

Improving Breastfeeding in Delaware: Creating Breastfeeding-Friendly Communities

Background

As a participant in ASTHO's 2014 – 2018 [Breastfeeding Learning Community](#), Delaware formed a multidisciplinary team with representatives from Delaware Health and Social Services' Division of Public Health, the [Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware](#), and [Nemours Children's Health System](#). Delaware's involvement in the learning community focused on improving support for breastfeeding initiation and duration by enhancing peer and professional support for women statewide. In the first three years of the learning community, Delaware's breastfeeding team trained over 700 healthcare providers in 62 practices using an evidence-based training program on breastfeeding best practices, [Educating Practices/Physicians in their Communities—Breastfeeding Education, Support, and Training](#). The program provides continuing medical education credits to obstetricians, pediatricians, and family practice providers.

Steps Taken

Enhancing Community Breastfeeding Support

To increase referrals for breastfeeding support, Delaware's breastfeeding team created a community reference and referral resource for healthcare professionals, hospitals, and community organizations. Delaware's breastfeeding team first surveyed existing community-based peer and professional support systems and resources available across the state. The team then used the survey results to create a [Guide to Breastfeeding Support Resources in Delaware](#). The guide includes a list of private practice International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs), information about hospitals and birth centers (including those with a [Baby-Friendly designation](#)), community resources, and breastfeeding websites.

To increase awareness of breastfeeding education resources, Delaware's breastfeeding team also created an internal document with a list of available provider and nursing education training opportunities, including lactation counselor and peer trainings and IBCLC certification. The Delaware team highlighted breastfeeding resources available in under-resourced areas.

Improving Hospital Practices

During the final year, 2017 – 2018, of the learning community, Delaware's breastfeeding team progressed from offering healthcare provider and nursing education to improving maternity and infant care practices. The team assisted hospitals and birth centers in their pursuit of Baby-Friendly designation through the [Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative](#) (BFHI), which is awarded to hospitals that meet exemplary standards in infant feeding. The team supported Delaware hospitals and birth centers by attending meetings to help guide the facilities to achieve Baby-Friendly designation and improve breastfeeding rates, and ultimately increased Delaware's [Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care](#) (mPINC) score from 86 in 2013 to 90 in 2015. CDC's mPINC national survey evaluates infant feeding care practices, policies, and staffing at hospitals providing maternity services, and shares feedback to encourage hospitals to improve their breastfeeding support efforts.

Additionally, Delaware's breastfeeding team provided technical assistance to birthing facilities that were accepted to participate in BFHI. Currently, four of six birthing facilities in Delaware have attained Baby-Friendly designation and a fifth facility is currently undergoing the process.

Barriers

- Delaware's breastfeeding team's most significant barrier to success is inadequate funding. This barrier creates challenges for identifying and developing effective approaches to increasing breastfeeding rates. However, the [Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware](#) continues to seek funding, including collaborating with local photographers on photography packages where the proceeds benefit their programs.
- Survey results revealed that Delaware's peer and professional support pool lacked diversity. In response, the team created a scholarship program to provide opportunities to increase racial, ethnic, and language representation among peer and professional breastfeeding supporters living or working in Delaware.

Next Steps

- Delaware's breastfeeding team will continue to assist birthing facilities that are in the process of breastfeeding quality improvement and designation as a Baby-Friendly facility.
- The team's scholarships to expand diversity within peer and professional support networks will continue through 2019. More information about the scholarship can be requested [from the Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware](#).

About ASTHO's Breastfeeding Program

ASTHO has partnered with CDC to support 18 and the District of Columbia, from 2014 – 2018, through the [State Breastfeeding Learning Community](#). This collaboration aims to create sustainable, scalable approaches to improving breastfeeding rates and addressing barriers to breastfeeding. State partners focus on three evidence-based system-level strategies:

- Improving hospital policies and practices.
- Enhancing peer and professional support.
- Assisting employers in the creation of breastfeeding-friendly worksites.

Additional Resources:

[ASTHO Webpage: State Health Agency Breastfeeding Promotion and Support](#)

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