

Business Case for Baby Friendly Initiative – Summary

Breastfeeding ranks as one of the most important contributors to infant health. Children who are not breastfed and women who do not breastfeed are at a higher risk for negative health outcomes.

Health Canada (2012) recommends that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months and continue to be breastfed for up to two years and beyond with the introduction of appropriate solids.

Impact of the Baby Friendly Initiative

The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) was initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1991. The objective of BFI is to improve outcomes for mothers and babies by enhancing the quality of their care and enabling them to make informed choices around infant feeding. Specifically, BFI was established to protect, support, and promote the initiation and duration of breastfeeding globally (Breastfeeding Committee of Canada, 2011).

BFI is an effective intervention that increases breastfeeding rates. A randomized control trial conducted in Belarus demonstrated a large increase in exclusive breast feeding at 3 months (44.3% v 6.4%; P<0.001) and a significantly higher prevalence of any breastfeeding at all ages up to and including 12 months (Kramer et al, 2001).

Benefits of organization breastfeeding policies

Benefits to workplaces include reduced health care insurance costs of \$331-\$472 per breastfed infant, decreased days of absenteeism as a result of decreased infant illness, decreased maternal stress, decreased employee turnover, increased job satisfaction, and increased productivity of the breastfeeding employees (Brown et al, 2001; Mills, 2009; Stewart-Glenn, 2008; Witters-Green, 2003).

Cost Impact of formula usage on the healthcare system

A recent U.S. cost analysis concluded that if 90% of families breastfed exclusively for six months, annual health care costs would be reduced by \$13 billion (Bartick & Reinhold, 2010). Furthermore, an additional report commissioned by UNICEF recently conducted an analysis of 25 systematic reviews and United Kingdom studies. This report suggests that if 45% of women exclusively breastfed for four months and if 75% of babies in neonatal units were breastfed at discharge, this would translate to savings for the health care system of over 17 million pounds (approximately \$27 million dollars Canadian) annually. These estimated savings are in relation to a reduced number of gastrointestinal disease, respiratory disease, otitis media and necrotising enterocolitis alone. Breastfeeding has been cited to have significant other health benefits in addition to the four benefits listed; therefore, it is inferred that this estimation of cost savings is conservative (Renfrew et al, 2012).

Recommended Actions

- For workplaces and the healthcare system to create supportive environments for breastfeeding by implementing policies such as outlined by the OPHA (2008) document *Creating a breastfeeding Friendly Workplace*
- For hospitals, public health units and community health centres to implement baby friendly policies and practices outlined by Breastfeeding Committee of Canada (2011) *BFI, Integrated 10 steps Practice Outcome Indicators for Hospitals and Community Health Services*.

For further information and resources supporting breastfeeding and the Baby Friendly Initiative contact the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada and/or Baby Friendly Initiative Ontario (www.bfiontario.ca).

Resources:

Best Start Resource Centre (2010). How to be a Family Friendly Workplace
http://beststart.org/resources/wrkplc_health/pdf/preg_work_16pg_FNL.pdf

OPHA Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup (2008). Creating a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace.
<http://www.opha.on.ca/resources/docs/BreastfeedingFriendlyWorkplace-Sep08.pdf>

More Resources

OPHA Position Paper: The WHO Code and the Ethical Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (2010)
http://www.opha.on.ca/our_voice/ppres/papers/2010-01_pp.pdf

OPHA Position Paper Informed Decision Making and Infant Feeding, revised 2007
http://www.opha.on.ca/our_voice/ppres/papers/2007-02_pp.pdf

OPHA Position Paper: Breastfeeding Position Paper, revised 2007
http://www.opha.on.ca/our_voice/ppres/papers/2007-03_pp.pdf

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