



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

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## **Gov. Whitmer declares August Breastfeeding Awareness Month**

LANSING, Mich. – To help broaden understanding and support of the critical role breastfeeding plays in providing a strong foundation for Michigan infants, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has declared [August 2020 as Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Michigan](#).

Gov. Whitmer joins with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Michigan Breastfeeding Network in celebrating the numerous short- and long-term maternal and infant health benefits of breastfeeding.

“Everyone, across all economic and cultural sectors, benefits from breastfeeding success, and it is imperative that collectively we do our part to support families in meeting their breastfeeding goals,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and MDHHS chief deputy for health.

The World Health Organization says breastfeeding is a public health imperative, central to achieving racial equity and a key strategy for combating the maternal and infant mortality crisis.

Policies and practices must reflect racial equity in breastfeeding as an aim to ensure all families can reach breastfeeding success. Collective advocacy can help to close these gaps and give every family an equal opportunity for optimal health and nutrition for their infants and young children, ensuring breastfeeding success for future generations as well.

According to MDHHS data, 88 percent of families initiate breastfeeding. However, systemic barriers such as unsupportive health care providers, lack of paid family leave, lack of access to supportive child care providers, and fewer lactation professionals from Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, all contribute to a steep decline in duration and exclusivity rates.

“August is such an important time for breastfeeding supporters to highlight breastfeeding successes and it is also critical we call attention to the fact that systemic oppression contributes to poor health outcomes throughout Michigan – especially for Black, Indigenous, and families of color,” said Shannon McKenney Shubert, Michigan Breastfeeding Network executive director. “We are so honored to serve alongside the many breastfeeding supporters who are working diligently to build a more breastfeeding-supportive culture.”

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The breastfeeding duration rate at three months of age for Michigan babies drops to 56.9 percent and by six months to only 23.9 percent of Michigan babies who are exclusively breastfed despite recommendations from professional health organizations for six months of exclusive breastfeeding.

To learn more about breastfeeding awareness month activities around Michigan, and to find additional local supporters and resources, visit the [Michigan Breastfeeding Network](#).

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