

AMCHP Issue Brief

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ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

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Issue Brief

State Opportunities and Strategies for Breastfeeding Promotion through the Affordable Care Act

The Role of AMCHP

AMCHP supports state maternal and child health (MCH) programs and provides national leadership on issues affecting women and children. We work with partners at the national, state and local levels to promote women's health; provide and promote family-centered, community-based, coordinated care for women and children; and facilitate the development of community-based systems of services for women, children and their families.

The AMCHP National Center for Health Reform Implementation provides state MCH leaders and their partners with the information, tools and resources to optimize the opportunities presented by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) for improving services, systems and health outcomes for MCH populations.

Introduction

Breastfeeding is recognized as the best source of nutrition for most infants¹ and strategies to support breastfeeding mothers and babies are some of the most effective measures to protect and promote the health of all infants. According to a report published by the Agency for Health Research and Quality, the evidence is clear that breastfeeding reduces sudden infant death syndrome, gastrointestinal infections, upper and lower respiratory diseases, childhood leukemia, asthma, ear infections, childhood obesity, and diabetes mellitus type 2 risk for children, as well as rates of hospitalization.² Mothers also benefit from breastfeeding. Research shows that women who breastfeed have a decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers.³ Additionally, a recent study estimates that as a result of less-than-recommended breastfeeding rates, the United States annually incurs \$17.4 billion in economic costs.⁴

Breastfeeding is a national priority as reflected in the Healthy People 2020 objectives. The Healthy People 2020 objectives for breastfeeding are: increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed ever, at six months, at one year, exclusively through three months, exclusively through six months as well as lactation support, worksite lactation support, reduction in formula use, increasing baby-friendly hospital births.⁵ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) annual report card indicates that in 2013, 77 percent of mothers initiate breastfeeding after the birth of a child. Yet, breastfeeding rates fell to 49 percent nationally after six months.⁶ Disparate rates among racial and ethnic groups persist with 55 percent of African American women initiating breastfeeding. However, while these rates are improving, breastfeeding rates among African American women remain lower than the rates of other racial or ethnic group in the United States, particularly among those living in the south.⁷

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