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HEALTH OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING FAMILIES



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Pensacola, Fla. – This August, the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) is celebrating National Breastfeeding Awareness Month. In concert with this observation, FDOH-Escambia introduces an enhancement to its Breastfeeding Program designed to encourage employers to support breastfeeding families, and to better-prepare breastfeeding mothers for their return to the workplace.

Breastfeeding promotes long-term health effects for both mother and child. According to the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics, children who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life have lower rates of respiratory infections, dermatitis, asthma, obesity, diabetes, childhood leukemia, and a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome. In addition, mothers who breastfeed have decreased risks for breast and ovarian cancer.

Women with children are the fastest-growing segment of the work force. In 2012, the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics noted that 57% of all mothers with infants were employed. A growing body of evidence suggests that rates of breastfeeding duration are higher among women who have breastfeeding support programs in the workplace. According to FDOH-Escambia's Breastfeeding Program Coordinator, Anne Sanborn, MPH, IBCLC, "When mothers return to work after their babies are born, time and space to express their milk during the work period help them continue to give their best to both their work and their baby."

To reach the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months, mothers need supportive maternity leave policies, flexible work hours, infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and private facilities for expressing and storing human milk. It takes time and practice to learn how to breastfeed, both for mother and baby, and to establish a good milk supply. Successful breastfeeding begins with support from families, health care professionals, governments, worksites, and communities. Healthcare organizations, childcare centers, retailers, and employers can adopt policies and practices that support and encourage breastfeeding as the normal and most desirable feeding method for infants.

FDOH-Escambia offers breastfeeding classes for all interested persons, including a class for Spanish-speaking clients. Breastfeeding Program staff can also provide technical assistance to local employers and organizations desiring to better-support breastfeeding families. In observance of National Breastfeeding Awareness Month, FDOH-Escambia will distribute toolkits to help support breastfeeding mothers' return to the workplace. Separate kits are available for employers and for mothers returning to work. Kits will be provided, while supplies last, to interested employers and mothers upon their request. Persons wishing to request a kit should call 850-595-6670.

For more information about breastfeeding resources, visit EscambiaHealth.com or call the FDOH-Escambia Breastfeeding Program at 850.595.6670.

Other local resources for breastfeeding information and support include area hospitals, Baptist Health Care, Sacred Heart Health System, and the La Leche League.

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