

Increasing Breastfeeding Initiation and Duration

At a staff meeting or retreat when your whole Healthy Start team is meeting together, review the breastfeeding practice brief. Then discuss these questions to consider ways in which your Healthy Start program could continue, or strengthen its current activities with participants, families, and your community action network (CAN) to help increase breastfeeding initiation and duration.

Give each team member a copy of these questions to help keep the discussion on track, and to use as a worksheet to keep a record of what the team discussed.

1. In our community, what are some of the factors that may be influencing whether participants choose to breastfeed their new babies (breastfeeding initiation)?

Factors that make it harder/less likely to begin breastfeeding (barriers)

Factors that make it easier/more likely to begin breastfeeding (facilitators)

2. In our community what are some of the factors that may be influencing whether participants continue to breastfeed over the first few months or a year (breastfeeding duration)?

Factors that make it harder/less likely to continue breastfeeding (barriers)

Factors that make it easier/more likely to continue breastfeeding (facilitators)

3. What are the biggest barriers to breastfeeding initiation in our community, and for our Healthy Start participants?

4. What are the biggest barriers to breastfeeding duration in our community, and for our Healthy Start participants?

5. What are we already doing as a Healthy Start program that can address/help address any of these contributing factors? What's working well? What could work better?



Developed by JSI for the Healthy Start EPIC Center

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6. Of the following strategies and practices known to be important for increasing initiation and duration, what can we do to strengthen our practices to better support our participants to initiate and continue?

- Identifying and supporting women with significant medical issues/chronic conditions, medications, and past surgeries in the prenatal period
- Providing women, their partners, and their mothers with prenatal lactation education, including up-to-date evidence-based non-branded multicultural materials
- Providing peer support to pregnant and postpartum women through peer counselors, baby cafés, or other parenting/breastfeeding support groups
- Supporting women to find a Baby-Friendly Hospital exercising WHO/UNICEF's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding
- Securing birth doulas for women
- Advocating for women, and helping them to advocate for themselves with health care providers and at the hospital during labor, delivery, and postpartum
- Ensuring women receive immediate post-birth lactation support and making sure they are connected to postpartum home lactation care, hopefully by day 3 postpartum
- Educating parents about newborns, their feeding needs, and the realities of parenting infants
- Providing participant-centered lactation counseling and specific breastfeeding support
- Referring participants to an IBCLC or other health care provider for breastfeeding support when appropriate
- Remembering Rule #1: "Feed the baby" and supplementing when appropriate, in this order:
 1. with mother's own expressed milk, if possible
 2. pasteurized human donor milk, if possible
 3. formula
- Working with community partners to improve the system of maternity care and lactation support
- Offering or connecting women to reproductive life planning and preconception or inter-conception health services
- Identifying, supporting and referring to treatment women with mental health and substance use issues
- Identifying, supporting and referring women who are experiencing intimate partner violence
- Identifying, supporting and referring women who are experiencing postpartum depression
- Offering Healthy Start certified lactation counselors the opportunities for hands-on training and case study discussion with other breastfeeding specialists

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- 7. What have we heard from our HS participants about the quality of lactation support services at the hospital(s) serving our community?**

- 8. What other programs, organizations, or agencies in our community, or at the state level, are currently working to address breastfeeding initiation or duration?**
 - Community Action Network (CAN):
 - Community organizations, programs or agencies:
 - Statewide organizations, programs or agencies:

- 9. As we think ahead about how to strengthen elements of our Healthy Start program that support breastfeeding, what additional information would we like to have? What would we like to know more about?**