

Evaluation of Motivators and Barriers to Breastfeeding

Objectives

- Understand Kansas City's hospital/health system progress toward Baby Friendly status
- Identify characteristics and needs of the target audience
 - Low-income and underserved women/infants
- Using collected data, guide cohesive community efforts to improve breastfeeding rates across the Kansas City metro area



Methodology

The design of this evaluation was framed by the social ecological health behavior model. Significant factors affecting breastfeeding initiation, continuation, and exclusivity fall into five categories.

- Individual – influences of history, attitudes, experiences of the individual
- Interpersonal – support systems, such as family, friends, and colleagues at work
- Organizational – institutions and organizations, such as hospitals
- Community – relationships between organizations, institutions, and informal networks
- Policy – local, state, and national laws and policies

To learn more about factors that support or detract from breastfeeding at each level of the social ecological model, we planned a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data was obtained using brief questionnaires and qualitative data was gathered from semi-structured interviews. Individuals surveyed and interviewed include lactation consultants, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) representatives, pediatric residency program directors, safety net clinic representatives, new mothers, and hospital staff.

Conclusion

Numerous factors can be influential on a mother's decision of whether to breastfeed her baby or not. Motivators for mothers to breastfeed their babies include recognizing the health benefits that breastfeeding provides and having a strong support system. Barriers to breastfeeding include lack of adequate knowledge about breastfeeding both before and after delivery, lack of access to appropriate healthcare support (such as lactation consultants) and insufficient support for breastfeeding once returning to school or work. Efforts to promote and encourage breastfeeding need to focus on providing support at multiple levels.

Recommendations

- Ensure that women are provided with as much evidence-based education about breastfeeding as possible – the earlier, the better
- Involve family members (fathers in particular) in breastfeeding education
- Increase support from hospital staff and access to lactation consultants 24/7
- Increase number of hospitals making progress toward reaching Baby-Friendly status
- Enhance support in schools and in the workplace
- Extend maternity leave for family members and ensure paid coverage for maternity leave
- Increase awareness among health providers about the change in pregnancy verification for Medicaid enrollment