



Caddo County Health Department

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Caddo County Health Department (405-247-2507)

### **World Breastfeeding Week Focuses on Empowering Parents To Reach Breastfeeding Goals**

The Caddo County Health Department joins the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) in promoting World Breastfeeding Week, Aug.1-7, with the theme “Empower Parents, Enable Breastfeeding.” The theme focuses on supporting both parents to be empowered in order to facilitate reaching their breastfeeding goals.

Empowerment is a process that requires evidence-based, unbiased information and support to create the enabling environment where mothers can breastfeed optimally. Breastfeeding is in the mother’s domain and when fathers, partners, families, workplaces, and communities support her, breastfeeding improves.

According to the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) data from 2017, 85.5% of Oklahoma mothers began breastfeeding their babies after birth. While most new mothers start out breastfeeding, many do not exclusively breastfeed for six months, or continue for up to 1 year of age or beyond as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

“We want to help build a brighter future for all Oklahomans so we are encouraging all new mothers to breastfeed their babies for as long as possible,” said Regional Director Brandie Combs. “We can all support this process as breastfeeding is a team effort. To enable breastfeeding, we all need to protect, promote and support it.”

Data provided in The Oklahoma Toddler Survey (TOTS) from 2015 to 2017 indicate that although the numbers are gradually improving, only 44.6% of mothers were breastfeeding at six months and 25.1% of mothers were breastfeeding at 12 months or more. The aim of the national Healthy People 2020 breastfeeding objectives is to increase the proportion of infants who are breastfed at six months to nearly 61% and at one year to 34%.

Terry Bryce is the director of the OSDH Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Service, which provides nutrition services for infants and children up to age 5.

“The WIC program plays a vital role in the promotion and support of breastfeeding,” said Bryce. “Breastfeeding peer counselors, international board certified lactation consultants and other lactation professionals help WIC elevate the capacity of breastfeeding to improve health outcomes of mothers and infants.”

For more information about breastfeeding, how to find a lactation consultant in your area, or how to become a recognized breastfeeding friendly worksite, visit the OSDH breastfeeding website <http://bis.health.ok.gov>, or call the Oklahoma Breastfeeding Hotline toll free at 1-877-271-MILK (6455). For more information about WIC, including clinic locations, call the Caddo County Health Department at 405-247-2507.

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