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**Baby-Friendly™ Initiative Questionnaire  
for Newfoundland and Labrador  
Hospitals/Health and Community Services**

**Report  
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## Introduction

Breastfeeding is the optimal method of feeding infants. It is also an important component of the reproductive process with significant implications for the health of mothers. As stated in the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*, infants should be exclusively breastfed for their first six months of life in order to achieve optimal health, growth and development, and then fed nutritional complementary foods while breastfeeding for up to two years of age (World Health Organization, 2003).

Following the World Health Organization (WHO) / United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) policymakers' meeting on "Breastfeeding in the 1990s: A Global Initiative", the Innocenti Declaration was produced and adopted to protect, promote and support Breastfeeding (Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, 2002). The Baby-Friendly™ Hospital Initiative (BFHI) was developed in response to this Declaration to address health care practices that may interfere with breastfeeding (WHO, 1998).

The BFHI protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding by implementing best practice through the *Ten Steps to Successful Breast-feeding*, developed by WHO/UNICEF in 1989 (BCC, 2002). Hospitals that meet all criteria as outlined by the WHO/UNICEF Global Hospital Assessment Criteria, will be designated Baby-Friendly™. Presently in Canada, there are three hospitals with Baby-Friendly™ designation; St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, Ontario, Brome-Missisquoi-Perkins Hospital in Cowansville, Quebec and Centre Hospitalier Saint-Eustace in Saint-Eustace, Quebec (UNICEF Canada News, 2003 and BCC, 2004).

UNICEF and WHO selected the phrase Baby-Friendly™ to reflect the significance of a Baby-Friendly™ institution being inclusive of all babies, regardless of

how they are fed (BCC, 2002). Even though the goal of Baby-Friendly™ is to increase the initiation and duration rates of breastfeeding, health care providers must provide the same standards of support and care for all mothers, whether breastfeeding or not.

The BFHI, however, has been broadened to include Community Health Services and is now generally referred as the Baby-Friendly™ Initiative (BFI). This initiative encourages and supports health care facilities and community health services to implement both *The Ten Steps* and *The Seven Point Plan*. The *Seven Point Plan* extends the principles of *The Ten Steps* to community health services, thereby enabling Baby-Friendly™ designation to a community health service.

The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC) is the national authority for the BFI, and provides information, support and assessment for all obstetrical institutions and community health services striving for best practice standards in breastfeeding (BCC, 2002). The Breastfeeding Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador, in affiliation with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, is the designated provincial body to monitor the implementation of the BFI in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### **Baby-Friendly™ Questionnaire**

In August 2003, the Ontario Breastfeeding Committee (OBC) circulated a short questionnaire to 37 Public Health Units and OBC members. The purpose of this project was to provide an update to the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada on the status of work towards the BFI in Ontario, and to support their provincial hospitals and community health services in becoming Baby-Friendly™. The Breastfeeding Coalition of

Newfoundland and Labrador, upon obtaining approval from the Ontario Breastfeeding Committee, decided to follow their initiative and adapted this questionnaire for use in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### *Survey Objectives*

From this questionnaire, the Breastfeeding Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador will:

- Update the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada on the status of work towards the BFI in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Enable the Breastfeeding Coalition and regional breastfeeding committees to provide assistance and support to hospitals and community health services in working towards Baby-Friendly™ designation.

### **Method**

Members of the Coalition reviewed the questionnaire, and modifications were made to address issues pertinent to Newfoundland and Labrador (see Appendix A). The questionnaire, along with a cover letter (see Appendix B), was sent to 24 individuals of authority in all provincial community health services and institutions providing obstetrical services. The questionnaire was completed either by the individual in authority or his/her delegate.

To improve the response rate of the survey, members of the Coalition were asked to make a reminder telephone call to those questionnaire recipients in their health region. Consent was implied by completion of the questionnaire

## Results

The response rate was 58.3%. From the questionnaire the following key areas were identified:

### *Striving for Baby-Friendly™ designation*

Fifty seven percent of respondents stated they were working towards Baby-Friendly™ designation. Of the 43 percent not striving for designation, 12.5 percent stated that they were in fact trying to become more “Baby-Friendly” and working to increase their breastfeeding rates, by using the BFI to guide policy and practice decisions. Four percent responded that they were unsure as to what the term Baby-Friendly™ designation actually meant.

Only 21 percent of respondents stated they have a person in charge of working towards Baby-Friendly™ designation, but 79 percent responded that they are working with community partners, i.e. hospitals, health and community services, breastfeeding support groups, healthy baby clubs, schools, businesses or coalitions, towards being designated Baby-Friendly™.

Forty three percent of respondents have developed Baby-Friendly™ policies, strategic plans and/or resource materials, but 25 percent of those respondents stated Baby-Friendly™ materials are used for developing policies to promote breastfeeding, but are actually a long way from achieving Baby-Friendly™ designation.

### *Challenges in becoming Baby-Friendly™*

Twenty five percent of those who responded felt that lack of resources was a major obstacle. Comments regarding lack of time in their job, nursing shortage, absence

of lactation consultant, no health educator, and lack of funds were cited. The present hospital physical environment, which prevented twenty-four hour rooming-in, was also mentioned.

Staff attitude and complacency were also cited as obstacles to becoming Baby Friendly™. As well, client attitude and the present “cultural climate” were stated as contributing to our low provincial breastfeeding rate, and simply educating all pregnant women on the benefits and management of breastfeeding is a challenge.

Complete lack of information regarding Baby-Friendly™ in an institution, was also mentioned.

*The role of the Newfoundland and Labrador Breastfeeding Coalition in assisting provincial organizations in becoming Baby-Friendly™*

Seventy one percent of the respondents indicated they would like more information about becoming Baby-Friendly™ (with *The BCC Baby-Friendly™ Initiative Resource* and *The Baby-Friendly™ Initiative in Community Health Services: A Canadian Implementation Guide (2002)* presently being the most common resources used), and felt that the Coalition could play a major role here. One suggestion was to have *The Baby-Friendly™ Initiative in Community Health Services: A Canadian Implementation Guide (2002)* available for every health care professional involved with breastfeeding.

Sixty four percent of respondents felt that visits to their organization by Coalition members, in the form of meetings or presentations, would be beneficial. As well, consultation by telephone was deemed as a possible method of assistance in 42 percent of respondents, along with video conferencing.

Thirteen percent of respondents felt that Coalition members should lobby the provincial government and advocate for Baby-Friendly™ to be the standard provincially.

### **Conclusion**

There certainly appears to be a growing interest in breastfeeding in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we are still a long way away from achieving Baby-Friendly™ designation. Many organizations are striving to increase breastfeeding initiation rates and promote a breastfeeding culture in Newfoundland and Labrador, in that organizations are using Baby-Friendly™ materials to develop breastfeeding policies. However, before Baby-Friendly™ designation can be achieved in community institutions and hospitals, it is necessary to increase protect, promote, and support breastfeeding in the general population.

Research has indicated that community initiatives are correlated with increased breastfeeding rates (Hogan, 2001). It is extremely positive, that over three quarters of the respondents are working with community partners to promote breastfeeding. A strong collaborative community effort is demonstrated through interaction with schools, businesses, support groups, hospitals, health and community services and/or healthy baby clubs, in building support for breastfeeding.

An obstacle in achieving higher breastfeeding rates in Newfoundland and Labrador and subsequently Baby-Friendly™ designation, is limitation of resources. Lack of funding to organizations inhibits the hiring of additional hospital and public health nurses, who in turn would provide additional manpower to support and educate new

breastfeeding mothers and those preparing to breastfeed. Lack of finances also prevent the hiring of those with specialized training, such as lactation consultants, who would play a major role in providing ongoing support and education to health care providers as well as parents, and to ensure information provided on breastfeeding is consistent and current.

The physical environment of an obstetrical institution is an important component in promoting and supporting breastfeeding. One of the listed *Ten Steps* to successful breastfeeding requires mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day (BCC, 2002). Hospitals with physical environments that are prohibitive to twenty-four hour rooming-in are often prevented from remedying this situation due to lack of space and inadequate financing.

Health care providers are known to influence a women's breastfeeding behavior in that their manner may be viewed as positively or negatively affecting maternal confidence and persistence in breastfeeding (Raj & Plichta, 1998). Complacency of health care providers, then, is a concern and reasons for such within some obstetrical organizations in our province require further study.

Society's values towards breastfeeding have long been recognized as influencing the initiation of breastfeeding. Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are still living in a "bottle-feeding" culture. Little or no prior exposure to breastfeeding, little support from family and friends, and the unacceptance of breastfeeding in public all influence the choice and ability of mothers to breastfeed (Scott & Mostyn, 2003). This demonstrates the importance of commitment by health care providers to educate families on the

maternal and infant benefits of breastfeeding, as well as the need for role models, and a positive portrayal of breastfeeding in the media.

#### *Future Role of the NL Breastfeeding Coalition*

It is clear many respondents feel that the NL Breastfeeding Coalition can play an important role in assisting organizations to work towards becoming Baby-Friendly™. More information should be provided to health care providers by literature dissemination, presentations, and/or teleconferencing through efforts by the Breastfeeding Coalition. It also appears to be the time for the Coalition to advocate on behalf of those striving to promote breastfeeding—for additional resources and to lobby government for establishing Baby-Friendly™ as the provincial standard. However, as the economic climate in the province is presently one of fiscal restraint, it is additionally important for the Coalition to assist health care agencies and institutions to try and devise innovative ways to improve the provincial breastfeeding rate using limited financial resources.

Many of the obstacles cited by respondents have been addressed in the Coalition's document *Breastfeeding in Newfoundland and Labrador: Moving Towards the New Millennium: A Strategic Plan (1999-2004)*. This document contains a breastfeeding plan for the province which identified key strategic areas, such as public education and promotion, professional education, resource development, and development of public policy to protect, support and promote breastfeeding. The results of this questionnaire demonstrate the importance of the Coalition encompassing this strategic plan, once again, and striving for implementation of its stated actions and achievement of objectives. This document can be accessed through <http://www.nlppp.ca/page7.html>

## References

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## Appendix A

### **Baby Friendly™ Initiative Questionnaire for Newfoundland and Labrador Hospitals/ Health and Community Services**

Name of Hospital/ Health and Community Services:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and position of the person filling out this questionnaire:

\_\_\_\_\_

Number of births at this hospital/within this region per year: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is your hospital/ health and community service working towards being designated Baby Friendly™?

Yes  No

If yes, what strategies have you found most successful in working towards this goal?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you working with community partners i.e. hospitals, health and community services, breastfeeding support groups, healthy baby clubs, schools, businesses, coalitions, or others, towards being designated Baby Friendly™?

Yes  No

Please indicate

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Is there a person in charge of your process to becoming designated "Baby Friendly"™?



9. How do you think the Breastfeeding Coalition can assist your organization in becoming Baby Friendly™?

- Providing resources
- Site visits with, for example, staff meetings or presentations
- Consultation by telephone
- Other, please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

*Return to: Baby Friendly™ Initiative Questionnaire*

*Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Perinatal Program,*

*The Janeway Children's Health & Rehabilitation Center, Health*

*Sciences Center,*

**St. John's, NL, A1B 3V6**

**Return by: February 27, 2004**

*Please feel free to share this information with your colleagues. For further information about the Breastfeeding Coalition of NL contact Lorraine Burrage, Tel: 709-777-4657, [lorraine.burrage@hccsj.nl.ca](mailto:lorraine.burrage@hccsj.nl.ca) or Lesley French, Tel: 709-637-5000 ext.5427, [lesleyfrench@hcswnf.ca](mailto:lesleyfrench@hcswnf.ca)*

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire Cover Letter

Dear Colleagues,

The Breastfeeding Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador is an interdisciplinary committee with representatives from all regions in the province strongly committed to increasing the initiation and duration of breastfeeding. The Breastfeeding Coalition, in affiliation with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, is the designated provincial body to monitor the implementation of the Baby Friendly™ Initiative in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Baby Friendly™ Initiative (BFI) is a global campaign of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This campaign recognizes that implementing best practices in health and community services is crucial to the success of programs that protect, promote and support breastfeeding. In an effort to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates, the BFI encourages and supports health care facilities to implement *The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* and community health services to implement *The Seven Point Plan*. Hospital or community health services that fully meet all criteria will be designated Baby Friendly™.

The Breastfeeding Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador is following the initiative of the Ontario Breastfeeding Committee, to provide up-to-date information to the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada on the status of work towards the Baby Friendly™ Initiative. This information will enable the Breastfeeding Coalition and regional breastfeeding committees to provide assistance and support to hospitals and community health services becoming Baby Friendly™.

The Breastfeeding Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador encourages health care providers who are involved in maternity services and community health, to participate in this effort. The Coalition would like your help in completing the attached survey. A regional Coalition representative will be contacting you towards the end of January or early February, to assist with any questions or concerns you may have.

The Coalition will hold all survey information in confidence, and will release information only in aggregate form. If you have any questions or concerns about the Breastfeeding Coalition or the survey, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Burrage and Lesley French  
Co-chairs Breastfeeding Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador