



BREASTFEEDING EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Division of Health Promotion
Maternal & Child Health Section
Title V Office
Family Health Unit

What is the purpose of the program?

The purpose of the program is to:

- Integrate breastfeeding education and support across all public health programs, policies and initiatives
- Facilitate and expand policy development and breastfeeding infrastructure

What does the program do?

Every pregnant woman receives education on why breastfeeding is important for her and for her child, including practical help for overcoming barriers to success. Assistance includes classes, counseling, telephone support and referrals; it may also include provision or loan of a breast pump. The program works with coalitions, hospitals, medical practices and employers. It provides staff training and education programs for physicians, medical residents and the community. Most districts have Peer Counselors who provide education and proactive mother-to-mother support. Additional outreach activities include community, workplace, and hospital support programs, health fairs, and media campaigns. These activities are carried out primarily by Georgia's WIC, augmented by funds from the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant.

How many people are helped by the program?

Georgia's WIC served a total of 138,245 women (including 81,895 prenatal women) and 176,256 infants in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2010. Fifty-three percent of Georgia's WIC infants initiated breastfeeding (38% for 6 months) in FFY 2010.

Why is it important to support breastfeeding?

Through numerous studies, breastfeeding has been shown to promote optimal child health and development, including prevention of obesity. It decreases maternal risks for breast and ovarian cancer, postpartum depression and other chronic conditions. Breastfed infants have fewer illnesses, which saves substantial health care dollars. There are significant savings for families who breastfeed due to the cost of infant formula, and equipment and supplies necessary to formula-feed. Exclusive breastfeeding is environmentally friendly: there is no pollution from manufacturing and shipping infant formula and no additions to landfills from cans, labels and packaging.

Who is eligible?

Pregnant and breastfeeding women who meet residence, income and nutritional-risk criteria are eligible for breastfeeding services through Georgia's WIC. In addition, all Georgians are eligible to receive breastfeeding information and support through community, workplace, and hospital outreach efforts.

Where are services located?

Statewide. To locate services by county visit http://health.state.ga.us/wic_clinics/clinic_lookup.aspx

Outcome Measures

- Increase the percentage of women who are breastfeeding at hospital discharge
- Increase the breastfeeding initiation rate among infants enrolled in Georgia's WIC
- Increase the percentage of infants in Georgia's WIC who breastfeed for at least 6 months
- Provide a platform to support an increase in the number of breastfeeding-friendly environments (community, workplace, and hospitals)

Legislative Authority: Federal Child Nutrition Act of 1966