

Culturally Relevant Breastfeeding Support Among Childcare Providers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



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Background

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal assistance program that reimburses childcare facilities and adult day care centers for serving meals that align with national nutrition guidelines.

Breastfeeding is associated with a myriad of benefits for families. Yet, structural inequities create barriers to breastfeeding that are **disproportionately felt by marginalized communities**. Childcare providers are key players in breastfeeding support efforts, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) recently updated guidelines to incentivize breastfeeding onsite and align with existing breastfeeding guidelines. This highlights the need to prioritize breastfeeding support efforts within childcare environments to promote the health and wellbeing of families served.

Breastfeeding Facts

> The WA breastfeeding initiation rate is 92.5%, yet only 28.9% of infants exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months¹

> Non-Hispanic Black infants experience the lowest breastfeeding initiation and exclusivity rates among any race/ethnicity²

Project Goals

- Identify **resource gaps and challenges** related to the CACFP infant meal pattern and breastfeeding support among childcare providers
- **Understand and advocate** for culturally relevant breastfeeding promotion efforts in childcare

Methods

- Conducted background research about the CACFP and breastfeeding
- Engaged in meetings with CACFP specialists from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and other partners to understand infant feeding challenges in childcare
- Created resources about the CACFP infant meal pattern and breastfeeding support
- Summarized findings from conversations with CACFP specialists and presented opportunities for future breastfeeding support efforts



Key Findings

Challenges faced by childcare providers:

- Difficulty understanding the CACFP infant meal pattern guidelines
- Documentation required to claim infants on the CACFP is extensive
- Lack of breastfeeding resources, space, and time

Future opportunities:

- **Share breastfeeding resources** between CACFP and WIC
- Continue promoting breast milk reimbursements for **infants and children of all ages**
- Work to understand the role of systemic inequities to encourage **culturally appropriate and well-informed breastfeeding support efforts**
- Further investigate how the **Washington Administrative Codes (WACs)** can be used to facilitate breastfeeding support in childcare settings

Takeaways

- Childcare providers are **crucial to breastfeeding success**, need to be well supported and recognized for their efforts
- Need **strong partnerships** between government and community stakeholders for culturally appropriate breastfeeding support
- Need **more research** to identify breastfeeding challenges and needs among marginalized groups

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1. CDC. Breastfeeding report card: 2020. Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/reportcard.htm>

2. CDC. Rates of any and exclusive breastfeeding by sociodemographics among children born in 2017 https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/nis_data/rates-any-exclusive-bf-socio-dem-2017.html