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## LOCAL BUSINESSES AND HOSPITALS TAKE STEPS TO SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING

DOH-Okaloosa Celebrates World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month



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**Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.** — The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) is observing World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month by celebrating the local businesses and hospitals that are working toward making Okaloosa County the breastfeeding-friendliest county in Florida.

“The diverse benefits of breastfeeding translate into hundreds of dollars of savings at the family level and billions of dollars at the national level through decreased hospitalizations and pediatric visits,” stated Dr. Karen A. Chapman, Director of DOH-Okaloosa. “Breastfeeding also means food security for infants. Breastfeeding significantly improves the health, development and survival of infants and children. It also contributes to improved health and well-being of mothers, both in the short and long term. This is why it is important that breastfeeding be supported in all aspects of a mother’s life.”

Local employers currently participating in the DOH-Okaloosa initiative [Healthy Okaloosa Worksites](#) are taking steps in providing support in their workplace to their breastfeeding employees. Participating employers that have made environmental and policy changes in support of breastfeeding are encouraged to apply for the Florida Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award given by the [Florida Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.](#) Local employers recognized in the past year include:

- Twin Cities Hospitals (Silver Recognition)
- Childcare Network #142 (Silver Recognition)
- Acentria Insurance (Silver Recognition)
- Northwest Florida State College – Child Development & Education Center (Silver Recognition)

In addition to the local businesses, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center (FWBMC) has also taken strides in supporting new and expecting mothers in making the choice to breastfeed. This past year, FWBMC began their journey to earn the [Florida Quest for Quality Maternity Care Award](#) through the Florida Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc. The role of the designation is to assess birth facilities’ policies and practices. FWBMC is dedicated to improving the health of babies and is taking steps toward helping mothers initiate breastfeeding within an hour of birth and implementing rooming-in, allowing mothers and infants to remain together 24-hours a day.

To celebrate National Breastfeeding Month, DOH-Okaloosa WIC staff will participate in the first annual Central Panhandle *Live, Love, Latch!* event taking place at the Landing in Fort Walton Beach, Florida on Saturday, August 27 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The event is hosted by La Leche League of the Navarre and the La Leche League of Central Panhandle.

Almost all mothers can breastfeed successfully, which includes initiating breastfeeding within the first hour of life, breastfeeding exclusively for the first 6 months, and continuing breastfeeding along with giving appropriate complimentary foods up to 2 years of age or beyond. Exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond provide high quality nutrients and adequate energy and can help prevent hunger, undernutrition and obesity.

For more information on how your worksite can participate in the DOH-Okaloosa initiative Healthy Okaloosa Worksite, please contact Chandra Williams at (850) 833-9240, extension 2161 or at [HealthyOkaloosa5210@flhealth.gov](mailto:HealthyOkaloosa5210@flhealth.gov).

### **About World Breastfeeding Week**

[World Breastfeeding Week](#) is an annual observance for the first week of August and is coordinated by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), a global network of individuals and organizations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide.

### **About National Breastfeeding Month**

[National Breastfeeding Month](#) is an annual observance declared by the United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) for the month of August.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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