

BC Synod of the ELCIC

GUIDELINE: Supporting the Baby Friendly Initiative

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to provide parishes and offices within the BC Synod of the ELCIC with knowledge and tools to support the Baby Friendly Initiative.

“Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.” JOEL 2:16

We are called to be inclusive, welcome the stranger and embrace all of God’s children, including breastfed babies and young children with their families.

DEFINITION

Baby Friendly Initiative: In 1991, the World Health Organization (WHO) and (UNICEF) launched the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI). This initiative is a global effort to promote, protect and support breastfeeding in response to the Innocenti Declaration (Italy, 1990). The Innocenti Declaration identified the significant threat to child health and survival that exists globally when exclusive breastfeeding is not practiced. The WHO and UNICEF outlined ten concrete steps to take to protect, promote and support breastfeeding, and the BFI is based on those ten steps (WHO, 2016). In 1998, Canada adopted the BFI and adapted the ten steps to guide the implementation.

BACKGROUND

Every infant and child has the right to good nutrition according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990). The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2005) aim to reduce child mortality in goal four. “Over 800,000 children's lives could be saved every year

among children under 5 years, if all children 0–23 months were optimally breastfed.”

(<http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs342/en/>).

Breastfeeding is the optimal method for infant feeding. There is strong evidence to support the health benefits of breastfeeding, both short and long term, to babies and mothers. Breastfeeding promotes attachment and bonding between mother and child. In addition, breastfeeding is congruent with the ELCIC Stewards of Creation Initiative

(<http://elcic.ca/stewardship/stewardship-of-creation/>) because it reduces waste in the environment. There are also reduced costs to the health care system because breastfed babies and young children are healthier.

Key Facts

- Breastfeeding improves child development and reduces health costs which results in economic gains for individual families as well as at the national level.
- British Columbia's Human Rights Code affirms breastfeeding and asserts it is discriminatory to ask women to cover up or breastfeed somewhere else.
- Breastfeeding needs to be normalized and welcomed in our society to promote, protect and support mothers and their babies and young children.
- Breastfeeding improves brain development and school attendance, and is associated with higher income in adult life. (<http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs342/en/>)

The WHO (2016) recommends “exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months... Thereafter, infants should receive complementary foods with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond.”

Parishes and offices in the BC Synod can promote, protect and support the WHO breastfeeding goal for babies and young children at our worship services, events and gatherings. Posting the

universal sign for breastfeeding at our entrances; enabling babies and young children to breastfeed whenever and wherever needed; providing a private room with a comfortable chair for families who prefer privacy; and familiarizing parishioners with this guideline will assist in supporting the goal of exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and then continue up to two years and beyond after the addition of complimentary food.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The BC Synod of the ELCIC supports the following:

1. Welcome all families and support them in when, where and how they feed their babies and young children.
2. Familiarize clergy, parishioners and staff with this guideline and post it for easy access
3. Provide a comfortable environment for women to breastfeed in our places of worship and work (i.e. chair; supported to breastfeed whenever and wherever baby is hungry)
4. Provide a comfortable, private room with a chair for women who prefer privacy during breastfeeding or infant feeding.
5. Provide a room with a sink and refrigerator for clergy and/or staff who are breastfeeding and have returned to work
6. Ensure a room with a change table and sink is accessible to all families
7. Display the universal sign for welcoming breastfeeding infants and young children and their mothers

RESOURCES

All parishes and the BC Synod office will receive a package with five inserts. These will be available for download as well from the BC Synod website under the Faith and Society Committee section.

1. Baby Friendly Checklist
2. Baby Friendly Church poster
3. Human Rights in BC: Sex Discrimination and Harassment poster (top of page one, right column)
4. A to Z Benefits of Breastfeeding
5. Universal Sign for Breastfeeding Decal
6. BC Synod of the ELCIC BFI Guideline

REFERENCES

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