Marshalltown Hospital Takes Steps to Becoming Friendlier to Babies and Mothers

By: Grant Gale

SUMMARY

Marshalltown’s rural community hospital has previously expressed an interest in becoming a welcoming environment for breastfeeding mothers and babies, but needed to take steps to change its policies to support that intention. The local WIC, Maternal Health, and Breastfeeding Peer Counselor programs reached out to the hospital through CPHMC (Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children). In strengthening the hospital’s partnership with the community and helping connect them to relevant programs, the coalition hopes that the hospital will be able to enact policy changes to create an optimal environment for breastfeeding mothers and babies.

How Can You Help?

As a pregnant or breastfeeding mother, you can help by letting your local hospital and medical providers know what type of resources and support you need to be successful. Speaking with local organizations, such as WIC, can help you create the type of breastfeeding environment that will lead to success and help you develop strategies to minimize challenges and eliminate barriers to breastfeeding.

"We are so excited to build on our strong partnership with the local hospital and providers of service to new mothers. Through this collaboration new mother will experience greater support when choosing to breastfeed their baby. Together we can do so much more."

- Gloria Symons
MICA Health Services Director

CHALLENGE

Early skin to skin contact between baby and mother along with breastfeeding are both helpful ways to ensure baby gets the best start available after birth. Unfortunately, rural hospitals do not always have the resources to ensure that families uniformly receive education and opportunities for breastfeeding support. Marshalltown is home to a small rural area hospital and, with larger hospitals less than an hour’s drive away, traveling out of town for deliveries has become a selected option for families. One reason families may choose to travel to a hospital from a larger city for their delivery is the available breast feeding support.
SOLUTION

Although the desire for change existed, the hospital struggled to find the staff time and resources to enact policy change. To begin this process, Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) started by reaching out and offering help to the local Labor and Delivery Nurse Manager to get the ball rolling. Shortly after the initial contact, a meeting was scheduled with the OB Nursing staff, Marshalltown Breastfeeding Peer Counselors, and coalition members. Through this meeting, the need for additional training was identified and a way to leveraging existing resources was established. As a result the hospital is making a plan to address this issue.

RESULTS

The hospital nurses were so optimistic about the first meeting with the coalition that they wanted to schedule a second meeting immediately to continue to discuss further changes to support breastfeeding mothers. The first meeting focused on addressing barriers and determining potential solutions. Since policy changes take time to implement, it was determined that setting small obtainable goals was the best way to begin the desired changes. In the meeting nursing staff established that an easy first step would be to simply increase educational material available in the rooms. A barrier that was addressed was the potential hesitation of hospital management and doctors. Fortunately CPHMC’s partnership with one of the big city hospitals—which recently received the Baby Friendly endorsement—is more than willing to help provide guidance and support to Marshalltown’s hospital.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

By developing new partnerships between, Maternal Health nurses, Breastfeeding Peer Counselors, our local WIC agency and Marshalltown’s hospital we will begin to see an increased level of collaboration of services for mothers and babies. These partnerships will lead to new education opportunities and eliminate duplicated services. In addition to these new partnerships the hospital recently trained two nurses who are Certified Lactation Counselors. Plans are underway to develop new training materials to aid parents in recognizing baby’s feeding cues, and new sources for parent educational materials—which focus on breastfeeding—are being compiled.