

# Supporting All Families through the Baby-Friendly Initiative



**The Baby-Friendly Council of  
Newfoundland and Labrador**

**2020-2025**

**A Directional Document**

# A Message from the Chair

HEATHER GATES

I am pleased to present to you *Supporting All Families: A Directional Document* to guide the work of the Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland and Labrador over the next five years. This work has involved a series of discussions to revisit our Vision, Mission, Values and Goals. We have learned so much from our vast history and the growing body of local infant feeding research. We also continue to learn every day from working with Newfoundland and Labrador families and through listening and considering the many voices on social media and throughout our communities.

The protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding continues to be the focus of the work of our Council. As a provincial public health priority, we know that increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration rates will have both health and economic benefits. We are also more aware than ever, of how medical care and interventions can impact the way infants are fed. All families must have access to evidence-based information in order to make informed decisions around their babies' care. Through following the World Health Organization's Baby-Friendly Initiative we can provide the best support to all families.

Our world is ever-changing and our council recognizes the importance of growth and reflection. This year has brought us both a public health and an environmental state of emergency. As a result, it is increasingly important to understand and address the links between breastfeeding, poverty reduction, food security and optimal health outcomes. I look forward to providing leadership to the Baby-Friendly Council of NL as we implement this important work.



Heather Gates  
BN, RN, IBCLC, CCHN(C)



# History

## FOUR DECADES OF WORK

The Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) is now in its fourth decade of work. The Council's history is characterized by passionate leadership and resilience.

The focus in the past has been on the establishment of **breastfeeding as a public health priority** and the **promotion of breastfeeding as the cultural norm in NL**. These specific areas of focus were essential at the time to address a global trend away from breastfeeding, a complex background of systemic issues undermining infant feeding decisions and a growing body of scientific evidence showing the protective effects of breastfeeding for mother, child and the population at large.





# Today

## EVOLVING PRIORITIES

In more recent years, as NL perinatal statistics show a rise in breastfeeding initiation rates in hospital and as breastfeeding becomes more visible in public spaces and over social media, the work of the Baby-Friendly Council of NL has shifted to focus more on **supporting the implementation of the World Health Organization’s Baby-Friendly Initiative** within the Regional Health Authorities, as well as **building capacity within communities through establishing partnerships with municipalities**. This new strategic focus reflects the importance of the continuum of care in supporting families from before birth, through pregnancy to their return to NL communities.

Though strides have been made forward in promoting breastfeeding as a cultural norm and increasing breastfeeding initiation rates, much work continues to happen to support families in making informed infant feeding decisions and meet their breastfeeding goals.





# Today

## EVOLVING PRIORITIES

In 2016, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released **The Way Forward**, a strategic plan which aims to achieve better outcomes to promote a healthy and prosperous province. A specific target within this plan is increasing the provincial breastfeeding initiation rate by seven per cent by 2025. The Baby-Friendly Initiative will help to achieve this target set out by the province.

The Baby-Friendly Initiative is a continuous, quality improvement initiative based on standards set by the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Ensuring a commitment to the Baby-Friendly Initiative not only aims to increase overall breastfeeding rates but also provides support for families who have made an informed decision to not breastfeed.

The operational budget of the Council is provided by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Council is led by a Chair, and the work is advanced through working groups involving members from the Provincial Government, Regional Health Authorities, Memorial University, and community partners such as Healthy Baby Clubs, La Leche League and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. The private sector has also been engaged in the work of the Council via a project to help local businesses become breastfeeding friendly.

The core group from the Regional Health Authorities are integral in moving forward the work of the Council. Having a united voice and consistent messages when it comes to infant and young child feeding has proved to be invaluable in the sharing of resources, building capacity and advancing work together. Working with all partners and in collaboration with the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada has created a comprehensive model that has sustained throughout many changes and challenges over the years.



# Successes

## ADVANCEMENTS OVER THE YEARS

It is important to recognize the advancements that have been made in promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding in Newfoundland and Labrador over the past four decades. The Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland and Labrador continues to provide leadership and expertise in policy, program development and research.

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE:

- Breastfeeding identified as a public health priority in NL.
- Baby-Friendly Designation of Labrador West Health Center – *first to achieve this designation in Atlantic Canada.*
- Over two decades of infant feeding research at Memorial University.
- Developed a breastfeeding resource for physicians.
- Released a breastfeeding toolkit for local businesses and community facilities.
- Developed a breastfeeding resources for the K-12 curriculum.
- Supported infant feeding information provided through the 8-1-1 Provincial Health Line.
- Adapted an infant formula resource to be used in Regional Health Authorities to meet the standards set out in the Baby-Friendly Initiative.
- Built a web presence through social media and [www.babyfriendlynl.ca](http://www.babyfriendlynl.ca).
- Supported World Breastfeeding Week since the establishment of the Council.
- Developed public education and awareness campaigns.
- Built partnerships with municipalities across Newfoundland and Labrador with the help of funding from the Provincial Government.





# Challenges

## REFLECTING AND LEARNING

Over the past few years the Baby-Friendly Council of NL has gone through many changes in its membership, as well as the chair position. 2020 has proved exceptional in presenting both an environmental and public health state of emergency (e.g. “Snowmageddon” and the COVID-19 pandemic). These events have provided an opportunity to grow as an organization and have amplified some of the systemic vulnerabilities that exist in infant and maternal health.

### CHALLENGES TO DATE:

- Inclusivity of all families. Regardless of infant feeding choice, all families in Newfoundland and Labrador need to be informed and supported when it comes to infant feeding. This is key to the Baby-Friendly Initiative.
- Meaningful involvement of Indigenous families and the diversity of people that live in NL communities.
- Knowledge translation, dissemination and application of local infant feeding research.
- Work of the council to support all Regional Health Authorities, as well as other partners.
- Budgetary processes and involvement of council membership.
- Focus and direction of provincial BFI working group.
- Organizational governance model of council.



# VISION

## THE BABY-FRIENDLY COUNCIL OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

- Newfoundland and Labrador children are breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary foods.
- Newfoundland and Labrador will be a place where all families are supported with infant feeding decisions.
- The Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland and Labrador will be recognized as the key-coordinating resource for the World Health Organization's Baby-Friendly Initiative in the province.





# MISSION

## THE BABY-FRIENDLY COUNCIL OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

- To protect, promote and support breastfeeding in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- To improve the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by providing leadership and support for the implementation of the World Health Organization's Baby-Friendly Initiative.



# VALUES

## THE BABY-FRIENDLY COUNCIL OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Evidence-Based Decision Making  
Inclusion  
Cultural Sensitivity  
Collaboration and Sharing  
Respect  
Compassion





# Priorities

- Baby-Friendly Initiative Implementation
- Baby-Friendly Communities
- Public Education and Awareness to support breastfeeding as the societal norm in Newfoundland and Labrador
- Emergency Preparedness and Infant Feeding
- Food Security and Infant Nutrition



# Actions

## GENERAL

- Promote and support provincial scope of council work (i.e. all partners).
- Strengthen coordination and communication within council.
- Establish a greater understanding of the overall purpose of the Baby-Friendly Initiative and its principles.
- Build capacity within the council.
- Seek and build meaningful partnerships within the Indigenous community.
- Develop a strategy for ongoing knowledge translation of research findings from Research Working Group to inform programs and policies.





# Actions

## BABY-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

- Revisit the role of Provincial Baby-Friendly Initiative working group.
- Support each Regional Health Authority in meeting Baby-Friendly designation goals and targets (e.g. strategies to support staff education).
- Determine process and obtain infant feeding statistics that are required to achieve Baby-Friendly designation.
- Learn from QI collaborative and apply knowledge.
- Increase awareness and understanding of ethical issues and WHO Code on marketing of breastmilk substitutes.
- Resource update and revision, including The Breastfeeding Handbook and the Physician Tool Kit.
- Support implementation of the Iowa Infant Feeding Attitude Scale (IIFAS).



# Actions

## BABY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

- Expand “Space for Everyone” initiative within communities.
- Re-develop the “Making Breastfeeding your Business” toolkit.
- Support accessibility to breast-pumps.
- Strengthen link with Healthy Baby-Clubs/Family Resource Centers.
- Strengthen link with the Midwifery profession.
- Strengthen connection with Public Health Sector/Community Health.





# Actions

## PUBLIC EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS

- Continue to promote and support breastfeeding as a cultural norm in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Establish breastfeeding as a key component of food security in NL and other emergency preparedness initiatives.
- Develop social media strategy (increase presence on various platforms, posting schedule, etc.)
- Continue to partner with education system to provide input into the integration of breastfeeding in the K-12 curriculum.
- Identify strengths/partnerships of social media efforts and build upon them.



# Key Milestones

**1979** Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Perinatal Program (now known as the Perinatal Program Newfoundland and Labrador) funded by the Department of Health and Community Services and housed in Eastern Health.

**1991** The Canadian Expert Working Group on Breastfeeding was established. This evolved into the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada.

**1990s** Regional breastfeeding committees established.

**1992** Provincial Breastfeeding Coalition of NL established.

**1994** Provincial infant feeding study conducted through Memorial University.

**1996** *Go with the Flow* breastfeeding video released in Healthy Baby Clubs.

**2006** Breastfeeding and BFI identified as a priority action within the Provincial Wellness Plan, Poverty Reduction Strategy and Education and Support Standards for Pregnancy, Birth and Early Parenting. ARNNL, NLMA, NLSWA, PANL, DNL, AMNL, NLPHA and LLLC advocates to provincial government to make breastfeeding a public health priority.

**2007** Labrador-Grenfell Health Region adopts Organizational Breastfeeding Policy (first in the province).

**2008** Provincial Government establishes breastfeeding consultant position (part-time). Funding for social marketing campaign, posters (*'You'll See Plenty of Strange Things ...Breastfeeding Isn't One of Them'*) and website ([www.babyfriendlynl.ca](http://www.babyfriendlynl.ca)). Working groups of Council formed including: BFI, research and public education and awareness.

**2009** Provincial Government provides annualized budget to Baby-Friendly Council of NL.

Breastfeeding Research Symposium.



# Key Milestones

**2010** Provincial roll-out of 20 hour 'Making-a-Difference' breastfeeding course for health professionals.

CIHR Café Scientific St. John's.

Second Breastfeeding Research Symposium.

**2011** NLPHA adapted the OPHA position paper on informed decision making and infant feeding to reflect the NL health system environment – NLPHA Position Statement Informed Decision Making and Infant and Young Child Feeding.

Province wide infant feeding study initiated (FiNaL study).

**2012** Breastfeeding Coalition of NL changes name to 'Baby-Friendly Council of NL'.

Organizational governance workshop.

CIHR Café Scientific Corner Brook.

**2013** CIHR Café Scientific Gander.

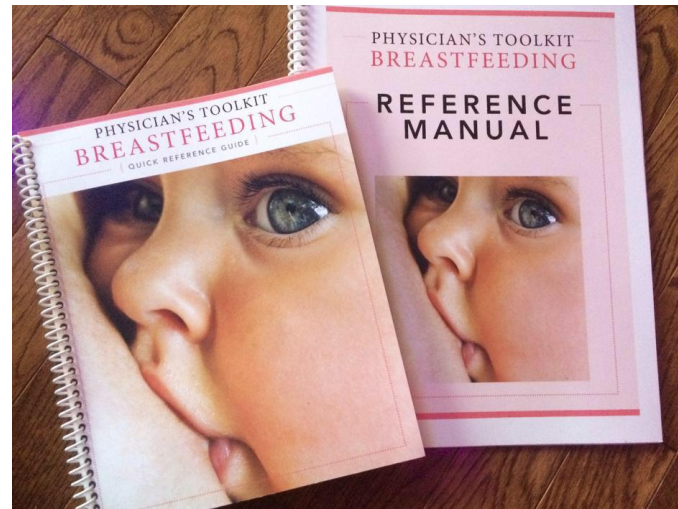
**2014** CIHR Café Scientific Happy Valley Goose Bay.

**2015** Make Breastfeeding Your Business toolkit was developed and implemented within local businesses and organizations.

**2016** Government of NL identifies breastfeeding as provincial priority in The Way Forward.

Physician toolkit developed and released.

Enhancing Communication for Online Breastfeeding Support session with La Leche League Canada and administrators from the online peer-to-peer breastfeeding support community (Breastfeeding Support NL).



# Key Milestones

**2017** Perinatal Program NL establishes part-time position for Baby-Friendly Council of NL Chair.

In-person council meeting held in St. John's to determine priorities.

Members of Baby-Friendly Council of NL present at the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada National BFI Symposium in New Brunswick.

Screenings of the Naomi Weis film MILK throughout Newfoundland and Labrador communities to discuss infant feeding decisions.

Release of YouTube educational videos *If Babies Could Talk: What They'd Want You to Know about Breastfeeding* and *Breastfeeding at Home*.

**2018** Adaptation of resource "Infant Formula: What you need to know" from Best Start.

Labrador West Health Centre (Labrador-Grenfell Health) awarded Baby-Friendly Designation.

Members of the Baby-Friendly Council of NL presented at the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada annual meeting.

The Baby-Friendly Council of NL, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Regional Health Authorities held a research and clinical symposium *Current Controversies in Infant Feeding Research and Clinical Symposium* followed by a clinical day to help build capacity in solving common breastfeeding issues. A Public Forum was also held.

Provincial funding received to support municipalities becoming breastfeeding-friendly in addition to operational budget of Baby-Friendly Council of NL.



# Key Milestones

2019 Baby-Friendly Council of NL chair position becomes permanent full-time.

Two birthing facilities in NL accepted into the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada Quality Improvement Collaborative.

Members of Baby-Friendly Council present at Breastfeeding Committee for Canada's BFI Symposium in NWT.

Participation in Municipalities NL 69th Annual Trade Show and World Café in St. John's NL, highlighting Space for Everyone: Communities Supporting Breastfeeding 2020.

Establishment of the *Janet Murphy Goodridge Legacy Award in Maternal and Child Health* at Memorial University.

Provincial Funding received to enhance and expand "*Space for Everyone: Communities Supporting Breastfeeding*".

Provincial Funding to support IIFAS.



**Baby-Friendly**  
**Newfoundland & Labrador**