



## **Working to Close the Gap of Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Breastfeeding**

*National Breastfeeding Month Helps Promote Benefits for All Families*

**Jacksonville, Fla.** (Aug. 24, 2022) – Many factors influence the decision whether or not to breastfeed, a choice typically based on concern to provide the best nutrition for a child’s health and well-being. Although the American Academy of Pediatrics, the U.S. Surgeon General, the CDC and others recommend breastfeeding as an important component of supporting the health of both mother and baby, breastfeeding rates remain lower than optimal, especially among people of color. In fact, there’s a 40-year-long run of racial disparity with Black families having the lowest initiation and continued breastfeeding among all groups.

The Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition (NEFHSC) and its community partners work each day to bring awareness to the importance of breastfeeding, acknowledging that a lack of education for mothers is one of the biggest challenges to reducing the racial breastfeeding disparity gap.

“Breastfeeding offers babies an ideal start in life and reduces the chances of developing obesity later in childhood and beyond. Despite its benefits, it’s estimated that only a quarter of infants are exclusively breastfed through six months, and only 33 percent are breastfed at one year,” said Faye Johnson, NEFHSC CEO. “Support from family, friends, health care providers, employers and other community members is a key component of successful breastfeeding duration.”

The month of August is National Breastfeeding Month with the last week recognized as Black Breastfeeding Week (Aug. 25-31), a special designation given the systemic challenges that prevent many Black women from reaching their breastfeeding goals.

“It’s wonderful that we highlight important causes during particular times of the year, and we honor breastfeeding 24/7 at NEFHSC,” continued Johnson. “We’re privileged to see firsthand that mamas want to do what’s best for their babies. But for women with limited lactation education and experience, their aspirations can make them susceptible to a lack of self-efficacy. We’re working hard to encourage women in a culturally sensitive manner, so they trust their bodies in ways that benefit both them and their babies.”

The NEFHSC provides breastfeeding counseling and support throughout its five-county service area. Information and education are also available through WIC, resources such as La Leche League and local hospitals (Jacksonville is home to four Baby-Friendly Hospitals, a global program to support breastfeeding sponsored by the World Health Organization and UNICEF). NEFHSC also is spearheading several efforts to help ensure more breastfeeding-friendly policies and practices are developed and enacted throughout Northeast Florida.

### **About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition**

The NEFHSC leads the community effort to reduce infant death and improve the health of children, childbearing women, fathers, and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, view [our media kit](#) or contact Erin Addington at [eaddington@nefhsc.org](mailto:eaddington@nefhsc.org) or 904.447.9853.

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