

BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the Baby Friendly Initiative?

The Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) was initiated internationally by the World Health Organization. BFI is an integrated approach for hospitals and community health services that uses 10 steps (based on the best evidence) to support the best maternal-child health for all mothers and babies. All of the provinces and territories are working towards this internationally recognized maternal-child health strategy.

BFI focuses on protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding as a way to strengthen health services and support safe motherhood, child survival and primary health care.

When did the Baby Friendly Initiative Start?

BFI started in 1991 as a Health Canada initiative to support breastfeeding. The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada helps any interested health facility (such as a hospital or health facility) work towards becoming accredited.

How Long Does it Take to be Officially Accredited?

Becoming officially accredited involves a specific set of steps. It usually it takes 3 – 5 years for a smaller facility to officially be accredited as a BFI facility, but it can take up to 10 years for a large hospital.

What is happening in the Northwest Territories with BFI?

There are currently two out of the eight Health and Social Services Authorities that are working towards becoming *BFI Accredited* facilities. The first step in this process is to become a certified site, which indicates that a facility is working towards accreditation. To signify that the work has started, the facilities apply for what is known as BFI Certificates of Participation.

The Stanton Territorial Health Authority and Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority have reached the first milestone in the process, that is, they are receiving BFI Certificates of Participation, June 3rd, at the Legislative Assembly.



Are there any North of 60 BFI Accredited Facilities in Canada?

The two health and social services authorities working on the BFI accreditation process to date are the first *north of 60*. Data from 2013 shows that there are 19 BFI designated facilities in Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan and many more in Quebec.

In 2013, the Kanestake Health Center became the first Baby Friendly designated Aboriginal Centre in Canada (and in North America). Kanestake is a small Mohawk community of 1500 located near Montreal, Quebec. The community women in particular were determined to work at empowering other women to remember the ancient traditions of breastfeeding. For more information (<http://www.kanesatakehealthcenter.ca/>)

Who benefits from the Baby Friendly Initiative?

Families, mothers, children, caregivers, maternity units, the family and the community all benefit from the BFI. Here are some examples of the benefits to these groups:

Families, mothers, children

- Families, mothers and babies will receive consistent and skilled help with breastfeeding. Staff in the accredited facility support breastfeeding.
- Mother's breastmilk, and the practice of breastfeeding, is valued, therefore no food or drink other than breastmilk is given to babies.
- Empowerment – mothers have the authority for her own resource – breastmilk.
- Healthy growth and development of babies as well as the health of the mother.
- Cost savings that are immediate and long-term. Breastfeeding is the 'best investment' a family can make.

Caregivers

- Will have increased knowledge as evidence for the Global Assessment Criteria becomes well understood.
- Increased skills – staff are committed to supporting breastfeeding.
- Increased professional competencies.
- Respect for mothers and babies and their ability to breastfeed when given support.
- Care becomes "woman-centres" rather than "task-centred" which increases cooperation and collaboration between staff.

Maternity Units

- A high standard of care is confirmed by the Baby-Friendly Assessment Team.
- The Global Hospital Assessment Criteria is recognized and respected by professionals and consumers
- There are considerable monetary savings.

Communities

- Health of the community as a whole has improved.
- Environmental considerations as there is less waste (cans, bottles, etc.).

Does Becoming Baby-Friendly Mean All Women Will now Be Told to Breastfeed?

As mentioned earlier, the Baby Friendly Initiative intends to support the best for mother and baby for optimum growth and development. Through a combination of efforts, such a normalizing breastfeeding, it is hoped that this traditional practice is preferred. Facilities need to keep data on breastfeeding, such as the number of women who do breastfeed as well as those who are unable to breastfeed. When moms are not able to breastfeed, then proper instructions for use of artificial milks are part of the BFI too.

What does a facility have to do first to get the BFI Certificate of Participation?

To get to the first 'level' leading to the BFI designation, the facility needs the Certificate of Participation. This means that the facility has done these four actions to start with:

BFI Certificates of Participation are only issued when these criteria have been met:

- ✓ a self-appraisal using the Baby Friendly Initiative Indicators
- ✓ developed an action plan to ensure that the Indicators and the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes will be implemented
- ✓ reviewed breastfeeding initiation and duration rates
- ✓ established a multidisciplinary breastfeeding committee

Who else has BFI Certificates of Participation in Canada?

Many other facilities across Canada have BFI Certificates of Participation as well, such as St. Martha's Regional Hospital and Public Health Services of the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority. They are the first in Nova Scotia to receive BFI Certificates of Participation, which recognize the effort and commitment of all the health care staff as they work towards BFI accreditation.

In Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Breastfeeding Committee and the Breastfeeding Committee of Canada (BCC) awarded the certificate. <https://thrive.novascotia.ca/success-stories/healthy-start/taking-the-first-step-in-the-baby-friendly-initiative>

How is the Baby Friendly Initiative Linked to the Early Childhood Development Strategy

The Framework identifies the need to emphasize the whole family and improve and expand our existing programs and services. The Framework builds on successful programs such as the Healthy Family Program and the Action Plan outlines areas that can be expanded or improved so babies and children have the best start in life.

Mr. Speaker, a key focus of the Action Plan is healthy development of children between the ages of 0-3 and engaging and supporting parents and families. Ages 0 to 3 are the early intervention years for healthy pregnancies, healthy babies and healthy toddlers.

The Baby Friendly Initiative is one initiative under the ECD Action Plan. The goal of the Baby Friendly Initiative is to support the best maternal-child health for all mothers and babies through this international designation. The designation signals that a health facility supports families and that mothers and babies will receive consistent and skilled help with infant feeding, as well, that staff in the accredited facility support breastfeeding

Such a breast feeding friendly environment helps parents who want to breastfeed get the help they need and continue to breastfeed as long as they choose.

What are the costs involved in becoming a Baby Friendly Accredited Facility?

Costs associated with becoming a Baby Friendly Accredited facility include fees for an assessor. Another criteria for becoming Baby Friendly also means that the facility will not accept free artificial milks (formula).

Where else can I go for more information on Breastfeeding and the Baby Friendly Initiative?

Here are some additional websites for more information:

Department of Health and Social Services www.breastfeedingnw.ca

Breastfeeding Committee for Canada <http://breastfeedingcanada.ca/BFI.aspx>

Moms, Boobs and Babies (Yellowknife Breastfeeding Support Group)