

LIVEWELL COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

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Supporting Breastfeeding Efforts in Summit County

LiveWell Summit County has launched a comprehensive awareness campaign and is aggressively spreading the word about the benefits of breastfeeding. People are getting the message!

Creating Ongoing Change at Many Levels

Over the last year, LiveWell Summit County has been working with the lactation counselor at St. Anthony's Summit Medical Center in Frisco, who has been an enthusiastic advocate for expanding lactation resources at the hospital. With the counselor's involvement, LiveWell Summit County has been able to help the hospital streamline and improve its lactation outreach efforts.

For instance, St. Anthony now utilizes the "Five Hospital Practices That Support Breastfeeding" guidelines, as outlined by the Colorado Department of Public Health (CDPH). The CDPH has found that when mothers experience a combination of these five hospital practices, the length of time the mother breastfeeds increases (i.e. three to 12 months)—which goes quite a way to ensuring the long-term health of the infant.

Hospital Practices that Support Breastfeeding

1. Infants are breastfed during the first hour after birth.
2. Infants stay in the same room as their mothers.
3. Infants are fed only breast milk and receive no supplementation.
4. No pacifier is used.
5. Staff gives mothers a telephone number to call for help with breastfeeding.

Many hospitals in Colorado have not yet implemented all five of these practices. St. Anthony's is ahead of the curve and incorporating the latest scientific research into its health efforts.



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However, St. Anthony's isn't stopping there. The hospital is also striving to incorporate the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI)'s "10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" into its lactation program. The BFHI is a well-respected, global program sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). While the CDPH's recommendations are an excellent starting point, the BFHI's guidelines are even more thorough and comprehensive. Ultimately, St. Anthony's hopes to be recognized by the BFHI for excellence in lactation care and receive their "Baby-Friendly Hospital" seal of approval.

Of course, achieving the "Baby-Friendly Hospital" goal will take a little time. For the right-here-and-now, LiveWell Summit County and St. Anthony's are making sure that all new mothers are fully equipped with all the information they need to confidently breastfeed their newborns.

To that end, LiveWell Summit County members, St. Anthony staff and local community members organize a bag-stuffing afternoon each year and assemble more than 400 complimentary “breastfeeding bags” that will be distributed to all the new moms in Summit County. The bags are actually reusable totes that contain a variety of useful takeaways including: a hand-knitted hat provided by the local adult daycare, a magazine with breastfeeding-related information, a colorful receiving blanket, a 2009 calendar and other fun goodies. One community member exclaimed, “These bags put the [well-known brand] formula bags to shame!”

“The Summit Prevention Alliance is wonderfully supportive of breastfeeding efforts in the hospital and the county,” explained Jill Boyle director of women’s services at St. Anthony Summit Medical Center.

With this kind of support, many mothers in Summit County begin breastfeeding with the intention of continuing as long as it’s necessary. However, many nursing mothers run into challenges when they return to the workplace. Recent changes in state law should help them transition back to work more easily.

Improving Accommodations in the Workplace

While society is much more accepting of nursing mothers in the workplace, there’s still plenty of room for improvement—especially, in the area of providing proper accommodations. The 2008 Colorado Workplace Accommodations for Nursing Mothers Act requires that employers provide reasonable time and space for mothers to express milk while at work. The law also protects women from being discriminated against for expressing milk in the workplace.

To help the community become familiar with the new law, the Summit Prevention Alliance (SPA) offered \$500 mini-grants to local businesses that were ready to make changes to their workplaces and accommodate nursing mothers as was now required.

The law became effective in August, and by December, the first on-site, lactation room opened. Three additional lactation rooms are scheduled to open this year. Several of the lactation rooms will be open not only to employees but also to clients and visitors to the worksite. At least three of the four employers who have opened lactation rooms are also making changes

to their employee handbooks and adding new policies to support and protect the rights of nursing mothers.

“We love our breastfeeding room at Early Childhood Options! The space is a physical reminder to everyone that supporting breastfeeding mothers is a community goal. The more we support families in making healthy choices, the healthier our community will be,” said Early Childhood Options manager Elizabeth Lowe about the new breastfeeding room.

Building Awareness Through the Media

Each year LiveWell Summit County runs a local media campaign to coincide with World Breastfeeding Week.

Last year, the Summit Prevention Alliance placed numerous newspaper and radio ads in both English and Spanish. Ads and stories explained the benefits of breastfeeding and raised community awareness of the 2008 Workplace Accommodations for Nursing Mothers Act. This year, SPA intends to launch an equally comprehensive communication campaign to further explain the benefits of breastfeeding.

Achieving Healthy Success

Thanks to LiveWell Summit County’s efforts, mothers can’t miss hearing that breastfeeding is important! Summit County is currently exceeding the Colorado Healthy People 2010 goal for mothers initiating breastfeeding, and the LiveWell Summit County team expects to see a continuing increase in the numbers of breastfed babies.

LiveWell Summit County

LiveWell Summit County is a program of Summit Prevention Alliance that seeks to improve community health by implementing strategies that support healthy eating and active living. For more information about LiveWell Summit County, visit www.summitpreventionalliance.org.

LiveWell Colorado

LiveWell Colorado is a statewide initiative aimed at reducing overweight and obesity rates and related chronic diseases in Colorado. LiveWell Colorado works with community initiatives such as LiveWell Summit County to promote equal opportunities for healthy eating and active living through policies, programs, and environmental changes. For more information, visit www.livewellcolorado.com.
