

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Louisiana Department of Health celebrates National Breastfeeding Month**

Baton Rouge, La. (August 22, 2023) — The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) is recognizing August as National Breastfeeding Month, a time to highlight the critical role that breastfeeding plays in shaping the health and well-being of families.

Louisiana has a strong culture of family and community support, and LDH is dedicated to empowering mothers and fostering an inclusive environment to promote breastfeeding. However, LDH also recognizes breastfeeding can be challenging.

“We know that not all women can or choose to breastfeed. But for women who do, support from their loved ones and communities is essential to breastfeeding successfully,” said LDH Deputy Secretary Tonya Joiner. “Our teams remain committed to providing information to mothers and families, and improving perinatal healthcare systems through evidence-based programming and policy change.”

LDH continues to work toward fostering a breastfeeding-friendly environment in Louisiana and improving statewide breastfeeding rates. The Office of Public Health (OPH’s) Bureau of Family Health and Bureau of Nutrition Services have laid out a vision for Louisiana to support women who breastfeed. An important component of this plan is ensuring that women know their rights, especially in the workplace. Several laws, including [the Pump Act](#) that took effect earlier this year, protect nursing moms by requiring employers to provide access to adequate break times and private spaces to pump or breastfeed. This not only promotes employee health, but also increases productivity and reduces absenteeism.

In 2023, LDH made key changes in Louisiana’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program that were aimed at increasing breastfeeding rates and increasing prenatal and infant participation in the program. These changes included:

- Expanding coverage options for outpatient lactation consultations, which provides opportunities for moms to receive expert guidance on breastfeeding
- Decreasing barriers to obtaining breast pumps through Medicaid reimbursement
- Enhancing outreach to eligible prenatal women to increase participation, including through text messages and calls
- Exceeding a goal of enrolling more than 1,700 new participants in the Pacify breastfeeding app: More than 1,875 participants are now enrolled.

Louisiana’s breastfeeding rates are below national averages, with lower rates among Black and Medicaid-insured mothers: [45% of Louisiana infants](#) are breastfed through their first 6 months of life; the national average is 55.8%.

This Breastfeeding Awareness Month, LDH is running a social media campaign

that aims to educate the public about workplace laws and standards that facilitate breastfeeding (pumping) at work.

The campaign will also promote the availability of multilingual resources available through Louisiana's WIC Program, which is part of the program's goals to expand the number of eligible families that utilize WIC.

About the Louisiana Department of Health

The Louisiana Department of Health strives to protect and promote health statewide and to ensure access to medical, preventive and rehabilitative services for all state residents. The Louisiana Department of Health includes the Office of Public Health, Office of Aging & Adult Services, Office of Behavioral Health, Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, and Healthy Louisiana (Medicaid). To learn more, visit www.ldh.la.gov or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or our [blog](#).

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