



MIBFN POSITION PAPER:

MIBFN POSITION PAPER: IN SUPPORT OF BREASTFEEDING IN THE CHILD CARE SETTING

Overview

In Michigan, there are over 77,000 working mothers with infants under one year of age and 443,000 children under the age of six potentially in need of child care (2017 State Fact Sheet, http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MI_Facts.pdf).

Based on these substantial numbers, it is critical that early care and education (ECE) programs support breastfeeding as the optimal method for feeding infants and children. ECE providers can make a difference by sharing information and supporting the needs of breastfeeding families with clear policies and accommodations. As cited in Caring for Our Children, the national health and safety performance standard for child care, “facilities should encourage, provide arrangements for, and support breastfeeding” while actively working to eliminate the barriers women face upon returning to work or school (Standard 4.3.1.1).

Policy Recommendations

In accordance with evidence-based research, ECE providers should follow World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines that recommend breastfeeding until at least two years of age with continuation of breastfeeding as long as mutually desired by mother and child. Breastfed children should be fed on cue with expressed breast milk provided by the family. Mothers should also be encouraged to visit the center during the day to breastfeed their infants or children and these same policies should also apply to staff members who are breastfeeding.

In support of breastfeeding in the child care setting, the Michigan Breastfeeding Network (MIBFN) advocates for the following:

- **All centers should adopt a clear written policy supporting breastfeeding for both families and staff.**
- **All centers should provide a clean, designated area (other than a bathroom) for staff, families, and visitors to breastfeed and/or express milk.**
- **All centers should encourage breastfeeding mothers to breastfeed or express milk on site for their children. Likewise, staff should be granted appropriate break time to express milk and/or breastfeed their children.**
- **Staff and families should receive accurate printed materials and information about breastfeeding, including a list of community resources.**
- **Staff should receive training on breastfeeding, including the health benefits, importance of exclusive breastfeeding, and supportive practices, including safe storage and handling of breast milk.**
- **Under federal law, it should be illegal for a child care provider to discriminate against a breastfeeding family and accommodations for breastfeeding should be protected by the law.**

Vision for the Future

MIBFN envisions a Michigan in which all families are encouraged to reach their breastfeeding goals and are supported along the way by every sector of society. As a champion for early-childhood development, ECE programs can create supportive breastfeeding environments for families seeking quality care for their infants and children. Implementing breastfeeding-friendly policies makes it possible for all mothers and children to receive both the short- and long-term emotional, immunological, and nutritive benefits of breastfeeding.