

## **August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month**

*Communities Can Work Together to Provide Sustainable Support Systems for Breastfeeding Families*

Meigs County, Ohio – To coincide with National Breastfeeding Month, Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jim Tressel signed a proclamation recently declaring August as Ohio Breastfeeding Awareness Month.

Breastfeeding is widely accepted as an effective strategy to promote positive health outcomes for both mothers and their babies. Research has shown that breastfeeding is a key factor in reducing risk of disease for both mothers and infants, including respiratory illness, ear infections, allergies, and some cancers. A woman's early experience with breastfeeding can affect whether and how long she continues to breastfeed, and providing support at every level can help reduce barriers to breastfeeding.

This year, Ohio will adopt the World Breastfeeding Week (August 1-7) theme "Prioritize Breastfeeding: Create Sustainable Support Systems." This theme focuses on meeting families where they are while highlighting the need to improve breastfeeding support from all areas.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life and continued breastfeeding with the addition of appropriate complementary foods for 2 years or longer. Communities and related programs play a vital role in helping parents reach these breastfeeding recommendations by providing education and support at the most crucial times in the perinatal period.

The Ohio Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program offers breastfeeding support to Ohio families by providing prenatal education as well as appointments with lactation professionals.

One of the most important ways businesses and communities can support breastfeeding is to help parents feel comfortable nursing in public. Businesses can show their support by placing a universal sign for breastfeeding support in their windows and educate their staff about the acceptance of Ohio law (Section 3781.55 of the Ohio Revised Code), which allows breastfeeding in public.

Businesses also have access to [The Ohio Workplace PLUS Toolkit](#), which can help with supporting their employees and providing a private space (other than a bathroom) to pump. This will help increase employee retention and reduce medical costs.

Child care centers have access to training materials and can learn more about obtaining a breastfeeding friendly designation. These programs play an important role in supporting

breastfeeding mothers and their infants by welcoming breastfeeding mothers and making sure staff members are trained to handle breast milk and follow mothers' feeding plans.

Hospitals also can join the [Ohio First Steps for Healthy Babies](#) initiative as an indication that they are dedicated to supporting new mothers who choose to breastfeed.

Learn more about all these initiatives and resources at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Breastfeeding>. For more information about breastfeeding, Ohioans can call the Meigs County Health Department WIC Program at 740-992-0392, or the Ohio Statewide Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-888-588-3423.

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