

BREASTFEEDING, CHESTFEEDING, AND LACTATION FRIENDLY ERIE COUNTY

The goal of Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County is to create more equitable systems of support and protection for breastfeeding and chestfeeding in Erie County, particularly among marginalized and underserved populations and communities. This initiative is a partnership with Catholic Charities WIC and the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County and is funded through the NYS Department of Health's Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, Lactation Friendly New York (BFFNY) grant. The initiative recruits and establishes New York State designated Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Worksites across Erie County, providing support for employees to express in the workplace. Grant funds can be used to help a worksite acquire necessary lactation room item(s) that the employer would be unable to acquire due to lack of funds, such as a mini-refrigerator, door lock, table, chair, or room dividers. The initiative also provides community education around breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation, prioritizing marginalized and underserved populations and communities. Erie County cities and towns that are explicitly covered by the BFFNY grant are Buffalo, Lackawanna, Tonawanda, Brant, Cheektowaga, Collins, and Concord.



According to the Erie County Community Health Assessment (CHA) 2022-24 [9], disparities in breastfeeding and chestfeeding exist by race, income, and place of residence. Rates of exclusive breastfeeding and chestfeeding were lower among non-Hispanic Black families and Hispanic families than among families of other races. Exclusive breastfeeding and chestfeeding rates were also lower among low-income families. The lowest percentages of exclusive breastfeeding occur in more rural and more highly urban areas of Erie County. Barriers to breastfeeding and chestfeeding for parents who were unable to for as long as they wanted or at all included access to education, professional support, peer support, workplace support, and free or low-cost supplies.

Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County relates to the following functions of the ECOHE as defined by the Erie County Health Equity Act of 2021: understand and connect factors

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BREASTFEEDING, CHESTFEEDING, AND LACTATION FRIENDLY ERIE COUNTY

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that contribute to health outcomes, make recommendations for improving delivery and access to health services, and promote public awareness and coordinate educational opportunities with the goal of supporting healthy lifestyles among disadvantaged and marginalized people.

The ECOHE's 2023 goal was to designate 10 worksites. In 2023, nine were designated: Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) - Buffalo, Native American Community Services - Erie, Buffalo Museum of Science, Care Management Coalition, Say Yes Buffalo, Bright Path Kids - Lancaster, Bright Path Kids - Crosspoint, Bright Path Kids - Corporate Office, and 43 North. Additionally, in 2023, the ECOHE, the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, and Catholic Charities WIC co-coordinated a panel discussion on breastfeeding, chestfeeding, and lactation that featured Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera as the guest speaker and panelists from the local office of the NYS Department of Labor, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries, the Buffalo Women's Caucus, and Catholic Charities WIC. Local businesses and organizations were invited to attend so that they could learn about the Amended NYS Labor Law Section 206-c, ECDOH's worksite designation process, the benefits of having lactation spaces for employees, and how to set up a worksite lactation program. The ECOHE also implemented a series of community engagement activities in August 2023 for Breastfeeding Awareness Week and World Breastfeeding Awareness Month.

Next steps for Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Friendly Erie County are to continue to prioritize site designation for workplaces that recruit employees from marginalized groups, as well as to concentrate efforts in Brant, Collins, Cheektowaga, Tonawanda and Lackawanna, the priority municipalities that do not currently have any designated worksites. Additionally, the ECOHE will work to create a lactation policy template that employers can utilize or customize for their worksites to mitigate this potential barrier to designation.



Example of Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding Awareness Social Media Posts



2023 Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, and Lactation Panel Discussion