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Office of Public Affairs

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**N.C. Public Health Leaders Encourage Support for Nursing Moms  
Breastfeeding Week Observed in North Carolina August 1-7**

RALEIGH – State public health leaders say a society-wide approach to support for mothers and babies who are breastfeeding is an essential key to improving infant mortality rates and improving children's health in North Carolina.

"We know that infants who are breastfed benefit in many ways - through improved immunity to disease, reduced likelihood of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and in lower rates of childhood obesity," State Health Director Dr. Jeff Engel said. "Our goal is to create a climate where nursing mothers are supported in their choice to breastfeed their children."

With the endorsement of the North Carolina Hospital Association, the N.C. Division of Public Health has established the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation to recognize those maternity centers that have taken steps to promote, protect and support breastfeeding in their organizations.

State and local government, industry and small businesses also are encouraged to recognize breastfeeding's benefits to mothers and babies by promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding in North Carolina. Beginning in July 2010, state policy requires all government agencies to provide space, privacy and time for nursing mothers to express breast milk. At the N.C. Division of Public Health's main Raleigh campus, a room has been furnished specifically for nursing moms' use. For ideas on becoming a breastfeeding friendly workplace, visit <http://www.nutritionnc.com/breastfeeding/index.htm>

Mother-to-mother support has proven to be one of the most successful approaches to encouraging mothers to breastfeed their babies. The N.C. WIC Program offers mother-to-mother support to increase the number of mothers who begin and continue to breastfeed. The program has expanded from 23 programs in 2005 to 70 programs in 2011.

"Linking moms to other moms who can provide support and encouragement for breastfeeding really works," said State WIC Director Alice Lenihan. "We believe that this evidence-based approach to care will improve the lives of many of our most vulnerable citizens."

The theme of this year's World Breastfeeding Week, chosen by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), is "*Talk to me! Breastfeeding - A 3D Experience.*" The focus is not only the importance of the mother-baby connection (two-dimensions) but also the third dimension of support from healthcare providers, friends, family members, and the community.

For more information about the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation or the N.C. WIC Program please visit <http://www.nutritionnc.com>. Other resources specific to this year's world breastfeeding theme may be found at the WABA website, [www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org](http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org).

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