

Home but not alone: Telephone Support for the First-Time Breastfeeding Mother
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Executive Summary

Breastfeeding is acknowledged worldwide to be the ideal source of infant nutrition, natural, economical and readily available. It also has the potential to improve infant health in United States. It is imperative that women receive the support, empowerment, and encouragement they need to maintain breastfeeding, achieve their goal, and provide the ideal nutrition to their babies. If the United States is to achieve the objectives in *Healthy People 2000 -2020*, that stipulate 50% of women will continue to breastfeed through six months, then clinicians must provide effective, evidence based support (CDC, 2010).

A systematic literature review confirms the positive effect of post-discharge breastfeeding support as a means to increase duration of breastfeeding. However, there is lack of uniformity and specificity regarding the definition, timing, and duration of the interventions. In the United States the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program clients are well studied, but there is a dearth of data to describe breastfeeding practices and effective breastfeeding support among low risk, non-impooverished women. This presentation describes a quality improvement project conducted in Delaware, U.S.A., in cooperation with the Bayhealth Medical Center, Kent General Hospital Lactation Program.

The objectives were to assess the effect of post-discharge telephone support on reducing the risk of early weaning; assist mothers to meet their intended breastfeeding goal; and increase the percent of mothers who meet the *Healthy People 2010 breastfeeding objectives*. A total of twenty-six, non-impooverished, non-military, low-risk, first time mothers of term infants were provided with structured, telephone support following discharge. A lactation consultant initiated telephone calls, provided support and anticipatory guidance weekly for three months, or as agreed upon with the mother, and then monthly until each mother reached her goal, or completed six months of breastfeeding, whichever came first.

At the conclusion of the program 100% of the participants met their goal. Seventy-three percent were still breastfeeding at 6 months as compared to 38% in the baseline data set. This rate well exceeds the *Healthy People 2010* target of 50% and the project demonstrates the positive effect of telephone support for this population of breastfeeding mothers. Additionally, this population consisted of a mixed rural/urban population of women residing in an area with limited public transportation. Utilization of telephonic support was an effective intervention with this population. It is hope that other birthing hospitals will duplicate this intervention to gain financial support by insurers as well as endorsement on a governmental level.