

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Baby-Friendly Initiative Designation**

#### **What is the Baby-Friendly Initiative?**

The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is a globally-recognized, evidence-based quality improvement program lead by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). It is an integrated approach for hospitals and community health services that uses 10 steps (based on the best evidence) to support the best health for all mothers and babies.

The BFI focuses on protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding as a way to strengthen health services and support safe motherhood, child survival and primary health care. It aims to ensure that all mothers and their infants receive the highest quality of family-centered care leading up to and following birth, both in the facility and in the community.

#### **What is the process to achieve the Baby-Friendly designation in Canada?**

To become designated is a multi-level and continuous process. To receive the first 'level' leading to the BFI designation, a facility needs the Certificate of Participation. To get this certificate, the facility has to:

- complete a self-appraisal using the Baby-Friendly Initiative Indicators;
- developed an action plan to ensure that the Indicators and the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes will be implemented;
- review breastfeeding initiation and duration rates; and
- establish a multidisciplinary breastfeeding committee.

Over time, these facilities must then implement and follow a series of Ten Steps that reflect best practices. Some of these steps include developing an infant feeding policy, creating a multidisciplinary committee, data collection, training direct and indirect care providers, and adopting maternity-newborn standards of care including skin to skin care and rooming-in.

The facility must then work with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada to arrange a review of documents (policies, procedures and resources), a 1-2 day pre-assessment site visit and a 3-day external assessment site visit. The process of becoming a Baby-Friendly facility can often be a catalyst for changing a facility's environment around infant feeding and it motivates facilities to transform their practices.

## **How long does it take to achieve the Baby-Friendly Designation?**

Becoming officially accredited as a Baby-Friendly facility involves a specific set of steps. It usually it takes 3 to 5 years for a smaller facility to officially be accredited as a BFI facility, but it can take more than 10 years for a large hospital.

## **How do facilities maintain their Baby-Friendly designation?**

A BFI Designation is valid for five years from the time of the external assessment. In order to maintain designation, the following requirements must be met:

- Facilities are required to continue self-monitoring reports.
- Breastfeeding statistics are to be reported annually to DHSS.
- A BFI Interim Report is submitted to BCC and DHSS every two years.
- The facility's infant feeding policy must be reviewed every two years.
- Re-assessment is conducted every five years.

## **How Many facilities in Canada are designated as Baby-Friendly?**

As of October 2018, there are 21 hospitals, 8 birthing centers, and 117 community centers designated as Baby-Friendly facilities in Canada.

## **How Many Facilities in the NWT are designated as Baby-Friendly or working towards the designation?**

Inuvik Regional Hospital is the first hospital amongst Canada's territories to be Baby-Friendly designated according to the International guidelines.

Four other health facilities in the Northwest Territories are currently working towards becoming BFI Accredited facilities; including Hay River Regional Health Centre, Stanton Territorial Hospital, Yellowknife Public Health, and Fort Smith Health Center.

## **How do families benefit from the Baby-Friendly Initiative?**

Being Baby-Friendly designated means that families, mothers and babies receive consistent and skilled help with breastfeeding. It confirms that staff provide families with unbiased evidence-based information and support so the families can make the best decision on how they will feed their baby within their unique context. It also ensures that families, mothers and babies receive best care and support

leading up to, during, and after birth according to international best practices for family-centered maternity and newborn care.

This includes ensuring babies receive skin to skin contact on their mother immediately after birth, and having babies remain with their parent after birth rather than being placed in a nursery to allow mothers and their babies to bond. Mothers are supported to build secure attachments with their child and are taught to understand responsive parenting and infant feeding cues. Mothers are also provided prenatal breastfeeding education, and families are educated on safe preparation/storage and feeding of infant formula.

After their birth experience, mothers are debriefed by their nurse and physician, and the program collaborates closely with Public Health and other community programs to ensure a seamless transition for mothers and families.

### **What are the health benefits associated with breastfeeding?**

A number of health benefits that are associated with breastfeeding. Babies experience a reduced risk of the child getting gastrointestinal and respiratory tract infections, ear infections, dental malocclusions, cavities, obesity, and type II diabetes. In the mother, breastfeeding leads to a reduced risk of post-partum hemorrhage, ovarian and breast cancer, and type II diabetes.

### **What are the recommendations for breastfeeding in Canada?**

The World Health Organization, Health Canada, Dietitians of Canada, and the Canadian Pediatric Society recommend breastfeeding for babies and children, exclusively for the first six months, and sustained for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding.

### **Does becoming Baby-Friendly mean all women will now be told to breastfeed?**

The underlying philosophy of the BFI is family-centered care. Each mother, child and their family are supported to find the best possible approach to infant feeding for them. The BFI aids mothers in making their own decisions, by working with them, supporting them, and providing current and factual information.

When moms are not able to or choose not to breastfeed, then instructions for the safe preparation, feeding and storage of infant formula are provided by the health care provider. In addition to feeding support, the BFI also supports practices that

promote secure attachment and responsive parenting, including skin to skin care, learning about infant feeding cues, and support for mother-infant togetherness.

### **How is the Baby-Friendly Initiative Linked to the Early Childhood Development Strategy?**

The Early Childhood Development Action Plan (2017-2020) identifies “supporting facilities to achieve and maintain their BFI designation, and continue to promote community-based breastfeeding and prenatal nutrition programs” as a key deliverable to achieve. It also stated that standards for breastfeeding and nutrition across the territory are to be based on best practices and the BFI requirements.

Inuvik Regional Hospital receiving its Baby-Friendly Designation is a significant stride towards Commitment 1 Action 3 of the ECD Action Plan that seeks to support facilities to achieve this designation.

### **Where else can I go for more information on Breastfeeding and the Baby-Friendly Initiative?**

Department of Health and Social Services: [www.breastfeedingnwt.ca](http://www.breastfeedingnwt.ca)

Breastfeeding Committee for Canada: <http://breastfeedingcanada.ca/BFI.aspx>