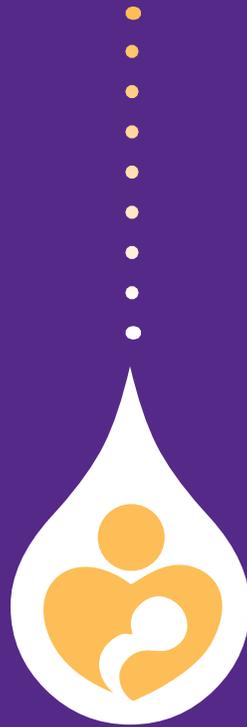


# "THE MILK OF LIFE"

*Breastfeeding Nurtures Healthy Families*



A FAITH BASED INITIATIVE

# BREASTFEEDING INITIATIVE FOR FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Men and Women of Faith,

As a trusted leader in your community, we are asking you to be our partner in promoting breastfeeding in Illinois faith communities. Faith based organizations can play an important role in establishing breastfeeding as normal and reinforcing its value to our babies, families and communities. We are asking you to introduce the “Milk of Life” program – *a community focused promotion and education initiative designed to draw attention to the important role of breastfeeding in nurturing healthy babies, healthy families and healthy communities* – into your faith community.

Although the benefits of breastfeeding are well known – breastfeeding decreases the risk of obesity, diabetes, cancers and other chronic diseases that are prevalent in our faith communities – too many babies are still not receiving mother’s milk and its many amazing benefits. Religious leaders, of every faith and denomination, have a tremendous opportunity to encourage and support breastfeeding and its role in health and family bonding.

With the support of the Illinois Department of Human Services and through a state and regional network of breastfeeding professionals and advocates, we are asking that you include the “Milk of Life” program in your parenting, family or lifestyle ministries. Designate a day in August – both World Breastfeeding Week and Illinois Breastfeeding Promotion and Support month are in August – to focus your sermon, message or service on the importance of breastfeeding to your congregation and community. All the information you need is included in this packet of materials.

Thank you in advance for helping Illinois achieve healthier babies, healthier families and healthier communities by promoting, supporting and protecting breastfeeding within your faith community.

Best regards,



Dr. Myrtis Sullivan  
Illinois Department of Human Services



Brenda Matthews, co-chair  
Illinois State Breastfeeding Task Force

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM:

*How  
Breastfeeding  
Nurtures  
Families*



# "BABIES WERE BORN TO BE BREASTFED"

*Did you know?*

Mothers Milk can't be reproduced.  
It is uniquely created each time mother nurses her baby.



Mothers Milk contains the right balance of nutrients  
designed perfectly for baby.



Mothers Milk provides baby with all she needs  
for growth & development.



Mothers Milk is easily digested and reduces baby's risk for allergies.



Mothers Milk protects baby from germs and illnesses.



Mothers Milk reduces childhood obesity and chronic diseases.



Mothers Milk provides baby's first immunization.



Mothers Milk makes baby smarter.



Mothers Milk is natural and environmentally friendly.



Mothers Milk is free!



*Breastfeeding Nurtures Healthy Families*

# BREASTFEEDING WORLDVIEWS

**BREASTFEEDING HAS BEEN PRESENT  
AS LONG AS WOMEN HAVE BEEN GIVING BIRTH  
TO THEIR CHILDREN.**

*Christian*

The first Christian images of breastfeeding are found in the catacombs of Rome, where the Virgin Mary nursed Jesus.

*Buddhist*

In Buddhism, breastfeeding has been a strong practice for centuries, with the custom being continued breastfeeding beyond the first year of life. The Edo period was very influential in establishing breastfeeding customs that continue today.

*Jewish*

Breastfeeding is valued by Jewish tradition.

The Talmud discusses breastfeeding duration in a number of contexts and in most cases assumes a duration of 24 months.

The Shulkhan Arukh codifies a minimum of two years and a maximum of five years.

Maimonides recommends breastfeeding in his compilation of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah LeRambam.

There are other references in traditional texts including discussion in the Talmud regarding breastfeeding durations of two through five years.

*Muslim*

The Koran frequently emphasizes the importance of breastfeeding during the first two years of life and stresses the importance of the father's support and encouragement in this practice. The medieval physician Ibn Sina of Buckara (AD 980-1037) contributed to the significance of breastfeeding by describing breast milk as "white blood".

*Hindu*

Breastfeeding is one of the oldest practices recommended in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Hindu Vedic literature and ancient ayurvedic texts underscore the importance of breastfeeding in the Hindu society.

*Native  
American*

Breastfeeding has been a traditional Native American custom. Native American babies were breastfed exclusively until they were able to take food from other sources.



# HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mother's milk is the most essential food for any newborn.  
No other food is more suitable for baby's consumption, survival and growth.

Initially, infant formula was invented to help those babies who could not be breastfed, e.g. babies in orphan homes. It contained little but dried milk powder with a few vitamin supplements thrown in.

Infant formula became popular during World War II, when women went to work to help with the war effort. The medical community supported the use of infant formula because it believed that artificial feeding could be more easily monitored.

The option not to nurse one's own infant became the norm and women perceived that formula was "superior" to breast milk. Infant formula became an "icon of modernity" separating mothers from babies.

The quest to find a perfect substitute for breast milk continues, with modifications in formula production to make infant formula more like human breast milk.

Breastmilk remains a unique substance with properties and components specially designed for human babies. It remains the safest, most convenient, and least expensive method of nourishing an infant.

**BREASTFEEDING IS MENTIONED IN HOLY TEXT AS A VERY "MATTER OF FACT" AND COMMON OCCURRENCE. IT WAS TAKEN FOR GRANTED AS THE NORMAL WAY OF FEEDING AN INFANT.**

## HEBREW SCRIPTURES GENESIS 21:7

"And she added, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age...The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast."

## EXODUS 2:9

"And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, take the child away and give it milk for me, and I will give you payment. And the woman took the child and gave it milk at her breast."

## SONG OF SOLOMON 8:1

"If only you were to me like a brother, who was nursed at my mother's breasts! Then, if I found you outside, I would kiss you, and no one would despise me."

## ISAIAH 49:15

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

## LUKE 11:27

"And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"

## KORAN

"Mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years..."

**ENTHUSIASTIC  
SUPPORT AND  
INVOLVEMENT  
IN THE PROMOTION  
AND PRACTICE OF  
BREASTFEEDING IS  
ESSENTIAL TO THE  
ACHIEVEMENT OF  
OPTIMAL INFANT  
HEALTH, GROWTH  
& DEVELOPMENT.**



## THE FAITH COMMUNITY CAN...

Provide a **welcoming atmosphere** or a special location in your house of worship for breastfeeding mothers and their children.

Include “The Milk of Life” initiative in your family, parenting or healthy living ministries, classes or campaigns.

The decision to breastfeed is a family decision. Fathers, grandparents and extended family often provide crucial support to breastfeeding mothers.

Urge the women with babies and young children, fathers and grandparents of your congregation to form a **parenting group or ministry which supports and encourages breastfeeding.**

Choose a day in **May** to emphasize the importance of breastfeeding as a way to celebrate all mothers and grandmothers in your congregation.

Promote **breastfeeding** to your congregation throughout the **month of August**, which is “Illinois Breastfeeding Promotion and Support Month”.

Use breastfeeding as the **basis for a sermon or inspirational message** one day in August to emphasize the importance of breastfeeding.

Include an **announcement** on breastfeeding in your newsletters, broadcasts or bulletins in May and August.

Post **Breastfeeding Promotion and Support poster or flyers** in your church, mosque, temple, or synagogue.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/Breastfeeding/> - comprehensive breastfeeding information (English and Spanish), free brochures (many languages), references



<http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/> - updated annually with slogan, posters, action folder, sample broadcasts etc.



[www.illinoisbreastfeeding.org](http://www.illinoisbreastfeeding.org) – Illinois breastfeeding laws, Grandmother's tea curriculum, regional resources and task force information



[www.promom.org](http://www.promom.org) – promotion of mother's milk, clip art, 101 reasons to breastfeed, art throughout history depicting mother breastfeeding child



ILLINOISBREASTFEEDING.ORG



PRODUCED BY THE ILLINOIS STATE BREASTFEEDING TASK FORCE  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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