

LISTENING TO NEW HAVEN ABOUT BREASTFEEDING

Promoting Equity in Breastfeeding through Community Partnership

The Challenge

Despite similar intent, Black and Latina women breastfeed at lower rates than white women (1,2). Breastfed babies are at lower risks for infections and childhood obesity, while mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop breast cancer and type 2 diabetes (3). In New Haven, Connecticut, where 30% of residents identify as Black or African American, and 30% identify as Hispanic or Latinx (4), it is important to work with the community to support local parents in meeting their breastfeeding goals.

The Approach

In April 2020, through the CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, over 70 people from more than 20 community-based organizations came together with CARE to re-launch the New Haven Breastfeeding Task Force, which supports Black and Latinx parents who breastfeed, their families, clinicians, and community members. Guided by Task Force members, CARE held focus groups and interviews with Black mothers and fathers, as well as Latina mothers, in order to understand perceptions, challenges, and facilitators of breastfeeding. CARE also conducted a Community Readiness Assessment and presented all findings to the Task Force for next steps.

WHAT IS NEW HAVEN SAYING ABOUT BREASTFEEDING?

Findings from CARE's Focus Groups and Interviews



Shift cultural norms to promote breastfeeding



Improve knowledge and practice of breastfeeding-friendly policies in the workplace



Address racial biases and increase support for breastfeeding among healthcare providers

Conducting a Community Readiness Assessment

Members of the New Haven Breastfeeding Task Force worked with CARE to assess the "breastfeeding-friendliness" of New Haven. New Haven is in the "Preplanning" stage of community readiness, where there is awareness of the need to address breastfeeding inequities, but there are not yet any focused efforts to effect change. This is a great stage at which to take action through breastfeeding-friendly programs and policies!

You need community
in order to
advance together.
That's what is necessary.

Latina mother

Our Community Partners





























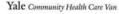












WHAT IS NEW HAVEN SAYING ABOUT BREASTFEEDING?

Turning Words into Action



Shift cultural norms to promote breastfeeding

What We Heard

- Formula feeding is viewed as the norm in the United States
- Breastfeeding needs to be more visible in the media
- Local breastfeeding resources need to be more widely shared

Working with the Task Force to Take Action

- Developed new English- and Spanish-language resource guides
 on breastfeeding support services in Greater New Haven, which
 were shared with over 75 community members
- Conducted interviews with 18 New Haven residents to inform the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) Breastfeeding: It's Worth It! campaign

Next Steps

- Collaborating with CT DPH to launch a communications campaign to support breastfeeding
- Provide storefront decals to businesses that show their support of breastfeeding "any time, any place"

66 The more information we got, the better we felt, and the more equipped we were to make our decision [to breastfeed]. 99

- Black father



Improve knowledge and practice of breastfeeding-friendly policies in the workplace

What We Heard

- Workplaces need to be breastfeeding-friendly with clear policies in place
- Some people do not know about their employer's breastfeeding policies and would like to know their rights
- Some businesses want to support breastfeeding but need more information and support

Working with the Task Force to Take Action

- Created a strategy, developed resources, and trained 11 Task Force members to encourage local businesses to become breastfeedingfriendly
 - Designed "Know Your Rights" flyers and updated "The Business Case for Breastfeeding" with the Connecticut
 Breastfeeding Coalition (CBC)
 - Built an Employer Starter Kit for becoming a Chest/Breastfeeding-Friendly Business
- Collaborated with the CBC; the New Haven Department of Transportation, Traffic and Parking; and community partners to design a lactation room in New Haven's local train station, with construction beginning in early 2023

Next Steps

- Collaborating with the CBC and other partners to create lactation rooms in more public spaces
- Assisting local businesses in receiving a
 Chest/Breastfeeding-Friendly

 Designation from the CBC, meaning that a business provides a time, space, and policy for pumping at work
- Organizing a press conference to highlight local businesses that have received the Chest/Breastfeeding-Friendly Designation

I had an office that I could just go in and pump during the day. And I think having those spaces made [breastfeeding] a lot easier for me.

- Black mother



Address racial biases and increase support for breastfeeding among healthcare providers

What We Heard

- Mothers want and need high-quality, culturally-sensitive breastfeeding education and lactation support from healthcare providers, beginning prenatally and continuing postpartum
- Mothers recommended that healthcare providers receive more information and training on breastfeeding and unconscious bias in practices

Working with the Task Force to Take Action

- Funding peer counselors with lived experience to support over 331
 Black mothers
- Funding the Mocha Milkshake Café breastfeeding support group, run by Earth's Natural Touch doulas to support over 116 breastfeeding families
- Provided feedback on a "Basics of Breastfeeding training" developed by CT DPH and Connecticut Children's Medical Center
- Created a training for healthcare providers specifically focused on the "Roots of Racial Inequities in Breastfeeding" among Black Americans, which was presented to 12 healthcare providers from 8 different offices for feedback

Next Steps

- Piloting the "Basics of Breastfeeding" and "Roots of Racial Inequities" trainings in clinical offices
- for the "Roots of Racial Inequities in Breastfeeding" training in order to reach more clinicians

66 [Recently,] I feel like there has been an intentional push to encourage African American mothers to breastfeed their children. 99

— Black mother

⁶⁶ I feel good when my doctor says, "Look, let's talk about breastfeeding because it's really important." ⁹⁹

- Latina mother

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on CARE's Breastfeeding Initiative, please visit **carenhv.org** or contact CARE's Breastfeeding Initiative Coordinator, **Tomeka Frieson**, at **tomeka.frieson@yale.edu**.

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