planned special community events in each county to draw attention to the new law and to the importance of breastfeeding for the health and well-being of mothers and children. Participants can learn about Michigan's new law, enjoy refreshments and enter into a sweepstakes for gift certificates to local department stores or for a baby sling (a device that helps moms carry their babies). Events are scheduled for:

- Jonesville: Wednesday, August 5th, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., G. Carl Fast Memorial Park;
- Coldwater: Thursday, August 6th, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Parkhurst Park;
- Three Rivers: Thursday, August 13th, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Three Rivers Farmers' Market

The WIC Program is a public health nutrition program for pregnant women, new mothers, breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to the age of 5 years old that is funded by the USDA. To learn if your family is eligible for WIC services, call your county health department office or visit our website at www.bhsj.org. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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