



Contact: Karrey Britt
Health Department
Office: (785) 856-7362
kbritt@ldchealth.org

Contact: Janice Early
Lawrence Memorial Hospital
Office: (785) 505-3132
Janice.Early@lmh.org

Contact: Melinda Toumi
La Leche League of Lawrence
Office: (785) 979-2477
melindatoumi@gmail.com

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2015

Lawrence is first to earn Community Supporting Breastfeeding designation; celebration scheduled Aug. 1 at Lawrence Public Library

Lawrence, Kan. — Lawrence is the first community in Kansas to receive the Community Supporting Breastfeeding designation from the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition. The designation recognizes communities that provide breastfeeding support across multiple sectors including businesses, employers, hospitals, child care providers and peer support.

The Breastfeeding Coalition of Douglas County, which formed during the past year, applied for the designation. Agencies involved in the coalition are the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, Lawrence Memorial Hospital, La Leche League of Lawrence, Lawrence OB-GYN Specialists, Lawrence Pediatrics, Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, and Pregnancy Care Center.

“Forming a coalition allows different organizations to work together and pool their resources to promote the benefits of breastfeeding and to support moms who choose to breastfeed,” said Traci Hoopingarner, director of the Family Birthing Center and Pediatrics at LMH. “Lawrence Memorial Hospital supports new mothers at the delivery of their baby with breastfeeding occurring within one hour of their birth. Our lactation staff then supports the new mom and baby while they are in the hospital. When the mother goes home, she needs resources to continue supporting her choice to breastfeed whether she is at home, work, or in a public place.”

One of the most highly effective preventive measures a mother can take to protect the health of her infant is to breastfeed. The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to 2 years of age or beyond. However, in Kansas, although most mothers hope to breastfeed, and 77 percent of babies start out being breastfed, only 11 percent are exclusively breastfed 6 months later.

Cary Allen, a breastfeeding peer counselor at the Health Department, said the success rate among mothers who want to breastfeed can be improved through support from their families, friends, communities, employers and policymakers. “This designation is exciting because it is an indication that we are building a culture of breastfeeding support in Lawrence.”

To receive the designation, Lawrence met the following criteria:

- **Have a local breastfeeding coalition.**
- **One or more community hospitals** participating in the High 5 for Mom & Baby program. Lawrence Memorial Hospital participates in the program.
- **At least 20 child care providers** complete the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition's "How to Support the Breastfeeding Mother and Family" course. As of June 1, 64 Douglas County providers had completed the course.
- **At least 10 businesses** receive a Breastfeeding Employee Support Award.
- **At least 25 businesses** participate in the "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" program.
- **Offer peer breastfeeding support groups.** There are three in Douglas County: La Leche League Lawrence, Breast Is Best Social at the Health Department, and the Breastfeeding and New Parent Support Group at LMH.

The Breastfeeding Coalition of Douglas County will celebrate the designation and recognize key businesses and partners during World Breastfeeding Week. The event will be 10 a.m.-noon Aug. 1 at the Lawrence Public Library, 707 Vermont St. There will be refreshments and activities.

Melinda Toumi, of La Leche League of Lawrence, said, "The designation is important because families who live in Lawrence and those considering moving to Lawrence can rest assured their employers, child care and health care providers, and local businesses are supportive of breastfeeding, which is the normal way to feed babies."