

MCH NLN Meeting, February 26-27, 2015

Alaska Abstract

Title: Gallery of Portraits: Race/Ethnicity Disparity Populations of Breastfeeding Mothers in Alaska

Person involved: Dana Kent, RD, LD, AK State WIC Program Breastfeeding Coordinator

Background/Introduction: The “Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding” 2011 lists race/ethnicity as an “unacceptable disparity” persisting in breastfeeding rates. In Alaska, two populations identified as impacted by this disparity, which show in the breastfeeding rates in select regions of the state.

The “Alaska Maternal and Child Health Data Book 2011: Alaska Native Edition” cites that breastfeeding was more common among non-Native women compared to Alaska Native (AN) women at birth, 4 weeks and 8 weeks postpartum. The AN/non-Native disparity increased with length of breastfeeding duration.

In Alaska, WIC program statistics demonstrate that this disparity exists to a great degree.

Local Agency Region	% Alaska Native Enrolled in WIC	Initiation	6 Month Duration	12 Month Duration
Aleutians	63%	54%	29%	29%
Kotzebue	99%	57%	27%	20%
Statewide	29.6%	84%	44%	37%

In Alaska WIC, the Asian population during SFY 2013 accounted for approximately 6.2% of the total WIC caseload. The Municipality of Anchorage WIC program has an Asian population that comprises 20% their total caseload. It is suspected that these women breastfeed less because culturally breastfeeding is associated with income insecurity and using formula is a sign of affluence. Many women in Anchorage give birth at a Baby Friendly hospital so if women choice to breastfeed their support is optimal at delivery.

Local Agency Region	% Asian Enrolled	Initiation	6 Month Duration	12 Month Duration
Municipality of Anchorage	20%	80%	47%	40%
Statewide	6.2%	84%	44%	37%

Project Goals: Capture pictures of local AN and Hmong women breastfeeding to use in poster campaigns with supporting positive breastfeeding messaging.

Methods: Volunteers were identified in Alaska Native and Hmong groups, and photographed breastfeeding. State staff developed BF messaging designed to appeal to these populations. The photos were used along with the messaging to create posters easily identifiable as featuring AN or Hmong families.

Results: xx posters were produced. Posters were distributed widely to WIC local agencies, hospitals, State of AK MCH, PHN and other interested groups.

Evaluation: The project is successful if the Alaska’s breastfeeding rates go up for the Native and Asian ethnicities. The project evaluation will compare breastfeeding rates for SFY 13 to 6 months after completion of the project to see if an increase has occurred for duration in AN and initiation in the Asian populations. Additionally breastfeeding rates will be monitored through review of the “Immunization Report Card” for trends indicating increases in breastfeeding initiation and duration