

Interactive Training Engages Hospital Staff to Support Breastfeeding

by: Amy Nelson

SUMMARY

Tarrant County, Texas welcomes about 28 thousand newborns each year, of whom around eight in ten are breastfed upon delivery. Although initiation rates are close to the 81.9% Healthy People 2020 goal, Tarrant County breastfeeding duration rates continue to fall short. In response, two local hospitals have partnered with Tarrant County WIC to host an exciting breastfeeding training to increase hospital staff confidence in supporting breastfeeding. Around eight hundred staff will benefit from the training in the first year.



CHALLENGE

In Texas, roughly 17% percent of infants are exclusively breastfed at age six months. Many respected health organizations, including the World Health Organization, recommend that infants be exclusively breastfed six months and that breastfeeding continue longer with complementary foods.

As a result of short breastfeeding experiences, many infants in Tarrant County, Texas are not afforded the full, potential health benefits of

breastfeeding, which can include reduced risk of overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

Early initiation of breastfeeding is pivotal in breastfeeding success, and thus the role of hospital staff in helping new mothers establish skills to support breastfeeding is essential.

Unfortunately, educational curricula covering breastfeeding management is limited and hospital staff feel ill-prepared for their important role.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Breastfeeding initiatives are going on in many settings across Texas and community support plays a vital role in their success in promoting breastfeeding. To find out more about how you can promote breastfeeding in your community, get involved with your local breastfeeding coalition. In Tarrant County, you can find out more through the Tarrant County Breastfeeding Coalition or Tarrant County WIC.

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SOLUTION

Acknowledging that hospital standards and practices impact breastfeeding success, WHO, along with UNICEF, developed the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. Implementing these steps, even gradually, has been shown to increase breastfeeding rates. To support hospital staff in changing care practices, John Peter Smith Hospital and Medical Center Arlington partnered with Tarrant County WIC to host Breastfeeding Boot Camp, adapting a training model created through a partnership in between Dallas WIC and several local hospitals. Participants move through six interactive modules where they learn how to teach skills that increase new mothers' confidence in breastfeeding.

RESULTS

Eight hundred staff from John Peter Smith Hospital and Medical Center Arlington will attend Breastfeeding Boot Camp in 2016, including all staff that are responsible for the care of new mothers and infants. To date, over one hundred staff have completed the training. Upon completion of the training experience, many participants indicate they plan to change their current practices to encourage skin-to-skin and hand-expression of breast milk, which have both been shown to increase new mothers' milk supply and breastfeeding duration. Participants also leave training with a better understanding of how their attitude and interactions with client can improve a mother's experience with breastfeeding.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Tarrant County Boot Camp organizers plan to continue Breastfeeding Boot Camp throughout 2016, with a total of twelve trainings, with the intent of reaching all JPS and MCA staff that care for mothers and infants. The training team has begun to educate new trainers to be able to accommodate future trainings and consider expanding the training opportunity to staff from other local hospitals. The training will continue to evolve to address new questions and to accommodate any changes in clinical practices related to supporting breastfeeding. It is the hope of the training team that Breastfeeding Boot Camp will help local hospitals meet training requirements to accomplish designations like Texas Ten Step or Baby Friendly.