

## POLICY STATEMENT

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**SUBJECT:** Breastfeeding in Nova Scotia: Responsibilities of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection

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<i>Approval Date:</i>	September 2005	<i>Page: 1</i>
<i>Updated:</i>	June 2006	
<i>Approved by:</i>	Department of Health, Senior Leadership Team Nova Scotia Health Promotion, Executive	
<i>Effective by:</i>	October 2005	

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### I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Health and the Department of Health Promotion and Protection hold a firm and unequivocal position in favour of breastfeeding and communicates its position both within government, the health system, to health system providers as well as the general population. Such an affirmation provides a fundamental point of reference for all provincial government and health system funded practitioners and staff.

### II. DEFINITIONS

**Baby Friendly Initiative:** An international program established by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to promote, support and protect breastfeeding worldwide in hospital and in the community. Three evidence-based documents provide the foundation for the Baby Friendly Initiative: The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative; The Seven Point Plan for the Protection, Promotion & Support of Breastfeeding in Community Health Services and; The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes

**International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes:** The International Code was adopted by a resolution of the World Health Assembly (of which Canada is a member state) in 1981. The Code bans all promotion of formula and sets out requirements for labeling and information on infant feeding. Any activity that undermines breastfeeding also violates the aim and spirit of the code.

**Breastfeeding Committee for Canada:** Established in 1991 as the national authority for the Baby Friendly Initiative in Canada, with a mandate to oversee and facilitate the implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative.

**Breastfeeding Initiation and Duration:** Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of life for healthy term infants with continued breastfeeding for up to two years & beyond with the introduction of complementary foods at six months. (Health Canada 2004 - endorsed by Canadian Pediatric Society, Dietitians of Canada, College of Family Physicians of Canada)

### III. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- Provide leadership for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding
- Improve the health status of mothers and babies by increasing breastfeeding initiation & duration in Nova Scotia
- Support the implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative

### IV. POLICY APPLICATION

The policy applies to Department of Health, Department of Health Promotion & Protection, District Health Authorities, the IWK Health Centre and all health system funded providers.

### V. POLICY DIRECTIVES

- 5.1 The Department of Health and the Department of Health Promotion & Protection state its position on breastfeeding, consistent with “Healthy Babies, Healthy Families: Postpartum and Postnatal Guidelines” and the Public Health Services: Infant Feeding Position Statement. Make it known and applied at every level within the health system. To this end, the Department of Health and the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, will, in part, through the Provincial Breastfeeding and Baby-Friendly Initiative Committee:
- appoint a person to coordinate breastfeeding and the Baby-Friendly Initiative at the provincial level;
  - integrate breastfeeding into all government programs relating to child health;
  - ensure that information on breastfeeding and infant feeding is standardized and updated in provincial documents or services to which parents and professionals refer (i.e. A New Life, Breastfeeding Basics, Year One Food for Baby, After Year One Food for Children, etc.);
  - include and maintain information on breastfeeding, including the position of the Department of Health and the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, on its website;
  - ensure the development and use of standardized infant feeding assessment and care planning tools by providers throughout the health system.

- 5.2 Put in place the conditions (time, space and support) necessary to facilitate breastfeeding by employees of the Department of Health and the Department of Health Promotion and Protection and work to ensure the same across government.
- 5.3 Ensure that social policies (interdepartmental and cross-sectoral) that promote breastfeeding are maintained and improved.
- 5.4 Establish a breastfeeding social marketing strategy aimed at the general population.
- 5.5 Promote the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) through a provincial committee (Provincial Breastfeeding and BFI Committee). The following are included within the mandate of the committee:
  - I. provide leadership for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding;
  - II. support the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Initiative within Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Breastfeeding Committee of Canada (BCC), the National Authority for the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI);
  - III. make known the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and the Seven Step Plan for the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding in Community Health to health system funded organizations and agencies;
  - IV. distribute to health system funded facility and organization administrators appropriate information concerning programs aimed at protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding (e.g. BFI);
  - V. assume responsibility, in collaboration with the organizations concerned (e.g. WHO, UNICEF, the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, etc.), for the certification of baby-friendly facilities and for recommendations made to the Department of Health and the Department of Health Promotion and Protection for the granting of the designation;
  - VI. build commitment throughout the province for breastfeeding and to implement the BFI so that breastfeeding will be the cultural norm for infant feeding in Nova Scotia.
- 5.6 Encourage the application of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which implies:
  - I. Include in policy relating to ministerial publications, both written and audiovisual, the obligation to respect the Code, while emphasizing that breastfeeding is the normal method of infant feeding. Images representing bottle-feeding, baby bottles, nipples or commercial infant feeding formula (artificial milk) should not be used unless absolutely necessary;
  - II. Ensure that policies relating to government publications are respected, and using influence on other Departments to ensure that the Code is respected.

- 5.7 With the Provincial Committee and the District Health Authorities/IWK Health Centre, support the implementation of tools e.g. infant feeding/nutrition assessment & care planning tool (under development) and activities, such as, individual breastfeeding support, community capacity building e.g. peer support groups, local coalitions/networks, by DHAs and other health system funded organizations and agencies.
- 5.8 With the Provincial Committee, encourage all professional bodies to ensure that universities, community and vocational colleges offer students who will be future health professionals, adequate theoretical and practical training in the area of breastfeeding.
- 5.9 Ensure the development and implementation of a provincial breastfeeding surveillance system using standardized definitions and timelines (initiation and duration) developed and approved by the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. [Consistent with “Healthy Babies, Healthy Families” infant feeding and growth (i.e. height and weight) should be monitored at 3-7 days of age, ten to fourteen days of age and at one month.]
- 5.10 Regularly monitor progress towards achievement of the BFI in Hospitals and Community Health Services across the province.

## **VI. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Department of Health, Department of Health Promotion & Protection, District Health Authorities, the IWK Health Centre and all health system funded providers are responsible for the implementation of the policy.

## **VII. MONITORING**

Monitoring tool(s) and processes will be developed in collaboration with District Health Authorities and the IWK Health Centre.

## **VIII. REFERENCES**

Healthy Babies, Healthy Families: Postpartum & Postnatal Guidelines (2002)  
Healthy Eating Nova Scotia (2005)

## **IX. ENQUIRIES**

Enquiries about this policy should be directed to:

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