Improving Breast/chestfeeding Rates Through Advocacy

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Introduction

- **BreastfeedLA's mission:** to improve the health and well-being of infants and families through education, outreach, and advocacy to promote and support breast/chestfeeding.
- **Executive Director**: Arissa Palmer
- **How**: By creating resources for parents, employees, employers, and anyone wanting to learn about the benefits and barriers to breastfeeding; by providing direct lactation support to breast/chestfeeding families

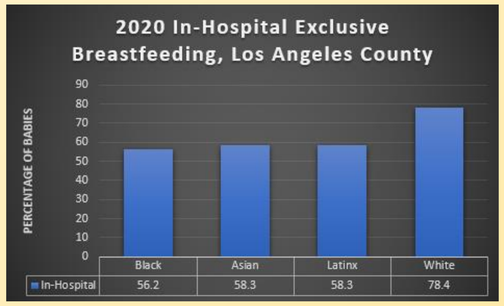
Why is Breast/chestfeeding Important?

- The benefits of breast/chestfeeding are unmatched for both baby and mother:

Baby	Mother
-reduces risk of: • Type 1 diabetes • Gastrointestinal issues (e.g. constipation) • Ear infections • Asthma • SIDS • Obesity -personalized nutrients that change with babies' development	-reduces risk of: • Type 2 diabetes • Breast and ovarian cancers • High blood pressure

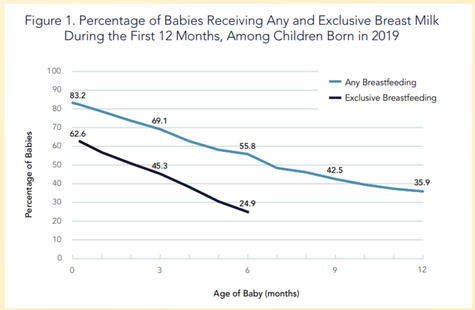
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies breast/chestfeed exclusively for 6 months and when possible, that they continue beyond 2 years with complimentary foods for as long as both, mother and baby wish.[1]

Disparities in Breast/chestfeeding Rates



Source: California In-Hospital Breastfeeding as Indicated on the Newborn Screening Test Form Statewide, 2020

Beyond In-Hospital and Beyond County Trends



Source: CDC Breastfeeding Report Card, 2022

Barriers to Breast/Chestfeeding: Laws and Policies

- Lactating parents need adequate time, space, knowledge, and support to reach their desired breast/chestfeeding goals
- Because lactating parents may work and go to school, it is important that they have what they need in those environments
- This includes laws and policies that protect and guarantee their rights in those environments

Federal Law Protecting Lactation Rights

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, (ACA), signed into law by President Obama on March 10, 2010. Amended the Fair Labor and Standards Act of 1938 requiring employers to provide reasonable breaktimes to pump breast/chestmilk and a private space that is not a restroom to pump.[2] Gaps remain:

- Approximately 9 million workers excluded including nurses, teachers, and farmworkers
- Employers cannot be held accountable (no way to enforce the law)
- The state failed to implement women's preventative services guidelines that includes health insurance coverage of antenatal, prenatal, and postpartum breastfeeding support and supplies[3]
- Even though guidelines recommend double electric pump, the Medi-Cal reimbursement has not changed in 35 years
- Some plans even require pre-authorization of breastfeeding support and supplies

Discussion

Bills need to be polished, amended, and sometimes reinvented until they serve their purpose. The legislative process allows constituents to be involved by writing letters, meeting with their representatives, attending bill hearings, sharing experiences, and essentially educating their representatives on an issue. This is exactly what we did on advocacy day.

California Breastfeeding Coalition Advocacy Day

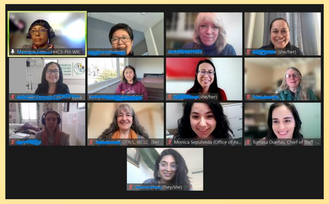
Who: Approximately 100 California constituents, parents, lactation professionals, and breast/chestfeeding advocates

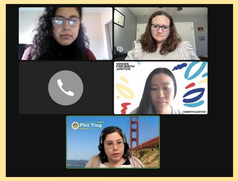
What: After 3-Day Summit on breast/chestfeeding, the participating breast/chestfeeding community was fired up to talk to policymakers so we met with 17 senators and assembly members across the state

Where: Virtual

When: January 26, 2023

Why: To voice their concerns with barriers to breast/chestfeeding, highlight policy priorities for 2023, and propose solutions as constituents, parents, lactation professionals, and breastfeeding advocates.





Breastfeeding Agenda Discussed with Representatives:

- Streamline lactation services to increase access
- Increase Medi-Cal reimbursement so that quality supplies and services can be provided
- AB228 (Wilson and Weber): stockpiling formula is not a good solution in emergency situations

Conclusion

Advocacy Day provided a platform for breast/chestfeeding advocates to unite on an issue that is important to them and together convey why and how we can continue to dismantle barriers to healthier communities. And although the issues at hand did not get resolved that day, advocacy informs future advocacy. We learned which representatives support breastfeeding and can sponsor and champion future bills, like an improved AB228**.**

More Lessons Learned

Advocacy Day taught me three valuable core public health competencies:

1. **The need for interdisciplinary approaches and a multi-level solution to achieve health equity**
2. **How to help others make connections between the social determinants of health and health disparities**
3. **The importance of looking at data and interpreting it in a meaningful way for others to make connections and informed decisions**

Acknowledgement

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References

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