

Creating a Mother-Friendly Environment for your Faith-Based Organization



Moms, babies and entire families benefit when infants are breastfed. It not only offers a healthy start for children, but it also saves parents money. These are some of the reasons why we are working to increase the number of infants breastfed in South Carolina. Families view faith-based organizations and places of worship as trusted sources of information about their physical and spiritual well-being. The information provided in this toolkit is intended to assist your faith-based organization with promoting and supporting families' decisions to offer the natural nutrition that breast milk provides by creating a mother-friendly environment.

This toolkit was created in partnership with the following organizations to provide step-by-step guidance for faith-based organizations to develop a mother-friendly environment. The toolkit will be periodically reviewed and updated as needed. For additional information contact CHInfo@dhec.sc.gov

**SC Department of Health and Environmental Control
Bureau of Community Health and Chronic
Disease Prevention**

Eat Smart Move More South Carolina

Palmetto Health Richland Hospital

South Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition

This toolkit is part of SScale Down, a collaborative initiative that engages key stakeholders in focused actions to achieve the objectives outlined in the South Carolina Obesity Action Plan. For more information, visit scaledown.org

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Introduction

As a faith leader, your support is critical to the success of any health initiative in your organization. By encouraging the use of information in this toolkit, you can inspire your congregation to create an environment that invites members and the greater community to feel welcome and accepted in their parenting choices. This toolkit provides suggestions that faith-based organizations can use to create a mother-friendly environment for moms to feed their babies.

A mother-friendly environment is one that encompasses respect and sensitivity of members and staff, educational opportunities and a facility that supports breastfeeding.

This step-by-step guide will take you and the health advocates in your group through the simple process of becoming mother-friendly.

Thank you for being proactive in the efforts to ensure optimum health for your members and their families.

Facts About Breast Milk

- Breast milk is made for babies.
- Breast milk changes with baby's growing needs.
- Babies are not allergic to breast milk.
- Breast milk is always clean, warm and ready to use.
- Breast milk is easy for babies to digest and is made of natural ingredients that can help fight infection.



One Mother's Story

Children and Babies are Welcome

Every week, my church bulletin at Grace Presbyterian actually says, "Children and babies are welcome." It makes it much easier to go to church with your baby in the first place. Moms can hold their infants or take them and walk around the back of the room if they are fussing. You don't have to drop them off in the nursery.

The church also maintains a room for moms to use if they need to breastfeed. The room has a chair and a locking door, making it easy to step out of service, feed the baby and come back. Specifically welcoming babies in the bulletin and making a room for us to feed them makes breastfeeding a breeze on Sundays.

Vinita Leedom
Grace Presbyterian Church
Columbia



Benefits of Breastfeeding

Benefits to the Baby:

- Can protect against ear infections, diarrhea, allergies, asthma and bone loss
- Can reduce risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Can help to reduce diabetes and obesity later in life
- Helps to build stronger bones and teeth
- Promotes positive effect on brain development

Benefits to the Mother:

- Helps develop a special bond between mother and baby
- Can reduce the risk of cancer - including breast and ovarian
- Promotes weight loss and getting back to your pre-pregnancy figure

Benefits of Cost Savings to the Family:

- Saves on the cost of formula
- Insurance companies may cover breastfeeding equipment*
- Breastfeeding equipment is federally tax deductible
- Breastfeeding equipment can be purchased with a flexible spending account
- Can help the environment by creating less waste from the packaging associated with formula

**Not all insurance companies or plans provide coverage*

Creating a Mother-Friendly Environment

1. Have a discussion with your congregational leadership about how your group will support breastfeeding.
2. Choose at least two health advocates to be mother-friendly champions, who can share the responsibilities of creating or enhancing a mother-friendly environment in your place of worship.
3. Have the health advocates form a mother-friendly committee (with the organization's leadership present or with their endorsement) to discuss crafting guidelines or an official policy on supporting breastfeeding in your organization.
4. Draft, review and adopt a mother-friendly environment policy (Find a sample on page 7 of this guide).
5. Have the committee discuss the group's position on nursing in common and/or worship areas and present it to your leadership.
6. Plan a celebration to announce the new mother-friendly policy and make information on breastfeeding available to all members.
7. Present copies of the policy/guidelines to all congregational auxiliaries, especially those who have contact with visitors.
8. In common areas throughout your organization's buildings, post information about the location of the mother's lounge or designated area for nursing mothers.
9. Continue to educate members and share resources to support breastfeeding.
10. Create a breastfeeding room as space allows.

Mother-Friendly Committee Worksheet

Below are questions to guide you through discussions with your mother-friendly committee.

Question	Yes/No	Reasons	Next Steps, if necessary
Is there any place in our facility that is off limits for breastfeeding?			
Are there any areas in our facility where if a mom chooses to breastfeed, others may feel uncomfortable?			
Is there a time and location for us to provide educational opportunities for individuals and families?			
How will all members be informed of the new policy?			
When and how will ushers, greeters, nursery workers, etc. be informed of their role in promoting the breastfeeding policy/guidelines?			
How many mothers could potentially benefit from us being mother-friendly? Do we have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space • Volunteers 			
Is there a budget for the mother-friendly support program?			
Who should be a part of this mother-friendly committee?			
What do we want our breastfeeding policy/guidelines to say? Sample policy/guidelines can be edited to meet the needs of your place of worship.			
How do we introduce our policy to visitors?			

Suggestions for Putting Your Policy in Action

Adopting a policy is the first step in creating a mother-friendly environment for moms choosing to breastfeed their babies. Below are suggestions on how to educate leaders and congregational members on the breastfeeding policy.

- Announce your mother-friendly policy to your congregation and seek members' support. Suggested activities:
 - Have faith leader talk about policy during service
 - Have health ministry or mother-friendly committee do a presentation
 - Prepare an insert for the bulletin explaining the mother-friendly policy
- Identify breastfeeding mothers (past or present) in your congregation to assist and support other nursing mothers.
- Inform members and visitors of the policy/ guidelines and make educational materials on breastfeeding available. Visit www.scdhec.gov/Health/FamilyPlanning/Breastfeeding/ to find educational materials.
- Offer education and information during World Breastfeeding Awareness Week (August 1-7).
- Hang a sign or poster in a visible place indicating mothers are welcome to nurse while in your facilities. You can visit www.scdhec.gov/library/ML-025523.pdf to download a sign you can use.
- Provide a clean, comfortable, private space (excluding any restroom area) to accommodate mothers nursing their infants.
- Provide a sign or door hanger to place on door of the nursing area when the space is being used by a mother. You can visit www.scdhec.gov/library/ML-025505.pdf to download a sign you can use.

NOTE: The DHEC Educational Materials Library allows you to view, print and/or order educational materials.

Materials are free and can be shipped to S.C. addresses. (Street addresses only; no P.O. boxes). Quantities may be limited. If you have any questions concerning ordering materials, please call (803) 898-3539.

Sample Mother-Friendly Policy

Position Statement

_____ is committed to both the spiritual and the physical well-being
(Your congregation's name)
of our members. It is important for our congregation to recognize and support a family's decision to
breastfeed and offer a positive environment for mother and infant.

As people of faith, we are called to care for the health and well-being of ourselves, our neighbors and
our community. Therefore;

_____ believes it is important to have a policy to promote an
(Your congregation's name)
environment that is positive and supports nursing mothers and their infants.

_____ encourages its leaders, staff and congregation to support our
(Your congregation's name)
members and visitors nursing their infants while in our facility.

_____, its leaders, staff and members will make a reasonable effort
(Your congregation's name)
to provide a clean, comfortable, private space (excluding any restroom area) to accommodate mothers
nursing their infants.

_____ pledges to include information on the benefits of
(Your congregation's name)
breastfeeding in our health education efforts.

Signature of Faith Leader

Date

Signature of Health Ministry Coordinator

Date

Signature of Mother-Friendly Champion

Date

Suggestions for Your Mother-Friendly Space



BASIC

- Clean, private space with room divider or door - excluding restroom areas. Could be a multipurpose space.
- Chair with arms or "C" shaped pillow (normally less than \$50).
- Hand sanitizer/paper towels.
- Door hanger/signage to indicate when room is available/in use.



BETTER

- Access to sink, soap, water, and paper towels.
- Clean, private room for only breastfeeding women excluding restroom space.
- A room large enough to hold several users comfortably.
- One or more glider/rocking chair for comfortable seating.
- Audio/video connection to service or activity.
- Signage in common areas indicating location of mother-friendly space(s).

Examples of Mother-Friendly Spaces



Outreach Activity Examples

Purpose

Faith-based organizations can opt to provide a variety of information, education and resources for families during pregnancy and after the baby is born. This helps both moms and dads make informed choices about infant feeding and building support among family and friends.

Suggestions

- Post the International Breastfeeding Symbol and policy in a visible area near entrance.
- Make pregnancy and breastfeeding pamphlets, books and videos available.
- Provide mothers with names of lactation consultants and other resources in the community.
- Offer classes and/or support group on pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- Educate fathers and grandparents about breastfeeding through campaigns and educational initiatives.
- Gather information and make members aware of mother-friendly spaces at local businesses and other places.



How Do You Know if this Effort Works?

Collecting simple feedback about the value of this type of effort can help secure ongoing support for your initiative. Your committee may decide to collect information on an ongoing basis and may occasionally do one or two surveys on an as needed basis.

Listed below are simple ideas that will help you determine this effort's success.

Usage logs – a record kept in the breastfeeding room for users to record room usage and to communicate any needs that may arise.

- A simple tracking tool is a sign-in sheet.

Program participant survey – women who benefited from this effort can provide feedback regarding what they value most and offer recommendations for improving the program.

Simple ideas include:

- Suggestion box
- Send text or email while in nursing room
- Have form with pen available in room
- Have pen and paper in room

Member satisfaction survey – members can provide insight into how well this effort is being accepted and what concerns might need to be addressed.



Helpful Resources and Support

General breastfeeding information: www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding

More breastfeeding information: www.scbreastfeedingcoalition.org

WIC free breastfeeding support resources (Must meet eligibility guidelines):
www.scdhec.gov/Health/WIC/HowWICCanHelpwithBreastfeeding

How to apply for WIC: www.scdhec.gov/Health/WIC

List of DHEC public health clinics: www.scdhec.gov/Health/PublicHealthClinics

La Leche League International — Cultural issues in breastfeeding: www.lalecheleague.org

Infant feeding plan: www.scdhec.gov/library/D-1233.pdf

Culture and Breastfeeding Resources

Culture—including factors such as ethnic beliefs, family support systems and income—plays a large role when making the decision to breastfeed and achieve overall successful outcomes for better health. To better understand cultural influences in providing care and support to your congregation members, these resources can help:

African American: Loving Support — Fathers Supporting Breastfeeding:
lovingsupport.nal.usda.gov/content/fathers-supporting-breastfeeding

Hispanic: Loving Support — Magical Bond of Love:
lovingsupport.nal.usda.gov/sites/lovingsupport.nal.usda.gov/files/dadbrochure_sp_0.pdf



