

# 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



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 2. Connecticut Department of Public Health. (2018). Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) Data. CT.Gov - Connecticut's Official State Website. <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Family-Health/Pregnancy-Risk-Assessment-Monitor-System/Data-to-Action>  
 3. Walters DD, Phan LTH, Mathisen R. (2019). The cost of not breastfeeding: Global results from a new tool. Health Policy and Planning, 34(6): 407-417. doi: 10.1093/heapol/czz050  
 4. United States Census Bureau (2020). P2: Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race. 2020: Decennial Census Redistricting Data (PL 94-171), New Haven city, Connecticut. United States Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=New%20Haven%20city,%20Connecticut&t=Hispanic%20or%20Latino&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P2>



# 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"

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

– 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 breastfeeding-friendly
  - 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 doula 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**
- Getting **CME accreditation** for the "Roots of Racial Inequities in Breastfeeding" training in order to reach more clinicians

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

– Black mother

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

– Latina mother

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on CARE's Breastfeeding Initiative, please visit [carenhv.org](http://carenhv.org) or contact CARE's Breastfeeding Initiative Coordinator, **Tomeka Frieson**, at [tomeka.frieson@yale.edu](mailto:tomeka.frieson@yale.edu).

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