

SHIP Breastfeeding in Health Care Initiative

Final evaluation report

Prepared for Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health as part of their SHIP grant evaluation

Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health is working with maternity care providers in their service area on an initiative to implement policies and practices that encourage new mothers to breastfeed their babies. The project is part of a larger effort, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of the overall impact of this initiative, with emphasis on the most recent evaluation period (January 2011 through June 2011). It was prepared by Wilder Research. Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, using tools developed by Wilder Research.

Reach

There are a total of seven maternity care facilities in Le Sueur and Waseca counties. This includes hospitals and clinics that provide maternity care. Le Sueur-Waseca Public Health is working with all maternity care locations, and each facility has had a differing degree of participation in the initiative.

Name of maternity care provider	Location
Waseca Medical Center and Clinic	Waseca
Minnesota Valley Health Center	Le Sueur
Montgomery Clinic	Montgomery
Queen of Peace Medical Center	New Prague
Waterville Clinic	Waterville
Le Center Clinic	Le Center
New Richland Clinic	New Richland

There are approximately 600 new births every year in Le Sueur and Waseca counties combined, which is the potential number of new mothers that can be reached through the hospital, clinic, and WIC sites in each county.

Activities

A Breastfeeding Subcommittee of the Community Leadership Team conducted numerous activities related to this intervention. Specifically, Dr. Daniel Stahl from Waseca Medical Center and Jessica Stadick from Le Sueur County Public Health/WIC program have provided valuable insight and assistance on this project. These individuals have both worked closely with the maternity care facilities to identify barriers and solutions to creating breastfeeding policies and standardizing maternity care practice.

Le Sueur-Waseca SHIP and Wilder Research conducted a survey of health care providers in the area to better understand what they are doing about breastfeeding in their practice with new mothers, as well as what types of training and/or materials may be helpful. Twenty-two health care providers completed the survey.

None of the providers surveyed indicated that their organization has a policy about breastfeeding as it pertains to how to provide care to patients who are pregnant and/or new mothers (at baseline). When asked what barriers to breastfeeding education exist for health care providers in their community, one-quarter of respondents indicated that courses are not available or are too far away, and that there is no funding for training. However, 68 percent of respondents believe it is extremely important for new mothers to breastfeed their babies, and over half of respondents are interested in learning more about how to support new mothers to breastfeed. The most popular topics of interest include community-based resources for breastfeeding support and learning about early issues. This survey identified further training needs for maternity care providers in Waseca and Le Sueur counties, and will inform next steps for the Breastfeeding Subcommittee and SHIP staff.

Dr. Daniel Stahl also spoke with several colleagues at the Waseca Medical Center to discuss challenges and solutions to supporting breastfeeding among expecting mothers. Common concerns include:

- **Health care providers noted that the timing of newborn follow-up visits could be better defined for nursing mothers.** In order to address possible differences in care, the clinic hopes to standardize nursing follow-ups with providers to ensure that mothers are breastfeeding adequately out of the hospital setting. They also hope to empower counties to offer home lactation consultations to ensure that mothers are breastfeeding adequately in the home setting.
- **Local providers are unaware of the support available in the community for breastfeeding mothers.** Waseca Medical Center hopes to create a standardized referral list that could be placed on the Mayo Health System website. They are also

interested in having local lactation specialists speak to various clinical groups as to what is offered in the community.

- **Breastfeeding education for patients (including the type of information and timing of discussions) varies between providers.** To address this issue, the clinic hopes to standardize the education of mothers during the prenatal period, as well as standardize the information on breastfeeding given to expecting mothers in their obstetrician packets.
- **Despite the presence of a clinic breastfeeding policy, patients and staff may not feel comfortable breastfeeding or being exposed to breastfeeding on clinic grounds.** Solutions to this issue include providing staff education on the legal grounds for breastfeeding, posting signage for breastfeeding rooms, providing staff education at orientation and on a regular basis on how to manage breastfeeding staff and patients, and using web-in-service for staff education.
- **Providers have differing levels of satisfaction with lactation teaching in the hospital setting.** Waseca Medical Center hopes to explore whether hospitals serving Waseca and Le Sueur counties have been exposed to the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, and the barriers that may exist to its implementation.

Other key activities that have occurred through this project include:

- Providing Le Sueur County employees with information on breastfeeding policy language to increase awareness
- Participating in monthly conference calls with the Golden Start Breastfeeding Initiative
- Planning a provider breastfeeding training (to be held soon) at both the Waseca Medical Center and the Minnesota Valley Health Center
- Conducting presentations on breastfeeding with the Rotary Club, the Exchange Club, and school community groups to approximately 250 people

Policy, systems, and environments

One of the goals of SHIP is to change policies, systems, and environments to make the healthy choice the easy choice and to ensure sustainability beyond the end of any one particular program or funding stream. In the case of the Breastfeeding in Health Care Initiative, it specifically means changing policies, systems, and environments to implement practices in maternity care that provide prenatal, birth, and postpartum support for mothers to breastfeed their infants.

The following are policy, systems, and environmental changes that have occurred through this initiative:

- A breastfeeding policy was passed in December 2010 for Le Sueur County worksite locations that outlines employer and employee responsibilities regarding lactation. It states that employees are allowed to breastfeed or express milk during work hours and will be provided a private lactation room. Supervisors will also alert pregnant and breastfeeding employees about the county's worksite lactation support program and negotiate policies and practices that will help facilitate each employee's infant feeding goals. Employees are responsible for informing employers of their needs, keeping milk expression areas clean, and properly storing expressed milk.
- SHIP staff are presently working to develop a breastfeeding policy at the Waseca Medical Center.
- SHIP staff are presently working to make a room available and provide needed supplies at the Waseca Medical Center, to support breastfeeding patients visiting the Center and new mothers employed by the Center.

Le Sueur-Waseca SHIP staff and the Breastfeeding Subcommittee of the Community Leadership Team have identified potential barriers and solutions to creating policies and practices that encourage maternity care providers to offer breastfeeding information and support. This information will help ensure that policies and practices address the needs of maternity care providers, which may ultimately ensure the sustainability of this intervention. **The work at each maternity care clinic is currently somewhat sustainable – some of the work may be sustained, but additional efforts are needed to ensure implementation.**

Longer-term impact

For the health of babies and mothers, experts recommend that women exclusively breastfeed their babies for at least six months, and continue breastfeeding through one year or longer. According to the National Immunization Survey, 80 percent of babies born in 2006 in Minnesota were breastfed, 52 percent were breastfed six months or more (15% exclusively), and 25 percent were breastfed 12 months or more. Breastfed babies are at a lower risk for many health problems, including ear and respiratory infections, diarrhea, asthma, and obesity, and mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop diabetes, breast cancer, or ovarian cancer (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website, www.womenshealth.gov). Changing the breastfeeding attitudes and practices of maternity care providers can ultimately have long-term impacts on the behaviors of those they serve.

Changing practices related to breastfeeding in health care should increase the rate of breastfeeding initiation and continuation among new mothers in Le Sueur and Waseca counties. Over the long-term, an increased percentage of Le Sueur and Waseca county residents will thus consume a healthy diet, including breast milk for infants. The expected

outcome is a decreased percentage of overweight and obese residents within the two counties, and an increased percentage of residents meeting the clinical definition for healthy weight.



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