Public Health Department Receives Breastfeeding Award

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (PHD) has been recognized by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE) and the International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA) for excellence in lactation care. This international recognition was provided based on a high level of professionally certified staff, program availability for breastfeeding families and various activities that help protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

There is now a strong body of research that reflects health benefits for mothers and children associated with breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is normal nutrition for infants. The PHD and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program are a valuable source of breastfeeding information and support. The risk of not breastfeeding includes: more ear infections, colds and flu, asthma, allergies, obesity, diabetes, and other health related issues.

The millennial or generation y is the new face of motherhood. This generation is responsible for 76% of all births and 85% of first births. The PHD Breastfeeding Program is successful and supportive to families in many ways including:

- Services and support are provided to women during pregnancy and following the birth of a child.
- Has some of the highest breastfeeding rates in the state of California.
- Two Peer Counselors who provide ongoing support and assistance.
- “Bfed” innovative two way texting program to meet the needs of “gen y”. Ninety three percent of WIC participants own a cell phone, 79% have unlimited texting, and 55% have a smart phone with internet service.
- Twenty-one lactation educators provide basic support. Five Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) complete high risk assessments and follow-ups.
- Mothers on Medi-Cal are eligible for this specialized service at no cost.
- Lactation Consultants are located in WIC and health care center sites to facilitate easy access.
- WIC has developed a new targeted “gen y” interactive learner centered prenatal breastfeeding class where the topics are “apps” and the participants use their cell phone in the class.
- WIC participants have access to 378 electric breast pumps.
- All staff is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Meg Beard MPH, MCHES, RD, IBCLC, Breastfeeding Coordinator noted, “We are pleased to have such high caliber staff and quality services to our local community. Together we are improving maternal and child health by promoting and prioritizing breastfeeding.” She can be reached at meg.beard@sbcphd.org or (805) 681-5276.

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