

Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Self-Assessment:

Instruction Sheet

Purpose: To provide instructions for completing the “Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care” Self-Assessment, including clarification of the questions and a list of definitions of terms.

General Instructions: This self-assessment is not used to evaluate your child care program’s practices, but as a training tool to help your program improve its breastfeeding support. By answering the questions as honestly as possible, you can direct your energies toward areas that need the most improvement. As accurately as you can, answer the questions to reflect the practices currently used in your facility. If you are unsure about the answer to a particular question, seek input from appropriate staff members.

Step 1: Have a written policy that reflects the program’s commitment to promoting and supporting breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding, and share with employees and families.

- A written policy for breastfeeding support should be part of the child care facility’s policy manual.
- “Exclusive breastfeeding” refers to babies receiving only mother’s milk—no infant formula or solid food.
- Educational materials should not be provided by commercial entities. This includes, but is not limited to, manufacturers of infant formula.

Step 2: Train and evaluate all staff in the skills to support and promote optimal infant and young child feeding.

- Optimal infant feeding consists of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, with breastfeeding continuing for at least the first year of life, and the gradual introduction of appropriate complementary foods starting at six months of age.
- Training may be formal (a class or training session) or informal (on-the-job at the facility), but should cover all needed areas.

Step 3: Inform women and families about the importance of breastfeeding.

- Materials should be actively distributed to families.
- Appropriate materials should be culturally sensitive and at a reading level geared toward the families you serve.

Step 4: Provide learning and play opportunities that normalize breastfeeding for children.

- Books do not need to specifically focus on breastfeeding, but should include images of nursing animals and/or babies.

Step 5: Ensure that all breastfeeding families we serve are able to properly store and label their breast milk for child care use.

- Storage guidelines for families should be based on current regulations and recommendations.
- Note that storage guidelines for home and for the child care facility are not the same.

Step 6: Provide a breastfeeding-friendly environment.

- The comfortable place for nursing a baby does not need to be private; it may be a chair in the infant room or other appropriate location.
- Ideally, mothers should be welcome to nurse their babies anywhere in the facility.
- Posters should include photos that reflect the ethnicity of the families you serve, and will have a reading level understandable by your families.
- Posters should be prominently displayed, preferably in multiple locations.

Step 7: Support breastfeeding employees.

- Breastfeeding employees who need to pump/express milk should have access to a private location where they can pump/express their milk.
- Ideally, breastfeeding employees will be able to have their babies with them at the facility, and nurse them as needed.

Step 8: Ensure that each infant has a feeding plan that supports best feeding practices.

- “Nursing on demand” means feeding the baby when he/she is hungry, in response to his/her cues. The alternative would be feeding the baby on a schedule, following the clock.
- The recommended age for introduction of solid food is six months of age.

Step 9: Contact and coordinate with community breastfeeding support resources; actively refer mothers and families.

- The statement “community breastfeeding support resources” refers to breastfeeding support groups, lactation consultants, hospital-based programs, classes, and other resources for breastfeeding mothers.

- These resources may be staffed by health care providers or trained volunteers.

Step 10: Train all staff (teaching and non-teaching) annually on the protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding.

- Continuing education may take place at the child care facility or elsewhere, but it should go beyond the usual on-the-job training.

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